

## Written evidence from Mr Luke Plowden

**I am responding as a private citizen living in the London Borough of Lambeth**

Lambeth has declared a commitment to becoming 'net zero/carbon neutral' by 2030.

The council's 'carbon neutral' policy includes the following commitments.

- Retrofitting Public Buildings
- Greener Council Housing

There are key problems regarding Lambeth's approach and their chances of achieving carbon neutrality, in my view.

**1. Embodied Carbon.** Lambeth's policy of demolishing social housing and replacing it with new buildings, largely for private sale, is presented by the local authority as producing an environmental gain.

New buildings are described as being more carbon efficient than their predecessors. However, the council is not calculating the carbon savings that could be made by repairing, retrofitting, and insulating existing buildings, compared with their policy of demolition and rebuilding.

This approach does not take into account the embodied carbon in existing buildings and the huge amounts of carbon produced in the building process, along with demolition itself and the consumption of fossil fuels involved.

The building industry is one of the UK's largest producers of carbon, with the manufacture of concrete being particularly carbon intensive, along with the transportation of building materials and so on.

Current demolition and rebuilding schemes also continue to involve the loss of a significant number of mature trees which are known to be a key weapon in the fight against climate chaos. Newly planted trees, if they survive, even in large numbers, have been shown to be far less efficient in this regard in the first half of their lives, compared with mature trees.

Loss of green spaces and amenity spaces in general is also a major risk here in terms of mental health and social cohesion.

### **Investments in green growth on estates.**

I don't see any attempts by the council to encourage re-greening/community gardening on regeneration estates-I would say this is actively discouraged. Residents' attempts to take

the initiative on this are frequently stonewalled or side-lined by the council. This encourages the sense that these estates and their residents are being 'written off' in the run up to demolition, while backlogs of repairs remain undone, fly tipping builds up, a growing number of homes are left empty and so on.

**2. Demolition.** Lambeth's recent history of demolishing structurally sound buildings, including publicly owned assets such as Olive Morris House in Brixton, and Mary Seacole House in Clapham, has been equally flawed.

Until recently, another publicly owned building, International House in Brixton SW9, was under similar threat, although the council may now finally be reconsidering this, following public pressure.

**3. Tall Buildings.** The council's recent approval of the proposed Hondo Tower in Pope's Road, Brixton, ignored the fact that tower blocks are increasingly being recognised as highly inefficient in terms of their energy usage-in terms heating, cooling, insulation and so on. These structures also require large amounts of steel and concrete in their construction, which again are highly energy intensive materials.

There was no attempt whatsoever made by Hondo to design a genuinely sustainable building in terms of renewable energy, energy conservation, the use of sustainable materials and so on. The council and developers' attempts to present this as a 'green' development were overwhelmingly shown to be meaningless.

**Transport in Brixton.** Building a tower on the Pope's Road site would also end Brixton's hopes of securing a new overground station here. Brixton is a major travel hub and is also known to have some of the worst air pollution in the UK.

Since road transport is a major cause of air pollution and a significant consumer of fossil fuels, the Hondo scheme would hamper any efforts to improve Lambeth's carbon output through improved public transport.

Concrete and glass buildings like these are known to absorb heat in hot weather and radiate it back into the surrounding urban environment around the clock.

#### **4. Public Awareness regarding tall buildings and over development**

Lambeth have experienced significant local resistance to proposed mega- developments at sites such as 8 Albert Embankment, the proposed twin towers at Loughborough Junction, the Dugard Way/Kennington Stage scheme, and others, which have been successfully turned down, following local campaigns.

Resistance to other proposed tall buildings, such as those on the site of the former Lambeth Hospital (Landor Road) and so on, is ongoing.

Meanwhile there is real concern about the ongoing increase in the number of tower blocks in Vauxhall/Nine Elms development, as well as the threat to the bus terminal there from further tall buildings, both in terms of the carbon implications and lack of inclusivity.

## **5.Transport**

I have no comment to make in general on LTNs but I don't feel that Lambeth have done a good job in terms of consulting residents or collecting and sharing data on air quality in the borough, as it relates to the road network and the impact, whether positive and negative, of recent changes, including the introduction of LTNs.

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