

West Hampstead & Fortune Green Neighbourhood Development Forum meeting, 4 December 2017

Present: Nick Jackson, Keith Moffitt, David Brescia (taking minutes), Linda Sluys, Ian Cohen, Sue Measures, Juan José Jaramillo, John Eastwood, Peter Taheri, Lorna Russell, [Sonia Flati?], Richard Burdett, Tracey Shackle, Helena Paul, Adrian Bridge, Maria Higson, Andrew Allaz, Pauline Swindells, [Lloyd Nomen?], Mark Hutton, Robert Lastman, Maria Elena Brady, Nancy Jirira, Mark Stonebanks, Nicki Cohen, Eugene Regis, [Ioassy Stulast?], Phil Rosenberg, David Yass, John Saynor, Michael Poulard.

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Guy Shackle, Alan Watson and Stuart Drummond.

2. Minutes of last meeting (12 September 2017) and matters arising

The minutes of 12 September 2017 were approved, with no objections. Keith Moffitt thanked David Brescia for producing them.

Juan José Jaramillo was confirmed as having been co-opted onto the NDF Committee.

3. Current Planning Applications

- **Gondar Gardens Reservoir (2017/6045/P)** application to erect six 4-6 storey buildings and four 2-3 storey buildings on the green space of a former reservoir, to create 82 self-contained retirement apartments (class C2), a 15-bed nursing home (class C2) and associated communal facilities including restaurant, library, exercise pool, gym and cinema. David Yass and Michael Poulard of the Gondar and Agamemnon Residents Association (GARA) made a presentation:
 - The deadline for submission of public comments had been extended to 13th December 2017.
 - GARA, and the residents' associations for Sarre Road and Hillfield Road, had reviewed the proposals by LifeCare Residences. A petition against the development had so far attracted 1,500 signatures, and those present at today's meeting were urged to sign if they had not already.
 - GARA explained that the 'reservoir' site, completely covered with grass, was as large a green space as Fortune Green (park), and a home to rare birds and Camden's only population of 'slowworms' (a legless lizard with protected status in the UK). It also provided vast open views for many neighboring properties: indeed, inspectors on previous planning applications had described the multiple private views as "so many and so important as to constitute a vital public asset".
 - Previous schemes proposed for the site had consisted of 16 luxury houses rising only 1.5 metres above ground level (approved but not built), and separately a frontage scheme that would have left 93% of the green space preserved (rejected initially, then granted on appeal). The new proposal was equated to trying to combine the two previous schemes (which had been approved in isolation rather than together) and dramatically increase the height.
 - In spite of the 'four chauffeur-driven cars' at the service of proposed residents, the scheme would add to traffic in the neighbourhood and the squeeze on parking from visiting relatives and staff (including night shift workers).
 - GARA thanked the NDF for giving prominent coverage to the issue. They cited the Neighbourhood Plan's support for the preservation of open space and views, and noted

that the proposal was contrary to this. The new buildings would be higher than those surrounding it

