

Fortune Green and West Hampstead NDF.

24 January 2019

Statement to the Examiner at the public enquiry into the appeal APP/X5210/W/18/3198746 against refusal of Planning Application 2017/6045/P Gondar Gardens Reservoir.

Presented by Nick Jackson, Co- Chair, Fortune Green and West Hampstead NDF.

The NDF was established in 2012 in reaction to the approval of the Ballymore development adjacent to the tube station. The surprise that 5 tower blocks had been approved without many people being aware of it shocked local residents into action. Having registered with Camden, we prepared the Plan and on referendum in 2015 it was approved by 2,344 votes (93%), with 174 votes against.

We currently have 569 members, who receive occasional newsletters. The open rate is normally well above 40%, peaking to 65%. We have open meetings approximately bi-monthly to discuss current planning issues.

The Plan was prepared on the basis of half a dozen surveys. There were 6 drafts of the Plan which were circulated for comment and discussed at monthly meetings. There were two full consultations on it before the referendum. We believe that the Plan represents a consensus of local residents and that most of these residents believe that the planning system should respect these local opinions where they do not clash with more senior planning instruments. As was intended in the Localism Act.

Having succeeded in preparing a Plan the Forum has shifted its focus to keeping local people informed about major planning issues and promoting the Plan to ensure that it is used and implemented. The Area had around 300 planning applications in 2018. We objected to around 15 in 2017, 8 in 2018, averaging 4%. We only object to those schemes that merit it, based on the policies and recommendations of the Plan.

There are some residents who believe that they will continue to be trampled upon by developers (and the council, let alone the rest of the planning system) but there is a growing better informed group that believe that initiatives such as the Plan can help maintain the better characteristics of the Area by permitting sympathetic development in line with the necessary increase in housing provision, facilities and infrastructure. We believe that it is very important for local democracy to give full weight to the policies and recommendations of the Plan.

You asked yesterday about the status of the paragraph C2 page 45 in the Plan, where specific comments were made on the Gondar Gardens site. When the Plan was being prepared it was one of the first in Camden, and indeed one of the first of its size in a major conurbation so the mechanics of drawing up a Plan for the Area were not clear.

It was clear that we should make policies for the Growth Area as it had been designated as being a focus for development, and after discussion with Camden and other professionals/experts we were persuaded, somewhat unwillingly, to look at other sites that

might be presented for development. The comments here reflected local views of what should be considered if applications were submitted. They were not saying the sites should be developed, just stating some parameters in case they were.

Finally, we have already submitted an objection to this planning application and have made comments on the appeal, which you will have seen. I will not repeat those views, but I would like to emphasise two points.

First, the Neighbourhood Plan is clear that the Area wants increased provision of affordable housing. Both wards have substantially lower rates of social rented housing than Camden overall. And when we are demanding that developers provide more, that means in our Area, not monetary contributions to be used elsewhere. There are very limited opportunities to provide affordable housing offsite in the Area so, particularly with a scheme this size, the only real option is to have the affordable housing within the site.

Secondly, the height and bulk of this scheme is excessive when compared to the local mansion block style and the design is not in keeping with the area, particularly with respect to the quantity of glass on the frontage and even more so behind it. We regret that the appellant has not taken the opportunity to improve the frontage, given the evidence of dislike of the two similarly designed frontage buildings previously refused by the Council.

This appeal should be dismissed.