

Dollis Hill

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bunker is scrapped

PLANS to build a civil defence bunker in Dollis Hill have been scrapped because the chosen site is permanently ankle-deep in water.

The GLC had allocated nearly £300,000 to convert the basement and sub-basement of the former Post Office Research Station into a shelter capable of withstanding nuclear attack.

It was to be north London's "wartime group headquarters" with room for up to 200 people whose job would be to control the local population after the bomb dropped.

But the GLC failed to take into account natural forces when it earmarked the site. For the past two years the basements have been flooded with water and GLC architects have finally conceded that the building is totally unsuitable for civil defence purposes.

In a confidential report, entitled Home Defence London North, GLC architects admit the building is useless. Even if vast sums of money were spent on pumping water out, they say, continual seepage would result in such a high level of humidity that it would damage the electronic equipment necessary for a control centre.

According to the report the GLC arranged a 25 year lease on the building—referred to as building 11 on the Dollis Hill estate—from the owners, Evans of Leeds. This was due to take effect from April 1980.

But, Mr. Leslie Fox, the London estate agent acting for

Evans, said he had no idea the GLC intended to use it as a civil defence centre.

Anyway, he said, by last April the building had already been flooded for over a year.

Mr. Fox added that no one was sure where the water was coming from or what could be done to stop it.

The GLC's report says the problem started when the owners carried out demolition work on the site to make way for a road and parking spaces. The work apparently altered the water table causing serious flooding underground.

A GLC spokeswoman said although the council had been negotiating the lease for some time no documents had actually changed hands.

She said: "We were aware from the start there was some seepage but it was thought this could be dealt with. Since then the works being done overhead have caused flooding and the council has decided to look for somewhere more suitable in the area."

Mr. Iltyd Harrington, GLC Labour councillor for Brent South, commented: "This demonstrates the stupidity of the civil defence posture. It makes a mockery of the contention that we can help people after a war when we can't even prepare a civil defence bunker without it filling up with water."

"It is a sad example of the lunacy that besets reasonable men—there is no defence against nuclear attack."

● CND protest, page 7.

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