



**LAND ADJACENT TO COCKFOSTERS UNDERGROUND STATION, COCKFOSTERS ROAD, BARNET EN4 0DZ – Application 21/02517/FUL**

31 July 2021

The Barnet Society has over 650 members in Chipping Barnet parliamentary constituency, some of whom live close to the site, and many of whom currently enjoy Trent Park and other amenities in and around Cockfosters.

Our Vice Presidents, Committee members and specialist advisers include architects, landscape architects, engineers and architectural historians who currently work, or have worked, with Historic England, government and other organisations in the fields of conservation and urban renewal.

We object strongly to this proposal.

Gateway

This site is on the exact border of town and country, and architecture of high design quality could celebrate the transition. But the variegated blocks on offer aren't up to the job. Nor would the new buildings adjoining the Cockfosters Station entrance be worthy of this Grade II Listed Building. They would loom over it in a domineering way, creating a ludicrous discrepancy of style and scale.

Green Belt

The development would dominate views from Hadley Wood and Trent Park (surviving parts of the historic Enfield Chase) and miles beyond, including vantage points in Barnet. It would also interrupt views towards the Green Belt from numerous places, affecting the quality of outlook for thousands of residents. The visibility of long stretches of green horizon from the suburbs is a fundamental benefit of the Green Belt which this development directly threatens.

Conservation Areas

The site lies predominantly in Trent Park Conservation Area and close to Barnet's Monken Hadley Conservation Area, and would damage the character of both. The visualisation from a single point in the park illustrated in the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (p72) mischievously underplays the pervasive presence of the four blocks, which would dominate southward vistas right across Trent Park. They also would be highly visible in eastward views from part of the Monken Hadley Conservation Area.

Trent Park registered landscape

The towers would harm the setting of the Grade II registered park and garden of Trent Park.

## Density

At around seven times the norm for an outer suburb, the proposed housing density is grossly disproportionate. Its massing is entirely out of character with the local shopping centre and its surrounding residential streets.

## High rise

The character of the northern fringe suburbs of Barnet and Cockfosters is fundamentally low-rise. New development should respect that. The proposals directly contravene Enfield Council's adopted policy on tall buildings. The existing nine stories plus penthouses of Blackhorse Tower already set a deeply regrettable precedent for Cockfosters and surrounding areas. Three of the four new tower blocks would greatly exceed it, the highest by 50%. They would be visible from distances considerably greater than is shown map in the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (p37), which – quite misleadingly – shows only views within a radius of one mile. As well as being prominent in views from hundreds of homes and streets in Barnet, they would disrupt eastward vistas from King George's Fields, Tudor Park, Victoria Recreation Ground and the Pymmes valley. They would set a most unwelcome new benchmark for similar buildings to overwhelm other local town centres including those of High, New and East Barnet.

## Bulkiness

As well as height, the towers would also have great bulk. The architects' fraying of the corners of one block and of the rooflines of two others would do little to soften their overbearing bluntness.

## Character, design and response to context

This scheme is an urban formula applied to a suburban site, not a response to context or local character. The designs are little more than identikit inner-city tower blocks on oversized platforms. They offer no response to the adjacent parkland and Green Belt, for example by softening and elided the harsh junction between town and country park in form, massing and landscape treatment. The location is exploited solely for their own views outwards and outdoor amenity space for their residents.

## Interchange

The opportunity to enhance Cockfosters Station as a transport interchange between tube, buses, taxis and disabled users is wasted. Due to the proximity of the station to the borough boundary many Barnet residents will be directly affected by this. This is particularly unfortunate given the significant Green Belt developments proposed nearby in Enfield and Hertsmere, which would increase passenger demand.

## Car parking

We object to removal of the car park, which would discourage car-sharing and other integrated transport solutions, and either displace cars onto local streets or impose CPZs on residential neighbourhoods. The loss of park-and-ride facilities would be particularly regrettable. Their users tend to be either essential workers – including tube staff – or more vulnerable people, all with justifiable concerns for personal safety. We also fail to understand how removing car parking places from the last tube station on the line will encourage people to use public transport, a stated aim of TfL. On the contrary, it will force residents who don't live near bus routes – many of whom have bought homes and built their lives around the convenience of the Cockfosters Station carpark – to drive further into London. Worse than

that, many future residents of the large housing estates proposed just north of the M25 by Hertsmere Council will be forced to do the same.

### Housing

We accept the need for new housing, but question whether the proposal would meet local needs in terms of type or affordability. We would prefer a greater variety including family homes, shared ownership and key workers, and management arrangements that discourage transient dwellers. This site is simply not suited to delivering large numbers of flatted dwellings.

### Local services

The impact on local services including schools, GP and dental surgeries must be quantified and properly planned for – and funding committed – in advance of any development. Given the proximity of this development, it would have a direct and serious impact on residents of Barnet.

### Sustainability

We acknowledge that the scheme would reduce carbon emission reduction beyond London Plan minimum standards, but we note that a carbon offset payment would still be required to achieve net zero carbon. On a site as environmentally and ecologically sensitive as this, we would expect better.

### Conclusion

This project risks repeating the worst mistakes of massive, monocultural estates of the post-war decades. The Barnet Society would welcome a development which focused on the need for a 21<sup>st</sup> century transport interchange serving the needs of the two London boroughs and Hertsmere. A joined-up plan might have room for some housing, but it would need to be much more modestly scaled and carefully designed to complement the sensitive location. This cluster of large towers is crude fix, and grossly out of place. A complete rethink is needed.

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