

Re Proposed Site Allocations for New Housing

COMMENTS BY DAVID SCHMITZ

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General Note

None of the Sites about which I intend to comment is located within my Ward. However, the residents of my Ward will be affected by each of the proposals about which I am intending to comment, because of the proximity of the land to the boundaries of my Ward, because of the use which residents of my Ward make of some of the facilities which are under consideration and because of the likely effect of the proposals on traffic patterns which are likely to have a spill-over effect. Finally, as I shall mention, the St. Ann's site throws up a problem which is of general importance.

St. Ann's Hospital

Mental Health Beds

At an Area Forum for St. Ann's and Harringay Wards, a representative of the Mental Health Trust, which owns the land, assured the people present that, in accordance with a general decline in the requirements for beds for mental health in-patients, 38 such beds would constitute adequate provision for the community, especially as it would represent an increase of 8 over the present provision of 30.

This statement however, is open to two criticisms. Firstly, it was made before the national shortage of such beds had become widely known. See in particular the report of the director of the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-24537304> Secondly, the trend in local provision was misstated because the figure for present provision was not a figure determined by policy or design, but by the need to close a ward because of its physical condition. At the Forum, I requested the pre-closure figure, but as yet it has not been supplied.

I accept that the provision of hospital beds is not a matter of planning policies as concern us here. However, it is necessary to consider the extent to which residential development will close off options for the provision of these services in the immediate area, and it is proper for us to achieve the flexibility which is clearly required. In my view, the analysis done thusfar on this issue is flawed.

Traffic

St. Ann's Road is narrow and busy and serves as a through route. The site is sufficiently far from Green Lanes as to give it a comparatively low PTAL rating. It is served by only two bus routes, the 341 and the 67, both of which are infrequent. There is no realistic possibility of making the development car free. In my view, therefore, it is essential for there to be a commitment by Transport for London to increase the available bus services to an extent where the provision of parking could be severely limited, as otherwise the congestion is likely to be severe, especially at times of day when drivers living in the development are pulling into St. Ann's Road in order to begin their journeys.

Community Garden

It has been observed that the problem of vehicle movements could be alleviated by provision of a footway to Harringay Green Lanes overground station. In my view, the distance precludes this having any significant effect. Moreover, the loss of the community garden by the railway bridge is unacceptable for the reasons set out in the comments by the Gardens Residents' Association. It would be deceptive to consider that adequate green space is available for the people who live near to the garden because of the nearby presence of Finsbury Park. The entrance to Finsbury Park and play spaces there are not sufficiently near to enable the children in the area to access it casually, rather than as a part of a planned activity. Also, a number of community events take place there which benefit residents, not only of St. Ann's Ward, but also of my Ward of Harringay. The forthcoming "race" for children of both wards, to be known as the Harringay Hurtle, is a case in point.

Scale

Anything over 4 storeys in height would be of scale and would damage the appearance of this very pleasant area.

Arena Retail Park

I agree that residential development is not appropriate in this area at all, for the reasons set out by the Ladder Community Safety Partnership. Of particular concern is the possibility of moving underground the parking for the stores within the Arena in order to make way for the proposed flats. There is already a great deal of congestion from the existing parking, and underground parking would make the bottleneck worse. I am also concerned about traffic fumes. The simple fact is that this is a commercial area, unsuitable for the introduction of residences.

Finsbury Park Bowling Alley

It is essential that the land on which the Bowling Alley is located should be excluded from any land which is marked out for residential development. If it is included, the money to be made from building a block of flats will clearly result in the demolition of the Bowling Alley and will ensure that it will not be replaced. This is an important facility. It is the only indoor

place of public resort which is not a bar or a restaurant and which is therefore suitable for the large numbers of young people who make use of it in all weathers.

Any proposal for a 15 storey block is again unreasonable. It will impact on Finsbury Park Station and will wall off a large number of residents from the residents of nearby premises.

David Schmitz