

Heard this one before

Another developer has plan to slash affordable homes from its scheme

by TOM FOOT

A DEVELOPER behind a 1,800-home regeneration of the O2 Centre site has revealed plans to slash 280 social housing units from the project – and delay starting any building works by up to five years.

The land close to the Finchley Road, where the first homes were supposed to be built, will instead become a temporary home to ten padel courts, a sauna and a golf pod.

Landsec – the largest corporate property investment company in the country – said on Monday it intends to “align with new government and mayoral emergency housing measures”. To this end, it says it can only make 20 per cent of the entire project “affordable”.

The quota of social housing homes agreed in 2023 by Camden Council’s planning committee had been set at 35 per cent, meaning 630 homes would be social housing – but this is now set to be dramatically reduced.

The developer has been given scope to tear up its affordable homes quota after a policy switch announced by London Mayor Sir Sadiq Khan and the government just before Christmas.

Liberal Democrat councillor Janet Grauberg said: “West Hampstead residents will be really angry. Camden’s Labour Council already approved development plans which breached their own policy for 50 per cent affordable housing.

“And now developers like Landsec have been told by the Labour Government and Labour Mayor of London that 20 per cent affordable housing will be acceptable. This is adding insult to injury.”

The shock change of plan came in the same week that a planning



How O2 Centre scheme had looked

application to build the 10 padel courts on the O2 Centre Masterplan site – the former Homebase store – was lodged at the Town Hall.

Works to build the first phase of the housing – around 650 homes – on that section of the land were supposed to start this year. If consent is granted, the padel courts can stay for up to five years as a “meanwhile use”.

The reduction in affordable housing is a familiar move in Camden. The previous developers at 100 Avenue Road in Swiss Cottage asked to



Padel power

PADEL here, padel there, in, out, padel it all about. The “meanwhile use” at the O2 development site for new padel courts follows a trend across north London. The racket-based game – it’s not tennis, squash or pickleball – is coming to Murphy’s Yard in Kentish Town and Camden Council wants to install courts in Canteloves Gardens. Read all about the rise and rise – possible fall – of padel in a special *NewJournal+* feature out this coming weekend. Log on to newjournal.substack.com

cut the number of cheaper homes in its tower block scheme, while Camden is locked in a dispute with Berkeley St George over its wish to reduce those available at the major Camden Goods Yard development in Chalk Farm.

Now, with the O2 site changes, Landsec said it has not been “immune” to the perfect storm of problems that has created the “most challenging housing market in decades”.

It said construction costs have increased, regulatory requirements have expanded and interest rates remain high, contributing to a slowdown in housing delivery across the capital.

By significantly increasing the number of private for-sale homes, profits will increase to levels it finds acceptable.

Development Director Tim Trillo said: “By refining our proposals, we are ensuring we can deliver this transformation, allowing us to unlock the incredible benefits of this Masterplan and creating high-quality homes and public spaces.”

West Hampstead’s Labour ward councillor Sharon Hardwick said: “This is clearly disappointing news. I will continue to press for affordable homes that genuinely meet the needs of local families and I will continue to challenge decisions that fall short of that standard.

“I am pleased that the majority of the affordable homes on the plan are two- and three-bedroom properties, which are much needed.”

A council statement said the Town Hall would be “carefully scrutinising the O2 proposals which were submitted this week and which are currently out for consultation against local, regional and national policies”.

Letters, page 21



The scene in Primrose Hill on Friday

Blaze by the bridge

FIREFIGHTERS spent more than three hours tackling a blaze at the former Primrose Hill train station on Friday morning, writes Caitlin Maskell.

Smoke could be seen billowing into air from the trackside site and some trains were delayed.

The station was taken out of use in the 1990s and is now used for a yoga business and a home furnishing shop.

Crews used 32-metre turntable ladders as a water tower to bring the fire under control.

Letters, page 23

ALEXANDRA AGHILLEA
THOMAS ANG
MAX BAILLIE
LOTTE BETTS-DEAN
AIDAN CHAN
ELIANOR CORR
HOPE CRAMISIE
CHARLIE CROSS
MARY DULLEA
NANCY ELAN
NEIL GEORGESON
IAN GILCHRIST
JULIAN JACOBSON
JESS HOSKINS
MARC KAWWAS

JULIA LOUCKS
NATHAN MERCECA
NIKI MOOSAVI
DARRAGH MORGAN
VARINIA OYOLA-HERAZA
THEANO PAPADAKI
OLIVER PASHLEY
NETA RUDICH
FRA RUSTUMJI
MICHAEL SHAK
DIMITRI SOUKARIS
TOM SUAREZ
ELEANOR TURNER
LYDIA WALQUIST
JOE ZEITLIN

With special guest
author ROBERT MACFARLANE

SOUND OVER SILENCE

The 3rd concert in a series for Medical Aid for Palestinians

Friday 13th February 26
Doors open at 6.15pm
Concert starts at 7pm
St James’s Church
Sussex Gdns
Paddington
W2 3UD

Ticketsource: www.ticketsource.co.uk/sound-over-silence

All proceeds go to MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians) Tickets: PWYC, £15, £25, £35