



**New Barnet Community Association**  
Community Centre, 48/50 Victoria Road, New Barnet, EN4 9PF  
020 8441 7044  
newbarnetca@gmail.com  
Registered Charity No. 1070455  
Registered Company No. 3564623

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By email

Fabiola Cedillo  
Barnet Planning Development and Control  
Barnet House  
1255, High Road  
London  
N20 0EJ

## **REQUEST TO SPEAK AT COMMITTEE**

### **Planning application No 16/7601/FUL Victoria Gateway Albert Road New Barnet**

Dear Ms Cedillo

**I am writing on behalf of New Barnet Community Association to strongly object to this application in its present form.**

In summary our reasons are listed next and then expanded in greater detail in the following paragraphs:-

- Gross overdevelopment
- Not in keeping with surrounding buildings and character of the area
- The proposals are in breach of the GLA London Plan and Barnet's Local Plan
- Inappropriate design in terms of layout , scale and massing
- Insufficient car parking
- Inadequate proposals to address traffic volumes and congestion in the area
- Inadequate provision to reduce air pollution in the area

Attached are five drawings taken from the application to illustrate a number of the points.

### **Context of this objection**

NBCA has been representing the views of many people in New Barnet since 1971 when the gas board tried to drive a road across the middle of the recreation ground. They failed and Albert Road (east) was built. We have always supported good quality sustainable developments and looked for acceptable mutually beneficial variations or compromises. Our biggest successes over the past ten years have been stopping the attempts by ASDA and Tesco to build two large supermarkets opposite the existing Sainsburys. We then worked proactively with the two companies to work up high quality housing schemes which we supported when they went to Committee, We have also worked hard to ensure the community will benefit from the new leisure centre in the Recreation Ground and are pleased to note that most of our comments have been incorporated either in the design or in the reserved matters attached to the consent.

NBCA is pro development, providing it is of the right sort for a suburban area. We do not ask for special treatment just that the planning documents which we contributed to over the years are implemented as they were meant to be used.

We are aware that the world's population is increasing year on year. To address the demand the GLA is planning for 100,000 more people pa to be housed in 55,000 new homes pa (current delivery c22,000pa). Barnet's new target is 2349 new homes pa (shortfall over past five years 7189). However the government nationally has since 1988 consistently failed to meet its housing targets as has the GLA and Barnet all by up to 50%. The current Government is pushing to deliver 200,000 new homes a year by 2020 so we appreciate that the council and planners are under pressure to maximize the numbers of new homes on every new site.

We support the overall aim.

However this must not be at the expense of existing communities by building inappropriate, out of character, soulless high rise buildings with inadequate measures to address the needs of the infrastructure. 5 and 6 storeys built in front of the building line so they abut a pavement that is already one metre too narrow for safe passage is unforgivable.

The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to build high quality buildings suitable for their area and involving the community. This flows through into the London Plan and the Barnet Local Plan which requires developers to *optimize not maximize* the number of units on any new development with high quality design a prerequisite. All of this stalled after consultation had taken place with the council.

When One Housing acquired this site from ASDA and bought up a number of vacant sites around Albert and Victoria Roads with Levitt Bernstein as their architect we were very pleased. We thought that this would end 30 plus years of planning blight in New Barnet. We had a developer with a social conscience who reinvested profits back into affordable housing or community facilities and who approached us for our co-operation as on the other significant sites in New Barnet. At the second meeting they produced drawings of mainly two, three and four storey dwellings plus some acceptable mixed use at ground and first floor levels and one six storey building for which there was already consent but they proposed to improve the layout and appearance which we welcomed. The buildings complied with the building lines in Victoria Road and the fourth floors were set back so providing higher densities while minimizing the impact in the street and area of predominantly two storey houses. At the initial public meeting the proposals were generally accepted and in many cases welcomed by the community. Following the pre-app meeting and eight later meetings with planners the layout and heights were changed to create monster buildings totally out of character in a traditional two storey Victorian street. All this grief for generations to come for the sake of 63 extra homes. Reverting to the original proposal could still produce about 50 extra dwellings so actually the grief is for about 13 units. There are light industrial sites which have been empty for years in the area which would make up this number of units in a year.

The major concerns relate to blocks A and H. Block A has increased from six to eight storeys which will make it highly visible from all over the Recreation ground and surrounding streets. It will also set a precedent for when the gun club lease expires later this year and we understand that the planning brief would look favourably on another eight story tower block on that site. This would totally change the character of the area in an unacceptable manner.

Block H has increased from three storey with set back fourth floor to five and six storeys. We are told this is a land mark building to give a sense of identity to the development. This is not necessary and even if it was it is in the wrong place. We would be better off keeping the Burlington Coach works until common sense prevails and a well designed three / four storey structure built behind the building line with a wider pavement is provided. See the attached drawings which highlight the issues.

