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Camden draws up cpo's on Tolmers Sq properties

By Adrian Greeman
CAMDEN Council has drawn up compulsory purchase orders on much of the property in the controversial Tolmers Square area, most of it now owned by property company Stock Conversion.

Council leader Frank Dobson said that the orders must not be refused by the DoE. If they are, Housing Minister Reg Freeson should resign, he said.

The orders will secure enough of the area for the council to proceed with plans to rehabilitate and redevelop, providing new

homes for 1 700 people.

But there could be problems because of the savage cuts made recently by the Government in rehabilitation and improvement allowances. Camden's allocation was slashed by 55 per cent, from £13.4m. to £6m.

Forward planning has already taken the council £87 000 over the reduced figure. So the purchase orders will need special approval if they are to be made this year.

"If we were not to be granted this money," Dobson told *Building Design*, "I don't see how the present Minister could remain in his post, because it was he who criticised our earlier shot-gun marriage scheme with Stock Conversion."

Final submission of the

orders awaits a detailed appraisal of the Land Bill. Camden would prefer to use the new legislation to buy the land if it is adequate.

Nevertheless, the finishing touches have been made on the orders, and they could go to the DoE any day.

Meanwhile, Stock Conversion has served court orders on the many squatters in its properties in Tolmers Square. No one seems able to explain why the company made this move. "We never comment on anything," a spokesman told *Building Design*.

Following the summonses, Camden contacted Stock Conversion to try to get them withdrawn, a move demanded by the local pressure group, the

Tolmers Village Squatters Action Group.

"We are level headed about squatters," said Dobson, "and although we have no say over those on private land, we feel our views should apply."

Stock Conversion said that having begun court actions, it was unable to stop them proceeding. They did, however, adjourn the hearings for 28 days, still without explanation.

Camden is currently rehousing tenants in the vicinity in council flats in nearby Robert Street.

With the squatters gone, and many tenants rehoused, most of Stock Conversion's property will be empty, giving it a much stronger case for permission to redevelop.