

Main points of

REPORT ON A MEETING HELD AT THE CAMDEN COUNCIL OFFICES ON 6 NOVEMBER 2017

Purpose of meeting

This was described as a Bangor Wharf PI (Public Inquiry) procedure meeting. It was led by Jonathan McClue, a Camden Council Planning Officer. He has been involved, together with a team of specialists, in the process of considering (and currently rejecting) proposals to develop the space. The aim was to inform and prepare members of the public who object to the proposals for a hearing to be held in about a month's time.

Background

Developers wish to carry out a scheme at Bangor Wharf. It became clear that this is a long and complicated process with many stages. There have so far been two versions of the proposals. The first was rejected, but though the developers have submitted a revised version, they have appealed against the rejection of the first version. Such appeals are considered by an Inspector at a public hearing. The Inspector examines all the evidence so far submitted, and the two sides (the Council and the developers) present their case. The persons doing this are cross-examined by barristers.

Members of the public, in this case mostly residents of Reachview Court, are able to present their case. Mr McClue said that such contributors should be aware that the Inspector will have read every document involved, including emails. It is therefore advisable to keep what is said short and to the point. The real aim of being there is to clarify, where relevant to present new evidence, and to get across the feelings of the public.

Mr McClue stressed that such testimony is not cross-examined, and that it is therefore possible to present arguments of a wider and more general nature than is possible for the Council officers.

The issues and possible action (some points of the original report have been omitted)

(1) Many EVTRA residents are concerned about disruption during the period of construction, notably large numbers of heavy vehicles, hours of work, air pollution and noise. We were told that these have to be agreed between the Council and developers in a Construction Management Plan, which is legally binding. Work cannot begin until this has been agreed and signed. The creation of such a plan does not even begin until the planning application is approved; it is therefore a good way ahead.

(2) The issue of protecting wildlife and the environment was raised – it has been an important objection by local residents and by Ian Shacklock. Mr McClue advised that, though residents were of course entitled to raise this matter, he felt that they should not do so, as it would not achieve anything and might be seen as wasting time and credibility and thus be counterproductive.

This was because the developers had commissioned an ecology expert to produce a report. When this was studied by the Council experts, they had to agree that it was essentially correct. The same response had been received from the London Wildlife Trust and the Canals and Rivers Trust. Residents would therefore be going against all expert opinion.

The basic grounds were that the numbers affected were not high enough, and there were no rare species.

It would however be possible to press for mitigating measures such as a lighting strategy, a biodiverse garden and boxed areas for birds and waterfowl.

(4) There had been concern among EVTRA residents about a rise in traffic, once the project was completed. Mr McClue explained that both sides had agreed that it would be a car-free area – there would be no parking spaces, and residents would not be granted parking permits.

(5) A major issue for residents of Reachview Court, Royal College Street and ourselves is the height and size of the buildings and the subsequent effect on daylight. A body of technical documentation on this matter has been presented, but Mr McClue felt that the presentation of personal assessments of the effect, and a request for the Inspector to visit the places affected could be valuable.

EVTRA is keen to hear from anyone who has the knowledge to help with this matter. It is stressed that this needs to be done very soon.

(5) There was a lot of discussion about the nature and affordability of the housing. It was generally agreed that it would only be available in reality to people with a high income (a minimum figure of £90 000 p.a. was mentioned). Alternatively, the properties would be bought by investors.

However, Mr McClue said that the Council had accepted as a principle some years ago that Bangor Wharf should be used for housing. Thus residents needed to accept that some sort of housing development would take place.

Fiona Russell (Reachview Court) argued that there would be no public benefit was potentially a strong case and should be put forward.

It may be useful to show that there are viable alternatives;

(a) Camden Neighbourhood Forum is pursuing a proposal for genuinely affordable housing.
(b) experts accept that low rise housing, suitably designed, could offer the same population density as high rise; examples already existed in the work of Peter Mishcon in Elm Village and in Soho.