

**West Hampstead & Fortune Green Neighbourhood Development Forum meeting,
12 September 2017**

Present: Nick Jackson, David Brescia (taking minutes), Linda Sluys, Sue Measures, Davi Kothari, Clarence Jackman, Jamel Lee, Dan Smith, David Tigg, Tom France, Mary Zyons, Mike Poulard, Philip Milligan, Marcel Maag, John Eastwood, Sue Spreckley, Anna Franklin, Helena Paul.

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Keith Moffitt (who was wished a speedy recovery from his illness), Alan Watson, Ian Cohen, Guy Shackle, and Stuart Drummond (Travis Perkins).

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of 10 May 2017 were approved, with no objections.

3. Presentation by Nido Collection, owners of the Blackburn Road student accommodation
The NDF had recently expressed concern at plans by Nido to build an extra 40 studios on top of their student accommodation building on Blackburn Road, as this would add to its height in places. The NDF had also suggested certain improvements that could be made by Nido to the bottom of Blackburn Road. Nido had asked for an opportunity to make a presentation to NDF members.

- Daniel Smith, managing director of Nido Management UK, which owns 10 student accommodation buildings across the UK, said Nido was hoping to put in a planning application “as soon as possible”:
 - Nido wants to add 40 studios on top of its existing building, which will increase its height in certain places (adding storeys to the Blackburn Road side), although the new extensions will not extend above the building’s current highest point.
 - Nido also proposes to make improvements to the existing façade. Nido had been told by Camden’s Conservation Officer that the existing building uses “low quality materials”.
 - Nido recognized that the building’s current design was aesthetically unattractive: “the proportion of the building isn’t great... a lumpen mass sits over the base”. Nido proposed to alter the current design to take greater account of the prevailing ‘red brick, white detailing’ Victorian architectural style of the surrounding West Hampstead area – although Nido’s design would still be modern.
 - Intended redesign features include a more pronounced entrance, and extra lighting.
 - Nido has an office in West Hampstead, where members of the public are welcome to visit to ask any questions.
- Members of the public responded with comments:
 - The current exterior was described as “totally deplorable”. Nido concurred that although the current design had been approved by Camden Council, “not a lot of people are happy with it.” Some members of the public expressed a “lack of confidence” in Camden Council; although it was noted with approval that Camden had advised Nido to speak to the NDF.
 - The proposal to increase lighting on Blackburn Road was welcomed, given its use as a through-route to the O2 Centre, and hope was expressed that this might reduce

crime. However, drug dealing has been witnessed in the vicinity of Billy Fury Way even in the daytime.

- The small proportion of British students was noted, given the general overcrowding in West Hampstead and shortage of accommodation for local students. Nido confirmed that 80% of students in its West Hampstead building are international, and 20% are domestic. Accommodation is “first-come, first served”, with prices starting at £199 per week. Nido said that the students make use of West Hampstead’s public transport links, such as the tube station, to easily commute to Westminster University and the University of London in Zone 1.
- Nido was asked if they thought Brexit would have any impact on the proportion of foreign students. Nido said they were expecting Brexit to have a “minimal” impact, and expected enrolment by foreign students to decline by only 4% as a result. Nido added that their accommodation was currently 100% booked, and they expected this to continue to be the case even after adding 40 more studios to the site.
- The build-up of rubbish on Billy Fury Way and Blackburn Road was branded “disgusting”. Nido agreed, and said they contacted Camden “on a weekly basis” on this issue, as well as clearing a lot of the rubbish themselves. They said that some of the land where dumping occurred was owned by Network Rail, and therefore Camden would not remove rubbish from that land. Nido was asked by the NDF to make clear in their upcoming planning application what land they owned and what they did not, and to examine what more they could do to improve the section of Blackburn Road under Nido’s control.
- Nido was asked if they might consider adapting some of their site to affordable housing. Nido replied that the terms of their planning permission required student accommodation only – residents needed to have a letter from a university confirming enrolment – and furthermore the current internal layout was not suitable for residential use. However, they added that they might consider in future accommodating interns in the summer months when students are away.
- Approval was expressed for the suggestion that Nido might add more trees as part of their redesign. It was noted with less approval that Nido did not propose to build any features that would be open to or usable by the public, but Nido said it was a balancing act making the site more attractive while not wanting to give anyone passing by a reason to loiter.
- The NDF advised that although Nido’s current proposals appeared to improve the view from certain angles, the view looked worse from the direction of Lymington Road, and Nido’s architects were asked to give further thought to this aspect of the design.

