

Dear Javier

Cc: Councillors Anna Wright, Sian Berry and Camron Aref-Adib

2 Chester Rd development

Thank you for your email.

I've previously sent out a link to a 'Q&A' style document which addresses some of the key issues that we discussed at the meeting. I also note that some of the questions and points were covered during the planning process in the application and in the planning officer's report to committee. These documents are available on the planning portal.

However, I wanted to address some of your specific comments and points in more detail.

Comments on the meeting of 21 Sept

"we were only given about 5 minutes to provide feedback on a piece of paper, about a project we knew little about"

Every resident attending the meeting was invited to speak – to say where they were from, and what concerns or queries they had. This took up most of the one hour meeting time.

The meeting was not about the design of the hostel building as this has already been consented. It was about those issues that people wanted to report (so that they could be tackled – fly-tipping, ASB, concerns about the temporary use of the site by Farrans) or those issues that might be taken into account by the incoming contractors for example: vehicle movements, site entrance, hoarding line.

- Feedback forms were at the registration desk and on the central table from the start of the meeting. The forms were intended to provide an opportunity for those who may not have felt able to voice their concerns fully during the meeting, or those wanting to ensure a particular point was recorded.
- I found that most of the people attending were well-informed about the project, having taken part in consultation events. Some present had attended the planning committee meeting where the application received consent.
- For those people who were in search of specific information, documents relating to the project were available in multiple copies, in print format, on the table.
- A card with QR code to link to the project website was provided. The key documents and updates relating to the project are provided on that website.

"we were left feeling that the meeting was a box-ticking exercise to comply with the statutory consultation process."

- I'm sorry that you felt that way. However, the meeting was not part of any statutory consultation. There were no requirements to comply with; no 'boxes to tick'.
- The meeting was designed to be an informal follow-up for residents who had expressed concerns about the use of the Chester Rd site (mostly ASB related) and the purpose of the meeting was to hear feedback from residents so that we could make sure we're focusing effort on the right actions. This is why the majority of the time was spent making sure all those attending got to speak.

"I look forward to having a proper meeting with yourselves (i.e. Camden) and the appointed contractor, with a clear purpose, agenda, structure and process for receiving and processing feedback."

These meetings (construction working group) begin after a contractor is appointed.

The first meeting is likely to include consultation on the draft construction management plan. The outcome of that meeting will be reported to our colleagues in planning.

As yet we have no date for this meeting.

1. Could you please explain what “temporary” means in the context of this project?

Temporary in this context means not long-term. It refers to the terms on which the families occupy their unit within the building ie they are not tenants, and the accommodation is not designed for long-term occupation.

The families have a personal permission (licence) to occupy the hostel on the basis that they are awaiting an offer of more permanent accommodation.

The families that will be housed at the hostel will be families from Camden. Their children will already be attending Camden schools. They will already have local GPs and dentists and other community/support networks.

2. Size and density and impact on local the local community:

These issues were discussed at length in the planning application.

- The planning officer’s report covers the relevant planning policies.
- The planning committee considered the report and the objections raised to it, including those regarding size and density, and concerns regarding the impact on the local community.
- After consideration, the application was given consent. No appeal was received.

Links to the documents and the decision are on the project web page and on camden.gov.uk

What support will Camden give to these families?

Camden employs a team of specialist workers who support homeless families.

In addition, Camden’s temporary accommodation team will manage the hostel and are on site 24/7 to assist the families. The housing allocations team will work with families to identify suitable long-term accommodation options.

Will Camden provide more funding and capacity to the local medical, educational and social facilities in the area?

- The new community centre for Highgate Newtown will be open before the new hostel building is complete. This centre will deliver a range of services for children and families. This is a major investment in local community provision.
- NHS is responsible for ensuring adequate medical facilities and was consulted on the proposals. Research into the possible impact on local services was undertaken by Camden and Islington health commissioning service. The report produced was considered as part of the planning application documents. There are medical facilities nearby at the GP surgery under Chester Balmore, and Whittington Hospital is within walking distance.
- Regarding schools, we expect that children living in the hostel will already be attending a Camden school. Should families decide to take up a place more locally, the Highgate area is well served by primary and secondary schools, including sixth forms.
- The birth rate in Camden is one of the lowest in the country and this situation has now persisted for several years. The falling number of school-age children in the borough means that schools have plenty of capacity.

