

# TOLMERS SQ: Dramatic policy reversal

**CAMDEN council led a fight against property developers last week in a dramatic reversal of policy on the Tolmers Square Development.**

Labour leader Cllr Frank Dobson, who less than a month ago believed that the council faced with an acute housing shortage should reluctantly agree to the Levy Tolmers Deal, was full of hope at last week's council meeting that "by way of concerted and intensive effort, we can persuade the Minister that he must redress the balance between developers and councils."

He moved the withdrawal of last month's Community Planning Committee's decision to go ahead with Levy revealing that last minute discussions with GLC leader Sir Reg Goodwin and local Labour MP's Mr Jock Stallard and Mrs Lena Jeger had resulted in a decision to press the Government for a new deal in urban property development.

Mr Stallard and Mrs Jeger had agreed, he said, to lead a deputation to Environment Secretary Mr Geoffrey Rippon asking him to grant compulsory purchase orders for land and property owned by Mr Levy's Stock Conversion and Investments Trust Ltd in the Tolmers Square Re-development area.

Mr Rippon will also be asked to sanction a system of financing the office development part of the scheme

which would give the profit back to the community — not, as in the Levy deal, to the private developer.

Mr Dobson and the majority of the Labour Group he leads changed minds on the Levy deal in the face of a massive "Stop the Levy Deal" campaign which was being backed by two of Camden's Labour constituency parties.

This puts them at the head of a campaign against private developers which, if successful, will have a dramatic effect on large developments throughout London.

But Tory Alderman Alan Greengross opposing the withdrawal of the decision to go with Levy, told the council: "If you think you are punishing developers, buying their land and giving them a quick return on capital without their having to lift a finger is enough to turn any developer into a raving masochist."

CPOs on Tolmers Square would force the council into admitting they want to change the West End residential zoning of the site, according to Ald. Greengross. "That would open the floodgates," he said. "for Stock Conversion to do what they damn well please."

A division forced by the Tories confirmed the withdrawal, however, in spite of abstention by two Labour councillors, Planning chairman John Thane, and Cllr Ivor Walker.