- The site is currently quiet and dark, but the proposal adds noise and light to the detriment of neighbours and wildlife.
 - The developer's own submitted documents demonstrate the area's access roads are unusually steep – arguably too steep for mobility scooters for instance.
 - Mark Stonebanks pointed out that the previous two schemes permitted for the site (but not built) had required sizeable contributions of affordable housing: £6 million worth for the first scheme, and 9 affordable units for the second scheme. The proponents of the current scheme, LifeCare Residence had argued that their development counted as class C2 in planning terms (residential institutions) – exempt from any required affordable housing contribution. Mark suggested a C3 classification (dwelling houses) would be more appropriate, as each unit would have its own lockable front door. He said Bartrams Convent Hostel had similarly been proposed by its developer Pegasus Life to be class C2, but this had ultimately been deemed class C3 instead.
 - Mark further suggested that LifeCare Residences' argument on traffic generation was flawed: the developer had cited Camden's figures on the average proportion of 65-80 year-olds who own cars; but Mark argued this statistic would be higher among those who would have to sell expensive homes to afford to live in this development.
 - David Brescia recalled that LifeCare Residences had asserted to him at a public consultation meeting on 16 March 2017 that their proposed development would require at least 100 apartments in order to be commercially viable, but clearly this was not the case if they were now applying for only 82 apartments (the size reduction coming from reducing the depth of the basement – not lowering the proposed height).
 - Other attendees commented. While noting that there is no such thing as 'village feel' in planning terms, a gated community was nonetheless considered inappropriate for this neighbourhood. Residents agreed on the dangerous steepness and difficult right-angle of the road, rendering it unsuitable for the extra traffic this development would generate. The disruption that would be caused by the construction work was mentioned, but Keith Moffit pointed out that this is not weighted highly in planning considerations. The 'luxury' nature of the development was criticized by some.
 - Ian Cohen requested that emotive attacks on 'luxury' should not be used to criticize the development. The scheme was wrong in that it breached Camden's planning rules and the Neighbourhood Plan regarding green space and views. But elderly people were not 'at fault' if they happened to have accumulated assets over their lifetime (e.g. a house) that they could now sell to fund their retirement, and attacking such people could alienate those who would otherwise help our opposition to this scheme. GARA confirmed their opposition was primarily based on the loss of green space.
 - Nick Jackson said the NDF's objection would be on the basis of the development's excessive density, lack of affordable housing, loss of green space, loss of open space, and added pressure to traffic and parking. Furthermore, the remaining undeveloped footprint could hardly be considered 'green space' if it was inaccessible for those members of the public not part of the gated community.
- **82 Compayne Gardens (2017/4519/P**, application to excavate and build an additional three x 2-bed residential units at lower ground level, add mezzanines to all first-floor studio flats, enlarge existing roof and build an additional two-bed residential unit at third-floor level): The NDF had considered the application, and concluded it looked like a moderate and acceptable development – the basement extension was marginal and did not touch anyone else's side walls.
 - **33 Ulysses Road (2017/4455/P**, erection of a rear roof extension to the main roof, including a 200mm increase to the ridge height): The NDF had objected, on the basis that the application would unnecessarily raise the roof higher than neighbouring properties. The application had

consequently been withdrawn. A modified application (2017/4907/P) was subsequently submitted, without the objectionable roof extension, and had been accepted.

- **Telephone kiosks / advertising stands, West End Lane pavement (2017/5429/P, 2017/5430/P, 2017/5431/P):** The NDF had objected, on the grounds that the phone kiosks are un-necessary (primarily used to host advertising screens) and clutter the pavement. The applications have been rejected, but we shall be watchful in case the applicant returns for another attempt in future.
- **Brondes Age, 328 Kilburn High Road (2017/5455/P,** application to demolish existing bar/restaurant and erect ground floor commercial units A1-A4 with 8 residential units above it on three floors): This development is outside of the NDF's West Hampstead / Fortune Green zone, but impacts on it and therefore the NDF is entitled to comment. The NDF considered that a lot of improvements had been made to the proposed development at the pre-planning stage, therefore the NDF has not objected.
- **307/309 Finchley Road (2017/3710/P,** application to change use of basement and ground floors from strip club and office, to office and 4 duplex units for short term lets): The NDF welcomed the change of use away from 'strip club' (sui generis) as an improvement to the area, and had received confirmation from the developers that they would tidy up Lythos Road, which the site turns into. A pre-application meeting with the planners had changed this proposal for the better, therefore the NDF informed Camden we were not objecting.
- **23 Ravenshaw Street (2017/0911/P,** application for a large infill of 8 flats in the space currently occupied by a single house). The NDF had heard no update on this development – Nick said he would speak to the planning inspector.
- **General:** Keith expressed gratification that lots of developers now ask the NDF what we think, although some still try to pretend we do not exist. Keith re-iterated that the NDF does not see its role as to comment on every single application – just the major ones, or those that might set a precedent or otherwise affect the Neighbourhood Plan. Nick commented that the Camden Design Review Panel did not appear to be a good planning tool, as their primary consideration seemed to be whether the design of developments would appeal to those living within them, rather than the wider community. Keith explained that the composition of 'the NDF' included all local residents in the audience, therefore anyone was welcome to raise planning issues they were worried about.
- As an example of the need for vigilance, Sue Measures recounted how **81 Fordwych Road** had been served a series of enforcement notices after making major changes to its roof without an application, and after neighbours complained its owner was digging up the garden and excavating a basement under the property without an application. Permission had been granted for a five-bedroom single family house with assurances from the developer that there would be no occupation of the basement; but a new application had subsequently been submitted to divide the property into 8 flats.

