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Labour may reverse Tolmers decision

CAMDEN'S majority Labour group may reverse last week's controversial decision by the Community Planning and Resources Committee to develop Tolmers Square in association with Stock Conversion and Investment Trust, rather than the non-profit Claudius Properties.

A number of Labour members said this

week they would move at their group meeting on October 8—two days before the council meeting — that the decision be referred back to the committee by the full council.

Hampstead and St Pancras North Labour Party branches also delivered sharp rebukes to the group this week for deciding to deal with Joe Levy's Stock Conversion instead of Claudius, run by journalists Christopher Booker and Bennie Gray.

But Camden's legal officers are checking whether the crucial council meeting might have to consider the whole issue in private session because of a writ served at the town hall last Friday.

The writ, from journalist Mr Nicholas Tomalin, of Gloucester Crescent, Camden Town, seeks a High Court declaration that to go ahead with the Levy deal would be against the interest of Camden ratepayers. The debate could go on in public if the

writ were withdrawn. If the council still decided to go ahead with the Levy deal, Mr Tomalin would have to get an injunction to stop the contract being signed, as well as re-serving the writ.

Labour members opposed to the Levy deal are confident of reversing the decision in caucus. They pointed out that a previous group meeting rejected the

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Claudius scheme by only 18-12 with more than 20 members absent.

"People are understanding more and more that what they are doing is giving Levy £20 million," said Councillor Brian Loughran.

But at the two party meetings this week, senior Labour members argued strenuously that while the Claudius deal was politically attractive, councillors in daily contact with homeless and poorly-housed families could not put 474 council homes at risk by asking the Government to allow compulsory purchase of Stock Conversion land for Claudius and Camden to develop.

Hampstead Labour Party voted over-

whelmingly to call for the reversal of Camden's decision and for a publicity campaign to show that "in the event of the necessary CPOs being disallowed by the Tory Government, such a decision would be fully understood to be a political one and not in the interests of a fair and just society."

St Pancras North's party executive voted unanimously for reversal and asked its management committee to circulate a petition which would spotlight the strength of grass roots opposition to the Levy deal.

Mr Beverly Rowe, the chairman, told the Ham and High that the executive sympathised with Camden's dilemma but believed Tolmers Square was the chance to make a stand against commercial development.

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