

Report on the Proposed redevelopment of Gilbeys Yard and Juniper Crescent – known as Camden Goods Yard.

A ballot of the residents of Gilbeys Yard and Juniper Crescent in Camden NW1 was held by One Housing between 22nd June and 27th July.

The question on the ballot paper was: 'Are you in favour of the proposal for redevelopment of Juniper Crescent and Gilbeys Yard?' The result was as follows:

Yes: 68

No: 91

Turnout 159 of 200 (79.5%)

One Housing tell us that this is the first of 18 ballots since the Mayor instituted this requirement which has voted against a redevelopment, although we have no independent confirmation of this.

The two estates are only 25 years old, winning Best Design awards at the time. The main reasons given for redevelopment was increased density and the need for extra housing for the people on Camden Council's waiting list. Despite this we never been given numbers or been told what percentage of homes will be allocated for social rents, which is the key component in helping the homeless crisis. The Mayor's answer to our question regarding this, conflated London Living rent (up to 80% of market rent) with social rents (about 25% of market rent)

NB: There is also a redevelopment taking place on the adjacent Morrisons which intersects the two estates which was approved despite strong opposition from local residents. They were seeking a much improved and inter-connective overall plan and design which was suggested but rejected by Camden Council. The original scheme was very poor and in our view did not properly support the requirements of Camden's own Development Plans for the area.

The original approval allowed huge overdevelopment with poor access routes for pedestrian and cyclists, poor public realm spaces that are mainly in shade and a lack of consideration of the areas to either side of it. There was enormous opposition from local residents who were in favour of high quality and well considered redevelopment of the land.

The current situation in the area is that we have hundreds of empty flats in the neighbouring Hawley Wharf, including those operated by Origin Housing. The impact of Covid-19 suggests that people would prefer lower rise buildings that they can walk up and down the stairs of, high quality outside space and public realm. Many are looking to relocate to less dense and less expensive locations outside London now that they are no longer required to attend their office every day.

We are currently opposing an application for the extension to increase the heights of the approved blocks.

The proposed redevelopment is part of a Joint Venture partnership with the private developer Countryside so that OH would own half of the homes in the redevelopment.

The current members of Gilbeys Yard TRA and the former Juniper Crescent TRA have worked very hard for over three years with One Housing on the Landlord Offer to try to obtain the best conditions for tenants and residents of Gilbeys Yard and Juniper Crescent in the event that the redevelopment went ahead.

Some of our requests were agreed but many others were not and we were not satisfied with many of the items of the Landlord Offer presented as well as omitted in the final offer to tenants and residents. These include:

- Space standards
- Protection from increased Service Charges and Council Tax
- Clarity on the amount of new social rented housing to be provided out of the approximately 700+ homes to be built
- Separate ballots for the two estates.

In May and June we requested a delay to the ballot until September to discuss these issues but One Housing insisted on proceeding with the ballot, despite consultation and engagement with tenants being almost impossible in the preceding weeks at the height of the lockdown.

On a personal note, as the Vice Chair of GY TRA I have found negotiations with One Housing unsatisfactory and frustrating. They seem to me to want to appear to be complying with the regulations of the GLA and Camden Council whilst taking no real interest in the needs of the tenants. There are many complaints about them from tenants regarding repairs and maintenance and their staff turnover is very high so that any continuity in communications or development of an on-going relationship with the estate officer is made very difficult.

I believe that they just pay lip service to the requirements requested by the residents steering group in the innumerable redevelopment meetings over 3 years and do the least they need to in order to placate any dissension from their preconceived master plan.

It feels to me as though repairs and maintenance have been considerably run down prior to the ballot in the run up to the ballot and that any real and tangible progress in the substance of the landlord offer was obstructed.

We did get support from our MP Kier Starmer and from 2 of our 3 councillors and I found them to be quite responsive and sympathetic when we called on them for support.