

## Housing plan hit by fears over daylight

A plan to replace a multi-storey car park with housing and add two floors to an existing 12-storey building has prompted mixed reaction from residents.

Two weeks ago, developers submitted an application that would see the car park to the rear of Centre Heights in Finchley Road, Swiss Cottage, knocked down and a two to five-storey residential mews built in its place.

The plan includes a two-storey extension on the top of the existing Centre Heights building to create five residential units.

Those behind the development say it would "considerably improve the appearance and coherence of Centre Heights".

The application has prompted mixed responses from residents.

Brenda Shina, of Centre Heights, wrote: "I support this application fully. Our daughter will be moving there as soon as refurbishments are concluded."

Zdenka Suerakova, of Harben Road, commented: "I am very much opposed. It will lead to severe overcrowding and decrease the daylight I receive. The noise and pollution involved will adversely affect the health of many elderly tenants such as myself."

Comments can be submitted to Camden Council until August 20.

## Bids to turn HMOs into luxury homes

Two houses containing a number of bedsits and studio flats are set to be converted back into family homes, defying Camden Council's housing policy.

Two planning applications were submitted to the council last week to turn houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in West Hampstead into luxurious homes.

Camden Council's housing policy states that it will resist developments that would result in a loss of housing in the borough.

But both applicants wrote that their conversion bids do not breach the policy because the houses are currently in a "sub-standard" condition.

Developer Agamemnon Ltd has applied to convert a house containing seven studio flats and two bedsits into a single family home in Agamemnon Road, Fortune Green.

In the same week, the executors of the estate of homeowner Henry Chum applied to convert a house containing seven bedsits and one studio flat in Lyncroft Gardens, West Hampstead, into a single family home.

Camden Council's housing policy states that it will allow applications that result in a loss of housing if the replacement home would ensure a previously sub-standard property would now meet appropriate housing standards.



■ Joseph Joy of Travis Perkins at the West End Lane site which Camden Council wants to redevelop against the company's wishes

# Councillors are failing the people who elected them

Members of Save West Hampstead: Stop the Blocks campaign argue that commercial growth must be delivered in a more balanced manner

Balancing growth with sustainability is a huge challenge. In Camden, as across London, we must plan for tomorrow, provide for today, and not lose sight of our heritage.

The emergence of redevelopment proposals for 156 West End Lane has called into question Camden Council's ability to manage this delicate balancing act.

Ill-considered plans unveiling themselves before residents have spurred the formation of our community action group, Save West Hampstead "Stop the Blocks".

We are deeply concerned by these proposals and, having learned from Camden's recent mistakes, demand a better long-term solution.

Today, we are around 100 people, with support across the borough growing faster than we could have hoped. We echo sentiments that ring true across London, which is seeing unprecedented growth in grass-roots community groups opposing 'developments' that don't meet community needs but are driven by the short-termism of councils and long-term profits of developers.

Our mission is to ensure proper management of public assets and scrutiny of elected representatives.

We do not stand in the way of house-building – we want more high-quality and actually affordable homes provided and we want elected representatives to take the lead.

We do not want inappropriate developments foisted upon us, with or without consultation, nor for the council to sell-off public assets for private gain.



■ An artist's impression of plans for 156 West End Lane

We do not want selective setting-aside of planning policies and nor should Travis Perkins, a local employer and supplier to tradesmen in the community for 35 years, suffer the vagaries of inconsistent planning simply because the council owns the site and deems it desirable to grant developers carte blanche planning consent.

Critical questions need answering before the fate of West Hampstead is sealed irrevocably:

What joined-up impact assessment is there of the proliferation of developments now taking place and the cumulative effect they, and other developments under consideration, will have on public amenity and services?

What effort is there to ensure preservation of the Conservation Area the site adjoins?

How has the council bungled the 'sale' of the site so spectacularly, costing taxpayers so significantly in the process?

How can it justify the wasteful neglect for years of ex-council offices above Travis Perkins that has cost thousands every month. This is not astute asset or financial management while Camden residents are suffering swingeing cuts to public services.

Why has the council abandoned planning policies on businesses and employment? The Liddell Road fiasco had the council justifying closure of local businesses and the loss of jobs to build an out-of-scale tower block by using the sop of a distant school annex to placate a community opposed to the plans.

Schools are needed, but must be delivered in a sustainable way

without imposition of developments that don't meet the housing needs of local people and the majority of workers on average wages.

Elected council members are not keen to engage with or listen to us. Meanwhile, they meet with prospective developers. We are left with no option but to question their priorities – is it the party whip, or the electorate, community and people that elected them?

The 156 West End Lane proposals outrageously contravene Camden's own planning policies, threaten amenities and would blight a heritage conservation area. We call for for other options to be explored and a better solution.

We call for Camden Council to act as considerate custodians of our community, not cash-chasing property speculators disposing of public assets that could benefit the community rather than private developers and the incumbent council administration.

Councillors and elected representatives are transient, but the communities they leave behind are forced to live with their legacies.

■ Visit Save West Hampstead "Stop the Blocks!" – [www.savewesthampstead.wordpress.com](http://www.savewesthampstead.wordpress.com) for our views in full.

■ The campaign is supported by Lymington Road Residents' Association, Crediton Hill Residents' Association, West End Green Conservation Area Committee, West Hampstead Gardens & Residents Association, Save Swiss Cottage, Reclaim London