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Offices put before homes, say action group

COUNCIL ACCUSED OF BREAKING IT'S ELECTION PLEDGE

CAMDEN COUNCIL has been accused of breaking an election promise — by putting offices before homes. The accusation was made by the Tolmer Village action group, who this week condemned the Council's plan to create 300,000 square feet of office space on the controversial Tolmer Square site.

The group say Euston is already saturated with office space and does not need any more. But the borough is short of homes — and these should be first priority in redeveloping Tolmer Square, they add.

The group has called for a public inquiry into the Council's plans for the Square.

At a press conference this week they claimed the council was planning a development that includes more office space than the original private enterprise plans rejected as socially undesirable.

Nick Wates, an action group spokesman, said one of the reasons local people supported the council buying the land two years ago from private developers was their belief that the council would come up with a more socially desirable scheme.

At the time of buying the land council leader Frank Dobson declared it could provide more houses and fewer offices than private developers, said Mr. Wates.

DOMINATE

"Now we find that the council is planning no such thing — and wants to dominate the area with office development."

Mr. Wates also argued against claims that the council must recoup the £4 million it outlayed to buy the land.

"Even if it is the prime objective the council must consider that at least 500,000 square feet of offices nearby are currently empty — not to mention Centre Point less than one mile away."

The current plan calls for 55,000 square feet of housing — far less than the 100,000 square feet of housing already on the site.

The council has also been accused of letting Tolmer Square run down.

The action group say the council could have slowly rehabilitated houses in the square over the years rather than let them reach a point where rehabilitation was expensive.