3. Cost and delays

- A number of global and UK-wide economic events - such as Covid, Brexit, war in Ukraine, rising inflation, especially in construction costs - have made the

procurement process especially challenging. This is by no means a Camden-specific problem.

- The previous preferred contractor (ISG) decided that the rapidly changing market conditions - mostly construction and materials inflation – created too much risk for them to undertake the work at a fixed price. This meant Camden had to go through the procurement process again. This is an industry-wide issue and not specific to this project.

How then is it affordable?

- Building this hostel will provide significant longer-term savings: Homeless families who would otherwise be placed in expensive and less than ideal bed and breakfast hotels outside the borough, will be able to stay in Camden. This provides a better outcome for the families, and should place fewer demands on Camden's support services

To repeat an earlier point, there is no intention to alter the existing design or lower the number of units of accommodation being provided in the new building.

4. Anti-Social behaviour and drug dealing : What measures will Camden will take during and post construction to avoid a further increase in ASB and drug dealing in the area?

Officers do not expect - and have no evidence to suggest - that the presence of the homeless families will itself lead to an increase in drug-use, ASB or drug-dealing. However the widespread concern expressed by residents suggests that drug-dealing and related ASB has increased in the Highgate Newtown area over the past few years.

- Camden's Community Safety team and the responsive street patrol both work with the local branch of the police (Safer Neighbourhoods Team) to tackle ASB. Drug dealing is a crime and the police have the necessary powers to tackle criminal activity.
- Regular community safety forums are held with Community Safety officers, the Safer Neighbourhoods Team (police), tenant and resident representatives and Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Planning Forum to help identify 'hot-spots' and prioritise actions and resources for the local area.
- Once the hostel is built and open, the staff will present on site to support the residents and either intervene or report any ASB that occurs.

These measures will continue to be the longer-term strategy.

It's important that specific incidents are reported by residents so that the teams have the data to justify their decisions. I've included the information about reporting in the Q&A document from the meeting and on our web page.

The CIP project team for the hostel construction does not have any powers to tackle ASB and drug-taking. Neither does our contractor. When these issues are raised with us, we then highlight the concerns to the relevant teams. This second-hand reporting is generally slower and less effective and than direct reporting by residents.

The project team will follow up recommendations from our colleagues regarding, for example, security measures in and around our sites. This can sometimes help to deter ASB.

5. Staircase overlooking Bramshill Gardens:

Can this be changed to avoid direct overlooking?

- There will be a total of 14 units on the first and second floors of the block facing Bramshill Gardens. We expect families in the block will primarily use the lift to access the upper floors.

- In a worst case scenario, a total of 14 families will be overlooking the junction at the top of Bramshill Gardens as they climb or descend the stairs.
- The staircase provides a secondary means of access to the block and is required for fire safety reasons. There is no intention to redesign the block to remove it or change its position.

Will the lighting for the stairwells and adjacent balconies overlooking Bramshill gardens be switched on all night?

- We do not expect the lights to be left on all night. The specification for the lighting in the block and on the stairs requires activation by motion sensors.
- If residents are disturbed by the lighting, they will be able to contact the hostel staff who will be on site 24/7 to deal with the issue. Likewise, any issues caused by the families' use of their balconies can be raised with the on-site hostel staff.

6. Construction Management Plan :

What will be included, when the contractor will start drafting it and how can local residents provide input into the plan?

The CMP follows a template so the sections to be included are standard. A copy of a Camden CMP was provided at the meeting on the 21st and a version is also on the project webpage.

Local residents will be invited to comment on the draft CMP once the contractor has produced it.

- The draft document will be published on the project web page and a link sent out by email to local contacts
- A poster with the link will be on the hoardings
- A meeting is usually held to discuss the CMP. This is likely to be online.

As mentioned previously, feedback on the CMP is reported to colleagues in planning who are responsible for supervising the CMP process.