4. West Hampstead Underground Station, Step-Free Access

The chairman of West Hampstead Amenity & Transport (WHAT) recounted the outcome of several recent meetings with Transport for London (TfL):

- TfL has a budget of £200 million to install step-free access in tube stations that currently lack it. TfL carried out a feasibility study of West Hampstead underground station, among others, and expects to make its choices by the end of 2017. The option TfL devised for West Hampstead station would involve slewing (moving) the tracks and widening the platform, at a cost of £15 million and with the closure of the Jubilee and Metropolitan Lines for at least 3-4 weekends. TfL considers this scenario too costly.

- WHAT has proposed an alternative, much cheaper, scheme to extend a walkway over the space currently occupied by the stairs at the station entrance, further towards the centre of the platform, and then accommodate steps and a lift to the platform centre. This scheme is similar to one TfL considered in 2001.
- The NDF has proposed constructing a new modern underground station directly across the street, with a wider entrance, more ticket barriers, and of course lifts, with the added advantage of then being on the same side of the street as the Overground Station.
- TfL has agreed to consider these cheaper options, but is adamant that no scheme will be undertaken unless TfL receives subsidy s.106/CIL funding (levied by Camden Council on new developments).

Members of the public commented:

- The pros and cons of a sloping walkway to the platform in place of stairs were debated: a walkway would avoid queues forming for a lift, but the regulations for disabled access require such a gentle gradient that the slope would end up too long to be walkable by some elderly and disabled people.
- Since West Hampstead was designated as a growth area, against the will of local residents, developers have been benefiting from West Hampstead's transport links, while adding pressure on them. Members questioned why the developers could not be required to make more of a contribution. A funding contribution could not be expected from the redevelopment of 156 West End Lane: the public 'benefit' of that scheme is the open space and proportion of affordable housing being provided. Nido's earlier confirmation of the use its tenants make of West Hampstead underground station, and its desire to expand, were noted again in this context.
- Although local groups have been lobbying for many years to link the West Hampstead Thameslink, Overground and Underground stations, recent construction projects have now made such a solution impossible.
- The NDF and WHAT will continue to lobby Camden Council and TfL for a step-free access solution for West Hampstead underground station, and other groups and individuals are urged to do the same.

5. Current Planning Applications

The NDF had recently objected to or commented on 4 current planning applications:

- The NDF has objected to an application (2017/4348/P) to add an additional storey to the house at **57 Burrard Road**, on the basis that this is already the tallest building on the street, and raising it further would set a precedent for every other building on the street to rise.
- The NDF is objecting to an application (2017/4326/P) to construct a new two-storey (plus basement) building in the garden of **63 Hillfield Road**, fronting Achilles Road, comprising two units (a two-bedroom and three-bedroom flat), while also converting the existing house from two flats to four flats. Although the NDF considers the façade of the proposed new building well-designed to match what exists on Achilles Road, it objects to the loss of greenery, concreting over the garden and to further overdevelopment in unsuitable parts of West Hampstead.
- The application (2017/0911/P) for a large infill of 8 flats in the space currently occupied by a single house at **23 Ravenshaw Street** remains active. The NDF remains of the view that the development is overly dense, that the proposed façade is ugly and out of step with the character of the local area, and that the road has no history of basement development. The NDF intends to talk to the planning officer, to discuss our concerns further. The application has received a lot of objections from members of the public.
- An application (2017/2391/P) was made to substantially expand the Saturday farmers' market at the top of Iverson Road into a general food market up to 7 days a week: 7am-8pm

weekdays, 10am-8pm Saturday, 10am-5pm Saturdays. The NDF was concerned that the daily flow of people between the West Hampstead Thameslink station and West Hampstead tube station would be disrupted if a sizeable portion of the open space was filled with stalls and shoppers. Iverson Road residents directly across from the site had submitted a long and considered objection about the increase of rubbish, noise and smells that they believed the expansion would generate. Attendees of the meeting expressed similar worries:

- In addition to daily commuters crossing between stations, a large number of parents were intended (by Camden Council) to start walking their children to the new school on Maygrove Road via this route. They needed sufficient space for this, and would be inconvenienced by the presence of stalls, mobile food vans, and their patrons.
- Rate-paying high street businesses of West End Lane could be threatened by a seven-day food market.
- It was suggested that some of those persuaded to sign a statement of support for this planning application, at a stall on market day, believed themselves to be signing a general statement in support of the existing farmers' market – rather than an endorsement of the planning application.
- Many of the existing Saturday farm stallholders had told shoppers they were ambivalent about the proposed expansion: unsure whether their trade would increase as a result of longer hours.

