

## Climate Emergency Camden's Deputation to the C&E Scrutiny Committee on Holmes Road, 30.03.23

Climate Emergency Camden has made deputations to this committee before, asking for better scrutiny of decisions made by Camden Council in the light of the Climate and Ecological Emergency. Unfortunately the proposed decision to dispose of the Holmes Road Depot will be very harmful and shows a complete lack of understanding of the threats and lack of oversight. The IPCC 6<sup>th</sup> report published last week made it very clear that 'business as usual' has to stop. With this decision however, Camden Council is doubling down on 'business as usual', INCREASING rather than decreasing the harm.

New buildings have been portrayed as a symbol of progress and a thriving economy, but the reality is often the opposite. The built environment consumes around 40 per cent of the world's extracted materials; in many countries waste from demolition and construction represents the largest single waste stream. Together, building and construction generate 39 per cent of the world's carbon emissions, with 11 per cent from emissions embodied in the materials and construction processes and the remaining 28 per cent from operational emissions (energy used to heat, cool and light the buildings).

The perception is that building new will radically reduce carbon emissions in operation compared to an existing building. However, even when operational emissions are reduced those savings will only be achieved in the future: constructing a new building means paying a heavy upfront toll from the extraction of raw materials, transport and construction. And we have to radically reduce GHG emissions **within 10 years**.

2 years ago Holmes Road depot had £8.4m invested to refurbish the building and reduce operational carbon emissions by 50%. This was achieved by insulating the building and installing low energy heating (heat pumps) and PV panels. According to the *Energy Strategy & Low Zero Carbon (LZC) Feasibility Report*, produced by Pi Consult for Camden Council in 2018, those works would:

- exceed the council's energy targets
- result in cumulative 51.85% reduction on the baseline emissions
- save 110 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year (2,200 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e over 20 years).

These savings in operational carbon over the next 20 years would justify the embodied carbon of the refurbishment works, estimated to have been around 1,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e (200kgCO<sub>2</sub>e x approx. 5,000m<sup>2</sup>).

However, if the building is demolished as planned, not only will these emissions be entirely wasted, but also the facilities will need to be rebuilt as part of the redevelopment, adding something like 5,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e (200kgCO<sub>2</sub>e x approx. 5,000m<sup>2</sup>).

Nowhere in the reporting on the proposed sale of the depot have the implications of these extra emissions been mentioned. Demolishing and rebuilding the depot will generate a further huge amount of unnecessary emissions within the next critical 10 year period. The harm caused will be further increased by the proposed redevelopment of the whole Regis Road site, which will be likely to further contribute to the crisis with the type of high carbon construction we see proposed at the O2 Centre.

The sell-off of the depot, together with the car pound and the reuse and recycling centre, aims to 'kickstart' the regeneration strategy for the Regis Road industrial area. Camden's plans for Regis Road and the nearby Murphy site are set out in the Kentish Town Framework, but this was developed before the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and will not result in the transformation needed to address these existential threats as it continues to promote high-carbon development. The Framework also predates and is out of step with the London Plan 2021, which emphasises 'Good Growth – growth that is socially and economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable.' Similarly, it contradicts many of the requirements in new and proposed national planning laws, which include increased requirements for climate change amelioration, environmental protection and community engagement. Camden should as a matter of urgency revise the Kentish Town Framework and not proceed with the impractical, socially and environmentally destructive targets set out in the current version.

At Regis Road there is an opportunity for a development built around the requirement to promote the circular economy. This could develop the existing facilities at Holmes Road depot, connect them to the recycling centre and integrate them with Kentish Town Road and Queen's Crescent, with an expansion of initiatives such as the Fixing Factory, and Library of Things. The recycling itself needs to be extended throughout the borough. At present most people must drive some way to access the single facility at Regis Road, largely defeating the point of recycling.

There is no need to demolish this building or sell it to a developer. The very recent retrofit works have made it fit for purpose, meeting the Council's needs. Demolition would be climate vandalism', flying in the face of all national and local guidelines.

Camden cannot continue to promote short term financial gain over huge long-term costs to us all. We call on the Committee to take the only responsible decision and halt the proposed sale.