7. Traffic and parking management :

- **Will Camden will try to stop lorries coming down Chester Road and encourage contractors to park and unload along Dartmouth Park Hill**

This would be the project team's preferred outcome.

However, it's up to the contractor Morgan Sindall to draft and submit their proposals in the CMP and it's up to the planning authority to make a decision about what is required from the contractor and whether their plan is acceptable.

- **What measures will Camden and its contractors take to avoid creating traffic and parking problems in streets such as Bramshill Gardens and Chester Road? How will these measures be enforced?**
- These matters will be set out in the draft CMP and consulted upon as mentioned previously.
- The Highways team and the Parking team have responsibility for those areas of work (eg travel plans, works to alter or restrict roads and pavements, parking management/suspensions)
- Enforcement of the CMP is a matter for planning enforcement officers. The best contact is probably Allen Gillespie. However, he cannot enforce anything until there's a 'signed off' CMP.

- Please note that the CMP is designed to be a dynamic document which can be updated in response to local conditions and issues that arise. Suggestions for changes to the document can be requested through the construction working group or made directly to planning enforcement.

8. Communication and accountability :

- **Which senior Camden officer is responsible for the 2 Chester Road Project? Who is our main contact point?**

At the moment the project is not 'live' and on site, so few resources are committed.

The preferred contractor (Morgan Sindall) is in the process of signing contracts for the delivery of the build and will take handover of the site, probably before November. They will appoint a site manager who will be responsible for running the build and health and safety on and around the site.

- Details of the site manager - your main point of contact (24/7) - will be posted on the hoardings.
- The Camden project manager is Janeth Aguilera. She is your main point of contact.

The role of project engagement is to enable residents to be heard, and provide information and updates. Where there are matters that residents are able influence, project engagement officers will make sure that appropriate consultation takes place and is reported.

Accountability of council officers and the council

- Camden officers follow the legal and financial regulations for local authority development, as well as internal governance procedures.
- All reports and decision-making relating to CIP projects and finances goes through Camden's Cabinet, and is then reported to a full council meeting. This meeting is made up of Camden's elected councillors.
- You can access reports about the Community Investment Programme, and about the council's financial decision-making on the council's website [Decision making in Camden - Camden Council](#)
- You can attend council meetings where decisions are made to observe what happens and you can ask to make representations.
- You can legally challenge the council's decision-making processes if they are not properly followed.
- Ultimately you can vote for the councillors who represent your ward and make the decisions.

9. Consultation and lessons learned

- **What lessons have been learned from previous schemes? How these mistakes will be avoided on 2 Chester Road. Will there be a meeting with residents about this?**

How are lessons from Camden's development projects learned?

- Camden has a variety of performance management and audit processes in place; these cover financial and legal regulations and 'best practice' guidelines.
- The progress and outcome of CIP projects is continuously reviewed. Reports are firstly made to the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny committee meetings are open to the public and the reports are published online at camden.gov.uk in the section on 'Council and Democracy'
- Any recommendations regarding 'lessons learned' or proposals for changes in performance measures are made through this process.

How can residents contribute their views?

- Any member of the public is welcome to provide feedback to their ward councillor about what they feel has gone wrong on any project, and what they suggest would be an improvement going forwards.
- Camden's planners hold Development Management Forums to capture specific comments from the public regarding development management and major developments in the borough:

[Development Management Forum - Camden Council](#)

10. When will there be another meeting about 2 Chester Rd and how will it be organised?

The next Chester Rd meeting will be a consultation meeting with the contractor regarding their draft construction management plan.

- The meeting will be chaired by the project manager.
- The contractor will present their draft document.
- Residents will have the opportunity to ask about and comment on those sections of the CMP that impact upon them – for example vehicle routes to site, monitoring of noise and air quality. The ward councillors from both Camden (Highgate ward) and Islington (Junction ward) will be invited.
- The feedback from the meeting will be reported to those colleagues in planning with responsibility for agreeing and enforcing the CMP.

We don't have a date for this meeting yet, as we don't have a draft from the contractor yet. When we do:

- An email will be sent to local contacts.
- The date of the meeting and the draft document will be published on the project webpage.
- A notice will be posted on the site hoardings.