The NDF urged anyone opposed to the planned extension to submit objections to Camden Council's planning department. **[Subsequent to this meeting, the planning application to extend the market was withdrawn.]**

6. Other issues and initiatives

- Residents of **Lymington Road** reported a recent noticeable increase in **noise** on their street on Saturdays, which they attributed to Tottenham football club playing its home games at Wembley Stadium this season.
- Residents of affected streets reported an increase in **rats, bad smells and overflowing bins** as a result of Camden cutting general rubbish collection from once a week to once every two weeks.
- The Gondar and Agamemnon Residents Association (GARA) said they were opposing efforts by Camden Council to reduce the proportion of **Gondar Gardens Reservoir** designated as green open space. GARA argued there should be a public consultation on this matter; they had submitted a Freedom Of Information request as to why there had not been one, but been denied under 'legal privilege'. This is in the context of successive applications by developers seeking permission to build ever larger residential schemes on much of the site. GARA are trying to meet with relevant Camden Council officers and councillors.
- Travis Perkins, the ground-floor tenant of **156 West End Lane**, has submitted an application for a judicial review of Camden Council's attempt to terminate their lease in order to sell the site for demolition and replacement with several larger buildings (retail and residential).
- Refurbishment contractors **C. Tavener & Son Ltd, 188 Iverson Road**, had recently held a public exhibition of their proposal (not yet submitted to planning) to redevelop the site of their business, keeping their offices and workshop, but also adding residential apartments for rent. The new proposed development would be one storey taller than their current building. Tavener have cited the precedent of the new (even taller) development 'The Ivery' across the street from them, but local residents are opposed to the loss of daylight on the street that this enlargement would cause, and the potential precedent it would set for other buildings along Iverson Road to add storeys. The Tavener proposal would also involve bringing the building closer to the pavement, which conflicts with the NDF's policy that

developments should stay set well back from the pavement, and the NDF will likely object on that basis. A resident of the neighbouring Maygrove Road recalled the loss of light they have similarly experienced from tall modern buildings going up all along one side of the road.

- Some 22 objections, many by neighbours, were said to have been made to an application by a Kingdon Road homeowner to extend into their garden, on the grounds of opposition to the loss of green space.
- Tree Preservation Orders were said to be a generally effective means of preserving trees from attempts to remove them.
- Previous monitoring has indicated high levels of air pollution in West Hampstead: 4 times the legal limit for Finchley Road, and at least 1.5 times the legal limit for much of the rest of the ward including West End Lane. Apprehension was expressed over the air quality at local schools such as Emmanuel on Mill Lane, and the impact of parents dropping off and collecting their children by car, as well as regular traffic congestion on West End Lane. A group of residents was keen to talk with Camden Council officers and councillors, but were having difficulty identifying the most appropriate ones; Helena Paul invited anyone with suggestions to email her at h.paul@gn.apc.org. Another resident suggested that one's local councillors and candidates are the best people to pressure on this subject.
- The same member of the public as had made the suggestion at the previous NDF meeting, again suggested the NDF invite a speaker from 'Architects for Social Housing' (ASH) to speak to the forum at some point in the future – while acknowledging their controversial political positions. The NDF Committee responded that ASH were welcome to get in touch and let us know what exactly they proposed to speak about.
- In the context of a recent agreement between the boards of the Notting Hill Housing association and the Genesis Housing association to merge their respective organisations, an attendee expressed dissatisfaction at past experience with the level of service provided by Genesis to its tenants.
- The likely redeployment of staff from the Kilburn Job Centre to a consolidated site in Willesden in 2018 was mentioned.
- Local residents observed that their repeated predictions to Camden Council, about the traffic problems that the Kingsgate School extension would cause to Maygrove Road, appeared to have come true, at least for the first few days. The situation was being monitored.
- Statistics were referenced demonstrating that crime has been rising in West Hampstead – this year compared to last.

7. Date of next meeting

The next NDF meeting will be in December 2017 at West Hampstead Library, Monday 4 December.