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Foes rally against Camden deal

By our own Reporter

Mr Joe Levy may not be redeveloping the rest of London's prime Euston Road site after all. He may have to forgo the £20-million profit which Camden Council were prepared to help him to make, by compulsorily purchasing the proportion of the 10.5 acre site which Mr Levy's Stock Conversion Company does not own.

A formidable coalition has gathered to oppose the deal, including the deputy leader of the GLC, Mr Iltyd Harrington, Mr Reg Freeson, the Labour MP and Shadow Minister for Housing, trade union leaders and local councillors. They have one week to convince Camden Council that the decision of the council's planning and resources committee to go ahead with Mr Levy should be overturned. The full

council will vote next Thursday and the lobbying has already begun.

Between Euston station and the huge Euston office development by Tottenham Court Road (on which Stock Conversion reaped £50 millions in profits), stands Tolmer Square, a superb example of what planning blight can do to an inner-city community.

Mr Levy's plan for it would include office blocks, housing for 1,280 people, and £3.5 million for Camden Council to be used on providing cheap housing. When this offer was announced, a non-profit company was formed by local citizens, called Claudius Properties, which offered exactly the same offices and housing as Mr Levy, but with the proviso that all of the profits—estimated at £20 millions—would go to Camden Council.

"I don't believe in Santa Claus," said Camden Council leader Frank Dobson when told of the Claudius offer. Because of the company's lack of experience, uncertainty over its plans for financing and the housing provision in Mr Levy's offer, Camden has so far rejected the Claudius scheme. Although Mr Levy's plans envisage housing 1,280 people in the new development, there are already 900 living in the area, who will have to be rehoused. That leaves a net housing gain of accommodation for 380 people. Eight years ago, 1,500 people lived in the affected area.

Camden Council has already written to the GLC, asking it to sell one key property which it holds in the area. The GLC has no intention of selling it, however, and GLC leaders privately vow that they will fight any attempt to buy it for the Levy development through compulsory purchase.