### **Planning considerations**

*The local plan consists of a **Core Strategy** dated September 2012, **Development Management Policies Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** dated September 2012, **Residential Design Guidance SPD***

*dated October 2016 and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD dated October 2016. New Barnet Town Centre Framework dated November 2010*

*It should be noted that the Boroughs priorities mirror the Mayor for London's priorities and are supported by the NPPF and have all been approved by a Planning Inspector at a public examination in 2012*

The NPPF states:-

*Paras 56, Great importance of good design key to sustainable development contributes positively to making better places for people*

*58, Designs must function well and add to the overall quality of the area, respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings, are visually attractive*

*66, applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take into account the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably (NBCA comment. Presumably when there is large scale public opposition the reverse will apply and the scheme will not be looked on favourably).*

The London Plan- Housing SPD dated March 2016 states:

*Para 1.3 recognises the opportunity for new homes on previously used sites but proper account must taken of the range of factors which have to be addressed to "optimize" rather than simply maximize housing potential. Of particular importance are ensuring good design and taking into account transport capacity and local context and character.*

*Research into people's neighbour preferences suggest that housing density in itself may be less significant to residents satisfaction than dwelling type and the neighbourhoods characteristics .High density does not always have to mean higher rise developments ( NBCA Note this is our experience at the Tesco and Asda schemes which are not at suburban density but at urban levels )  
The need to secure residential quality (including the need to take into account local context and character and achieve high quality design) through policies 3.5. 78.1 – 7, 12*

Defining good places

*Standard 1 states development proposals should demonstrate*

*a) how the design responds to the physical context including the character and legibility of the area and the local pattern of building.*

*b) how the scheme relates to the identified character of the place , to the local vision and strategy or is justified in relation to a coherent set of ideas for a place expressed in the local vision and strategy ( New Barnet Town Centre Framework 2010 and Local Plan 2012)*

*Standard 6 refers back to policy 3.4 and policy 3.5 which refer to optimizing density by taking into account local context and character and the Public transport accessibility.*

The following are quotes from the Barnet Local Plan 2012:-

*"Throughout these documents there is reference to areas that are suburban in character which should be protected and enhanced.*

*Densities should be optimised not maximised.*

*The appearance, scale, mass, height and pattern of new buildings must respect, preserve or enhance the local character of the surroundings,*

*Proposals which are out of keeping will be refused. Development which is considered to be detrimental to local character will be refused*

*Areas must be protected and new buildings will only be permitted where they enhance the area.*

*The tension between protection and growth is recognized and notes that it is important to maintain the quality of life which includes environment and character of an area.*

*Any growth must conserve and enhance the character of the area.*

*The Core Strategy aims to address strategic needs for family accommodation.*

*New housing should be of high quality which should aim to create places that meet the needs of people, and maintain and improve the local character. They should contribute to the local character and integrate with the social, green and physical infrastructure.*

*New homes including family and Lifetime homes should meet the Boroughs priorities and not undermine the suburban character or local distinctiveness.*

*Flatted schemes can weaken the traditional street style.*

*For Barnet to grow successfully it is imperative that safeguards are in place to protect and enhance the suburban quality of the borough.*

This application does not comply with the following Policies set out in the Approved Local Plan Core strategy:-

- CS 1 “Protect and enhance high quality suburbs”
- CS 4 “Providing quality homes”
- CS 5 “ Protecting and enhancing Barnet’s character to create high quality places”  
“ Protect heritage and character”
- CS 6 “ Promoting Barnet’s town centre”

and Development Management Policies:-

- DM 01 “Protecting Barnet’s character and amenity
- DM 11 “Development principles in the town centres”
- DM 17 “ Parking standards”

## **Car parking**

The London Plan and the Barnet Local Plan allow for up to 1.5 car parking spaces for an urban area with a PTAL of 2/3 which is what the original proposals across the whole site provided. This has now been reduced to 1.05 spaces per dwelling which may be acceptable for some of the affordable rent units but will be wholly inadequate for the high quality blocks.

## **Traffic Congestion**

Traffic congestion is a daily problem in New Barnet. East Barnet Road comes to a standstill frequently all day every day and Victoria Road is used as a by-pass. Tail backs often reach Brookhill Road and

Plantagenet Road and when there are road works or an accidents they reach East Barnet Village and the Great North Road. TfL commenting on the Leisure Centre application recently stated that they have concerns over the roundabout at the junction of East Barnet Road and Victoria Road which is already close to capacity. Studies show that it will be over capacity by 2019 and significantly worse in 2024. We are concerned that works to road junctions, zebra crossings and the use of various traffic management measures over a wider geographical area which would mitigate the problems now and in the future are not being considered. Major surgery is required not a sticking plaster

### **Air Quality**

We are concerned that the air quality tests that were carried out were insufficient in that they did not cover a large enough area and inadequate in that traffic pollution in particular is noticeable in the New Barnet area generally. The increased traffic created by the wider Victoria quarter development and the leisure centre will only make the matter worse. This needs further investigation

### **Conclusion**

We support the principle of a mixed housing development on this site.

We consider that the scheme proposals shown to NBCA and the public at the first public exhibition provides a good platform to develop the final scheme for this site.

The scheme in this application is totally unacceptable and must be refused as it stands.

Failure to comply with the approved NPPF, London Plan and Local Plan by virtue of:-

- Gross overdevelopment
- Not in keeping with surrounding buildings and character of the area.
- Siting breaches relevant policies
- Inappropriate design in terms of appearance layout, scale and massing.
- Insufficient car parking numbers
- Inadequate proposals to address traffic volumes in the area
- Inadequate noise and air quality investigations.

We are asking the developer to withdraw this application and prepare a scheme that is compliant with the national, regional and local standards in line with their first proposals.

We urge the planning department to reject this scheme.

Yours sincerely,

David Howard

Trustee NBCA  
5, Eversleigh Road  
New Barnet  
Herts  
EN5 1NE

Tel: 0208 440 2008  
M: 07 958 509 787