

BITTER ROW OVER NEW TOLMERS SQUARE PLAN

By GEOFF HAYWARD

A NEW multi-million pound scheme to develop the controversial Tolmers Square site near Euston Road has caused a bitter row inside Camden Council.



THE crumbling porticos of Tolmers Square . . . ripe for redevelopment.

The Conservative opposition on Council has accused the ruling Labour group of burdening the ratepayer with an expensive scheme which could have been built and financed by private developers years ago.

Councillor Alan Green-gross, opposition leader, claims the new plan is worse than the original plan that was rejected.

He also maintains the new £16 million plan calls for more office space and fewer homes than the original scheme put forward by private developers, which aroused bitter opposition several years ago.

The original scheme drawn up by Mr. Joe Levy's Stock Conversion Company proposed huge office development on the site as well as a certain amount of land set aside for housing.

But this plan aroused opposition from conservationists and Labour members on the council. And Mr. Levy, who bought up land around the square, finally abandoned the scheme and sold the land to the council for almost £4 million.

"Camden Council could have had all the homes they had wanted in the square if they had accepted my plan and they would be built and occupied now," said Mr. Levy recently.

The new plan calls for almost 300,000 square feet of office space returning a rent of over £2,000,000 a year.

About 55,000 square feet of housing is included which would involve space for 400 homes for 1,300 people.

HOLDING ACTION

But the new planning application is described by the leader of the council, Roy Shaw as merely a holding action while the whole scheme is thought out.

He maintains that the Conservatives have got the whole thing wrong as the new scheme is merely an outline which would be submitted to the planning control committee in about six weeks for consideration.

"Because it is necessary to safeguard the development permit we have to put forward a planning application," he said.

He also believes that the new scheme will ultimately pay for the cost of buying the land in the first place as well as provide work for many people.

"The council is now committed to rehabilitation rather than redevelopment as far as housing is concerned on the site," Councillor Shaw added.

"We are also planning for a lower density of housing as recommended by Department of the Environment guidelines."

The new scheme may also include shopping facilities and a cafe.

When a plan is finally agreed it will be carried out in conjunction with a suitable developer with the council sharing in the finance and profits, said a council spokesman.