

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2024/3019/P	Antony and Vicken Gormley	06/08/2024 16:59:27	OBJ	<p>We are writing to you as residents of Gasholders Building to express our concerns regarding the application for the proposed pavilion at Coal Drops Yard, and associated changes.</p> <p>We understand that the shops are not doing particularly well, though the restaurants are usually fully booked. It is our view that Argent has decided to go for an all-out change of style at CDY rather than carefully address the problems., i.e. completely change the feel of the place, going from thoughtfully chosen independents (some better than others), to much cheaper mass market shops and 'grab and go' food outlets. It feels as if they are happy to dump everything that has been done to make this a unique and special place up till now, in order to get maximum footfall and spend.</p> <p>To us, it feels like now that Argent have sold almost all the residential units they can forget about the promises made to residents about what the area will feel like, and push ahead for maximum retail profit. A stunning historic architectural place has been sensitively restored and we think that this should be respected.</p> <p>We would suggest that there are many ways in which the Coal Drops Yard retailers could be helped to be more successful and the visitor and shopping experience could be improved with a light touch, without destroying the very beautiful yard, a unique space in London. For a start, many of the premises are in virtual darkness, set back under solid walkways. Improving signage and lighting or even moving some of the shopfronts forwards would help hugely. There are quite a few untenanted spaces already (and there will be more in the northern part of the estate soon), we suggest using these first, perhaps in a new way, couldn't they be divided and used by more and smaller retailers who would thereby be paying lower rents and be able to offer cheaper goods and catering to more people? There is ample opportunity for temporary setups, something between market and small shops. You could create a wonderful seating area, with planting (done so well across the estate) in the middle of the yard, for people to sit with a coffee, a book, a sandwich. The space, the feeling of space would be intact.</p> <p>I (Vicken) went to the consultation meeting and it was clear that they are intending to bring in a lot of mass brands, fine and useful in their place but why replicate here what you have in every high street shopping centre these days? We are a short walk to the shopping centre at the Angel where there is already a Uniqlo and many mass market brands available. This seems to be a complete turn around on the part of Argent and represents a lack of imagination, a lazy solution in a place that deserves more. I presume the retail director has been brought in to do this job, he will move on afterwards but we will be left with something that feels sad and broken.</p> <p>What the applicant has chosen to present as feedback from residents does not fit with what we have heard from local people we have spoken with, and is selective. Phrases such as 'many people think...' have been used a lot to say positive things, but they hardly touch on any of the concerns which have been voiced and dismiss them very quickly. For example it is a wonderful space for large scale dancing that happens, choral events, cycling events, the remaining yard is much smaller and tighter and not suitable for these things. They repeated say it is 'unused', or 'underused', this is not true, it's purpose is that it is space, the most precious thing in urban life, you can take it away and then it's gone forever.</p> <p>We enjoy the many things the estate does to bring people in and provide fun and pleasure to so many. The fountains, for example are a wonderful thing for families, local and from far afield. In short, we object to the destruction of the beautiful, unusually shaped, historic space of the yard which would be brought about by situating something large, blocking and permanent in it. There are very few of these historic yards in London, thinking about Neal's Yard in it's heyday or perhaps Borough Market area now, where there is a special and historic atmosphere. We are so worried that this will be entirely lost if these plans go through, there seems to be a complete mis-match between the very special nature of the architecture of the yard and surrounding area and everything that has been achieved to make an outstanding development, where we are very happy and proud to live, - and the short sighted commercial intentions of the Argent team at the moment.</p>