

# Andrew Dismore

## Putting Barnet and Camden first



### **LONDON** ASSEMBLY **LABOUR**

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London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden  
City Hall  
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01/06/2020

#### **Objection to planning application for National Institute for Medical Research, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1AA, Ref: 20/1893/FUL**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to object to the above application in my capacity as London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden.

I am disappointed, but not in the least bit surprised that yet another developer, who already has permission for a large application that has led to a substantial overdevelopment of this site, has applied for permission for even more development.

This application represents the continuing salami slicing of all the protections agreed to in the original application. The original permission was the maximum permissible development, and therefore by logic any subsequent application to add more development goes well over the limits. Therefore many of the reasons for objection to this scheme are in line with those of the already agreed to scheme.

This application represents an even worse overdevelopment in the Green Belt, with building designs not conducive to the Conservation Area (with the exception of the competition result for the cruciform building), too many flats with inappropriate housing mix, inadequate parking provision and transport challenges related to The Ridgeway,

On the compromised views from the Totteridge Valley and construction impact on the surrounding area, I believe that the requirements of NPPF have not been met and that there is a significant increase in the built floor space that constitutes overdevelopment without any explanation of exceptional circumstances in support of this. The views into the site, the bulk of the buildings and the traffic issues all add support to my view that this Green Belt site is being overdeveloped. In addition, the design of some of the blocks is poor and unsympathetic to the needs of the Conservation Area.

The proposal to increase the density of flats on the development is unacceptable. This proposal is only made possible by changing the housing mix that already included too many smaller flats. The original plans for blocks A/A1, B1/B2 and C1/C2 comprised:

40 x 1-bedroom units  
80 x 2-bedroom units  
17 x 3-bedroom units  
0 x 4 and 5-bedroom units  
Total: 137 units

What is proposed now for these blocks makes the following changes:

+ 28 x 1-bedroom units  
+ 29 x 2-bedroom units  
- 5 x 3-bedroom units

Total: 52 extra units in addition to the 137 above.

Policy HOU02 'Housing Mix' of the Barnet Draft Local Plan (Reg 18) January 2020 sets down priorities for dwelling sizes. The highest priority listed for market homes for sale or rent is 3-bedroom properties with 2 or 4-bedroom dwellings as a medium priority; 2-bedroom flats (with four bed-spaces) are the highest priority for Affordable Rent and Low Cost Home Ownership dwellings. Policy HOU01 'Affordable Homes' refers back to policy HOU02 in terms of housing mix. Therefore it is unacceptable to increase the number of 1-bedroom units at the expense of having fewer 3-bedroom flats. What is the point of having local policies if the Council does enforce them at planning stage?

The main variation on the front elevation is that of the decorated brick panels. Ground and 1st floor levels are similar to the approved scheme (planning permission 16/4545/FUL) as are 6th and 7th floors. However in the original design there were five decorated vertical brick panels at 4th and 5th floor levels, four of which extended down through the 2nd and 3rd floors. On the current design these have been reduced to three decorative panels, only two of which extend down to 2nd and 3rd floors. The effect is that the design does not have the impact of the original proposal.

On balance the current cruciform elevational design is a reasonable proposal and whilst it will change the mix, this will not overpower the previously approved scheme. The cruciform building should be built correctly, to the design standards set out in the previous approval 16/4545/FUL that had a wealth of detail included that I would not like to lose. Maintaining the copper roof design of the cruciform building is important.

On Blocks B1/B2 and C1/C2, To solve the additional parking required the application proposes enlarging the basement of the Cruciform Cluster (Blocks A - C) to provide 52 additional car parking spaces and pro-rata increase in affordable housing, cycle parking, and refuse storage. The increase in the size of the basement extension (1724 sq. m) would be up by a third, more than normally acceptable in the Green Belt. The buildings as proposed are materially larger than the buildings they are replacing. This is contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Changes to the floor plans in Blocks B-C would disturb the integrity of the external elevations of the original design in terms of fenestration.

With regard to traffic and transport, the proposal would add to the density of the development and because of its relative isolation would lead to additional traffic whose exit from the site would be onto The Ridgeway, which we know is already notoriously busy. Any access from the site onto Burtonhole Lane should in no circumstances be allowed. The proposal also does nothing to address the poor provision of parking for residents on the site that will lead to overspill parking on surrounding lanes. I have raised the fact that the site is on a hill that would be classed as a category 1 climb on the Tour de France, with a minimal bus service that leads down to an already congested station with minimal service and capacity.

Finally, I would like to ask for confirmation that all necessary tests for asbestos and chemical contamination had been correctly carried out on the earlier parts of the project and correctly signed off. There has been considerable concern about these issues amongst local residents and businesses.

To conclude, the proposal represents inappropriate development and is harmful to the Green Belt. The NPPF states... "As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances." In this application as no very special circumstances have been demonstrated the application is therefore contrary to the NPPF and on this basis alone should be refused. I believe the application is driven by the need to meet market demands and not by planning issues. The density of the site is too high for the locality and the addition of extra flats adds further to the weight of previous arguments and submissions. The loss of 3-bedroom units is something that I cannot support. The building designs are not sufficiently sensitive to the needs of the Conservation area.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Andrew Dismore".

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