

E. Standard

9.10.1973

Victory in Euston offices battle

COMMUNITY protesters have won the first round of a fight to stop a multi-million pound development scheme in Tolmers Square, Euston.

Camden Borough Labour councillors, at a five-hour meeting last night, deferred approval of the scheme which would have allowed Mr Joe Levy's Stock Conversion Property company to build valuable office properties in return for cheap housing land on the 11½ acre site.

The decision comes three weeks after the Council's planning and resources committee gave the go-ahead to what protesters dubbed "The Levy Deal."

The council was due to approve the deal tomorrow, but critics of the scheme, led by journalists Bennie Gray and Christopher Booker told councillors that the company would make a £20 million profit on the deal.

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They said the council should look at alternative plans.

Mr Booker said today thousands of people would be delighted with the news.

"My reaction is one of mixed delight. Obviously we are very happy.

"Three weeks ago the planning and resources committee agreed that speed was of the essence.

"But the last thing we want to see is a deferment which leads to another deal with Levy

some time in the next few months.

"Tolmers Square had become a test case between councils and developers, and in future councils must ensure that they get more money back for the community," Mr Booker said.

Leader of Camden's majority Labour group, Mr Frank Dobson said today no agreement about the future of the square "would be entered into with anyone until the Council has had the opportunity to consider a number of various alternatives."

Mr Dobson said that the Council would approach the MPs for Holborn-St Pancras South and St Pancras North and ask them to lead delegations to the Secretary of State, Mr Geoffrey Rippon.

"The delegations will be putting to Mr Rippon proposals on alternative methods of financing future mixed developments including Tolmers Square," Mr Dobson said.

He added: "There will also be discussions with the leaders of other councils involved in major developments of this nature to see what we can formulate in the way of an overall policy in an effort to strike the balance between developers and councils in favour of the councils."