

4 June 73  
Times

## 'No-profit' developers make offer to Camden

By David Leigh

Stock Conversion, one of Britain's biggest property developers, controlled by Mr Joe Levy, will be sent a letter today by Camden Council, saying that it has been offered a non-profit-making plan which would make the council better off than the one the company had been about to sign to build a large office block in central London.

By setting up a £100 company called Claudius Properties and offering 8.5 acres of land free to the council and upwards of £5m in profits, Mr Christopher Booker and Mr Bennie Gray, two journalists with *The Sunday Times*, have introduced a new element into the relationship that high land prices have forced urban authorities into with property companies.

Camden was about to sign an agreement with Mr Levy to redevelop the 10½-acre Tolmers Square area west of Euston Station for housing with a tower block of offices on the site.

In return Mr Levy was to sell Camden 8.5 acres for housing at £200,000 an acre—an effective subsidy to the council of £3.7m on the market rate of £300,000 an acre. The council was also to get a share in Mr Levy's profits.

The Booker-Gray plan involves giving Camden the land,

borrowing some £20m from Edward Bates, the merchant bankers, hiring architects and estate agents, buying property in the area owned by Mr Levy and others, with the help of compulsory purchase orders, and financing the whole operation with the profits from building the office block. Proceeds of more than £5m would eventually go to Camden.

Councillor Frank Dobson, the Labour leader of the council, will study the non-profit-making plan with senior members of the majority group this week. They will have to consider whether it would take longer to get houses built under this scheme than under the Stock Conversion project.

Alderman Alan Greengross, who was Conservative chairman of the planning committee when the agreement with Stock Conversion was mooted, objects to the Booker-Gray plan.

They misunderstand the difficulties, confuse the issue and imply that the municipalization of central London is the answer he says. The initiative for the agreement came from Camden, and Mr Levy already owns the land on which the office block would be built.

Camden might not have got much out of the contract, but this had been through lack of negotiating skill and determination, he says.

Mr Gray agrees. However, councils cannot be expected to cope with sophisticated negotiators, he says. "Ours is an offer they can't refuse."

The Times  
4th June 1973