

BACTON TOWERS ACTION

To Camden Council

2ND February 2025

Dear Cllr Olszewski and Ms Rowlands,

We are writing on behalf of residents of Gospel Oak and Haverstock wards who are very concerned about the plans published by Mount Anvil for the redevelopment of Bacton Low Rise Estate. Several hundred Camden residents have signed a petition calling for a return to the original scheme proposal, or a scheme of a similar scale, because of the impact that the Mount Anvil scheme would have on the neighbourhood.

Mount Anvil propose that the number of homes on the Phase 2 site is increased by 88%, from 227 (the original planning permission) to 447, and that the maximum height is increased from 8 storeys to 24-26 storeys. This is the result of series of changes made to Council's original plans, which had been previously developed and agreed by local people.

A Non-Material Amendment to the original planning application was made in 2020, which added 20 additional homes to Phases 2 and 3 of the development to address viability issues. Yet, just two years later (07.09.22) a Cabinet decision was made, without any public consultation or proper scrutiny, agreeing to officers' proposals that the Council should enter into a private development agreement for the site. The stated reasons were that officers were finding it difficult to fund and procure the original scheme.

The result of this decision is that a further 200 homes are proposed to be added to the scheme. A large proportion of the increase is due to the need to cover the cost of the developer's profit (typically 20%) and mitigation of commercial risks.

The subject of this letter is the **governance** of the Council, and whether it was right for the Council to make the decision to abandon the previous scheme in favour of a private development agreement. We believe that the Council's decision runs contrary to the following:

Camden's strategic plan, as represented by We Make Camden:

'We Make Camden is our shared promise to protect what is special about Camden, involve every person in solving the problems we face and to stay optimistic about what we can achieve together'.

The Localism Act of 2011

The Localism Act gives local people the ability to determine the development in their own area. The Gospel Oak and Haverstock Community Vision (adopted 2022) was developed on this basis. This Supplementary Planning Document sets out key development principles and planning objectives to guide future development. It includes for 247 homes on the Phase 2 site.

Camden Council's Constitution

Article 14 states that:

‘When taking any decision that may have an environmental impact, the Council will consider the likely environmental consequences of the relevant decision. This will include making the most of opportunities to minimise negative impacts, to enhance the natural environment, and to act to mitigate and adapt to climate change, recording and detailing that consideration within the decision-making report.’

We call on Camden Council to review the Cabinet decision of 09.07.24 in light of the above.

The result of the decision is a scheme that is unacceptable and contrary to Camden's own planning policies (the original scheme was only just deemed acceptable in its density). We think that it is unlikely that Cabinet Members would have agreed to go down this route had they been fully aware of the implications. One consideration is the proportion of affordable homes: the Cabinet report (SC/2022/44 dated 24.08.22) states “The entire Bacton Low Rise Estate redevelopment (Phase 1 and 2 combined) is consented to deliver 41.7% affordable housing, and this level of affordable housing will be maintained in the Development Agreement”. This does not appear to be achieved by the current proposed scheme.

In the foreword of the Gospel Oak and Haverstock Vision, Cllr. Beales referred to building ‘confidence and trust’ to realise the vision. The Council cannot have such a relationship with the people whom it governs, unless it keeps to the principles it claims to be guided by.

The Bacton Towers Action group is calling a public meeting on 20.02.25 (7.00- 8.30pm), to which many local groups will be invited. We are also inviting Mount Anvil. We would be grateful if Camden Council could arrange for a Cabinet Member and senior council officer to attend. The meeting can be an opportunity for Camden to engage with residents and explain the Council's position on the development.

Could you please confirm who will be able to attend within the next week, so that we can make the necessary arrangements. We are currently arranging the venue (probably Queens Crescent Community Centre).

Yours sincerely,



Robert Lewenstein
Chair of Bacton Towers Action