4. Other issues and initiatives:

Re-designation of the NDF

- It is coming up to five years since the forum was designated. The area plan has a longer life, but our designation as the body that monitors it must now seek re-designation for another five years. Keith expressed thanks to James Earl for leaving the Committee with a draft plan for re-designation, and to Brian O'Donnell of Camden Planning for advice.
- The NDF aims to hold a public consultation early in the New Year to make sure we're reflecting the will of the people. Phil Rosenberg said members of the public who appreciate the NDF's work are encouraged to say so. Sue said it was important to remember that a lot of significant development in this area came after the Plan, and that the NDF needs to reach out to residents living in new developments on Iverson Road and the Ballymore development. She added that more engagement could be done on social media, and that Juan José could help with that.

- Keith mentioned that a number of planning students from institutions such as UCL had been making enquiries to the West Hampstead & Fortune Green NDF.

Neighbourhood Plans of other areas

- It was reported that the Hampstead and Kilburn NDFs were progressing with their own plans. The Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan is currently under consultation.

West Hampstead Growth Area master-planning

- Keith asked if the councillors present could look into the status of the Growth Area Master Planning: it was felt that a number of good ideas had come out of the November 2016 workshop, and a consultant had been paid to write a report based on it, but the ball seemed to be in Camden Council's court now. Councillors Lorna Russell and Phil said they hadn't heard any news, but would look into it.
- One issue raised from the workshop was that not enough of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding raised from new developments was being used to improve the site surrounding the new developments. Ian Cohen re-iterated that West Hampstead and Fortune Green had seen hardly any CIL funding spent in our area, despite the high number of new large developments.

156 West End Lane / Travis Perkins

- Although Stuart Drummond of Travis Perkins was unable to attend today, it was reported that Travis Perkins' attempt to get a judicial review in its battle against Camden Council had been turned down on appeal. Phil said he had heard Camden was fairly confident of its legal position. Helena Paul asked if the construction of the new 156 West End Lane development would be carbon neutral; Keith said he could look into that; Nick pointed out that new buildings have to be built to much higher standards than old buildings.

West Hampstead Overground Station

- Rebuilding was reported to be proceeding apace.

West Hampstead Underground Station

- Georgia Gould, the leader of Camden Council, had visited West Hampstead and attended a half-hour meeting with the NDF and WHAT (West Hampstead Amenities and Transport), who had jointly lobbied her on step-free access and other improvements for West Hampstead tube station. Gould had agreed to write to Transport for London – and since done so.
- The NDF will keep fighting hard for important step-free access.

5. Any Other Business

- Ian had heard from one of the public liaison meetings that the Liddell Road residential development would not be going to market until the early part of 2018.
- Keith and Nick thanked Helena for text she had drafted, and they had subsequently edited, for submission to a London-wide consultation on air pollution by City Hall. Helena mentioned that from the whole of London only 250 groups and businesses had made submissions to the consultation.
- In response to a question from the audience about the state of cladding (fire risk) on council-owned buildings, Phil stated that Camden Council was taking the issue seriously and had appointed a new 'director of community safety' to look at the problem. Linda Sluys suggested that housing management strategy was likely to change across the country shortly. Keith explained that this was not a planning issue, and that there were not any older buildings with cladding in the West Hampstead & Fortune Green area covered by the NDF.

6. Date of next meeting

The next NDF meeting, to include the AGM, was provisionally scheduled for 19th February 2018.