

HAMPSTEAD & HIGHGATE EXPRESS

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB

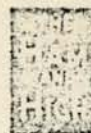
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GOLDERS GREEN NEWS

CAMDEN BOROUGH NEWS

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Think again

HOUSING is undoubtedly one of the key issues in the urban crisis that now faces central London. And it is this crisis which has presented Camden Council with an agonising dilemma over the development of Tolmers Square.

The council's Community Planning Committee, using its executive powers, last week decided somewhat reluctantly to go ahead with a deal with Mr Joe Levy's Stock Conversion and Investment Trust, which will bring down the cost of the urgently needed housing land but make the company a massive capital profit.

The Labour group, on a vote of 18 to 12, decided that this scheme presented a better chance of getting homes built quicker than the attractive alternative proposal of Claudius Properties, under which the profits from the offices to be built will give Camden its housing free.

But no sooner had the decision been taken than journalist Mr Nicholas Tomalin served a writ on the council seeking a statutory declaration that Camden is acting against the interests of its ratepayers.

So now the council is well and truly caught in a cleft stick. For while it may yet be a month before the final contract with Stock Conversion is signed, the council might find itself in a legal tangle that will postpone building houses for a considerable time.

Meanwhile, Hampstead and St Pancras North Labour parties have both passed resolutions urging the council to reverse its decision. And there is still the prospect, particularly if the writ was withdrawn, for the full council to reconsider the matter next month.

This, we believe, is the best course open to Camden, all the more so since 24 Labour councillors were missing from the vital group meeting. They could sway the decision either way. Which is why it is necessary for the whole council to be seen to do its duty.