

# **Landsec's O2 Centre Masterplan Phase 1 development**

## **Introduction.**

CRASH (the Combined Residents' Associations of South Hampstead) cannot be accused of NIMBYism. When Camden first held a consultation at the library on West End Lane outlining its thoughts on the development of the O2 Centre site we in CRASH – with most other respondents – welcomed the plans for the better use of the under-used and wasteful car park for housing and other community benefits. Incidentally, that early consultation included an assurance from Camden that the O2 shopping centre was not included and was safe from redevelopment. However, the scheme granted consent in 2023 was almost universally condemned for any number of reasons, including density, height, design etc. The latest version, now submitted, does not remedy any of the faults; it aggravates them.

## **Height of the buildings.**

There was considerable discussion between groups and individuals over various aspects of the consented application, but there was overwhelming opposition to the heights of the proposed tower blocks (the infamous soviet-style blocks). The applicant is now proposing to add extra floors to the tower blocks. So much for community consultation. The tallest tower blocks will now be 16 and 17 storeys – over four metres higher than the consented scheme. English Heritage admits in its submitted comments that the tower blocks will be harmful. It beggars belief that these tower blocks will be seen from as far south as Greenwich Park.

## **Density of dwellings.**

There was also almost-universal criticism of the density of dwellings proposed – and consented – in the original application, and yet the developer is proposing forty-three more homes raising the Phase One total to over 650. Again, so much for community consultation. Landsec boasts that in total – over the three phases of the development – it will provide “1,800 high quality homes for families”. CRASH is at a loss to understand how the local infrastructure – already grossly congested – is expected to cope with hundreds of new residents.

## **Housing Mix.**

Of the additional 43 dwellings now being proposed less than half are classed as affordable. Camden's own minimum requirement for affordable housing is 50%. Communities need – and deserve - genuinely affordable social housing, for singletons, couples and families; not properties as investments.

## **Green Spaces.**

The removal of one block permits some small increase in the development's Phase 1 allocation of 'green space'. However, the landscaped areas, including the so-called linear park, are largely positioned cheek by jowl with railway buildings and infrastructure that is intrinsically ugly, and invariably vandalised and covered in graffiti. Would any parent allow a toddler to play, or would any pensioner feel safe, on a strip of land plagued by speeding riders on e-bikes, e-scooters etc, let alone delivery riders on motor bikes? Landsec has an appalling record of maintaining – never mind improving – its outdoor spaces at the O2 Centre, leading to CRASH to assume that any new green spaces would soon become litter-strewn and vandalised wastelands.

## **Building Design.**

CRASH considers the elevational design of the housing blocks to be, at the upper levels, boring and pedestrian, and at the lower storeys crude, gimmicky and unworthy of Hampstead's well-deserved reputation for beautiful listed buildings and good modern design. The change to a darker-coloured brick will only reinforce the oppressiveness of the aptly-described 'soviet-styled blocks', helping to accentuate their visibility from all points of the compass – including, as already mentioned, Greenwich Park in south-east London.

## **Conclusion.**

The three roads most directly affected by the O2 development (Blackburn Road is discounted as the majority of residents there are short-term students) are Broadhurst Gardens, Lithos Road and Rosemont Road. Of these three, Broadhurst is the only one in the CRASH area – the South Hampstead Conservation Area. The tower blocks, already consented, will loom over the residents of Broadhurst blighting their northern view for the next half-century. No further increase in height can be permitted.

CRASH asks that the Application 2025/0484/P be refused.

Type of comment: OBJECTION