

My name is Colin Bull. I am Chair of the Cockfosters Local Area Residents Association (CLARA).

CLARA was established in 1992 and covers the "Cockfosters Area" - our members include Barnet and Enfield residents. Our locus at Cockfosters is 1 to 2km to the west of the application site at New Barnet station.

Speaking personally, I am a former resident of New Barnet, a regular visitor and I am familiar with the former GasWorks site.

CLARA has followed this application through its various iterations - as they have been publicly reported and when they were discussed in Barnet planning committees.

The Save New Barnet campaign has run over a number of years. In our view, that is an exemplary model of constructive community response to this large proposed development. To us, their analysis to us has been thorough and insightful: I will not attempt to replicate it.

We know SNB have worked with the former developer to arrive at a constructive solution for this site. We cannot see the same collaborative approach from Fairview, as they have thought to ram through an enlargement of the extant scheme.

Like Save New Barnet, CLARA accepts the need for responsible housing development in the area. We are not anti-development. We do understand the need to supply more, well-designed homes which are fit for tomorrow's families. We concede the challenges of designing good homes within the limited supply of sites and the potentially over-burdened infrastructure at the nexus of New Barnet, East Barnet and Cockfosters.

As has been pointed out in earlier submissions during the course of the application, there are sizeable new housing developments in the vicinity. It shouldn't matter that some of these are just over the border in Enfield. They all rely on the same road, transport and social infrastructure. The schools around Cockfosters are over-subscribed - sometimes school placement relies on an almost parasitic dependency on school places in Barnet. Primary care and hospitals are similarly over-subscribed and inter-dependent. Indeed, we are in the same successor-CCG.

While there must be new developments, their scale must be carefully considered. At Cockfosters, there has been the recent development at Bolingbroke Park which added over 200 homes just over 5 years ago with houses and flats, with a mix of tenures, including affordable housing. This is a suitable yardstick and test of design approach, against which these Victoria Quarter plans can be compared: They do not compare favourably.

Also at Cockfosters, there is currently a redevelopment of the so-called Blackhorse Tower to provide around 230 one and two bedroom apartments. Although these flats will be for sale, without any affordable homes, these are starter homes - similar to those proposed for this site at Victoria Quarter. These homes will be ready next year.

Furthermore, at Cockfosters, there is the potential for up to 650 homes of predominantly one and two bedroom flats on the Cockfosters station car park. We have vociferously opposed this TfL scheme because it would only provide the kind of small dense homes that are proposed here. The scheme has been refused by the Secretary of State for Transport because of the site's need for park-and-ride. But this would be a poor scheme. Expensive, small, high-rise flats. This may seem to be an irrelevant digression but it serves to illustrate the local pressures.

Finally, there is the very large approved scheme at North London Business Park for 1350 flats, which the developer is now seeking to increase to 2500 homes.

Of course, all of these plans are not the subject of this Inquiry. But I respectfully suggest that they are relevant.

Taken together, one wonders how the area can absorb all of these extra residents.

The existing approved scheme at New Barnet is big enough. The Applicant could engage with local residents to explore the limited potential to enlarge the scale - but only if this can reasonably be done. They really should: They would have a constructive and competent partner.

Finally, we come to the design of the proposed scheme. Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder: To my eye, this scheme is atrocious.

I spent 4 years in Germany around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. I can only say that the GDR would have been proud of this proposed campus - one only has to look at the design! The proposed buildings would be too dense, too close together, affording little quality of life for the occupants. They are a potential blight on the Community.

I close by endorsing the work done by Save New Barnet on the limitations and risks associated with the internal design of these flats. Their concerns must not be airbrushed - they are not matters for post-determination: They dictate the questionable design that is now suggested.

The Inquiry should refuse this appeal.

It would be best if the extant scheme would be developed.

If it cannot, any revisions to those plans should be developed with proper community engagement, so as to arrive at a new planning application.

Thank you for your attention.