

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2019/4867/P	R Neuschul	08/10/2019 11:14:43	OBJ	<p>Applicant has merely asserted that anti-social behaviour is making life miserable for residents, without delivering any supporting evidence thereof. Unsupported assertion is not argument or evidence. Evidence would be: police reports, resident of the yard's statements in support, CCTV footage etc.</p> <p>As a local resident who makes frequent use of this freely accessible passage on a regular basis to cut the corner between St Chad's Street and Gray's Inn Road, both during daytimes and at night, I have not seen a single piece of anti-social behaviour in this area within the last year, and most certainly not any evidence of its use by homeless, drug addicts etc, let alone any anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>This application should be rejected as yet another reduction in the general amenity and diversity of publicly accessible spaces in the area.</p>
2019/4867/P	Frankie McCamley	08/10/2019 16:26:36	SUPPRT	<p>My boyfriend lives in Hand Axe yard, but I am truly scared to walk through the site alone. It is a dangerous place where criminals believe anything goes. I have been spat at and verbally abused by drug dealers and their customers as well as those who sleep in the bin store. I've witnessed someone urinate on a front door and a window and countless drugs deals. Being nearly knocked over by a motorbike was a true highlight. Gates on either end of the development would make me feel safe and seriously help prevent the continuous acts of criminality. Dialling 999 is a daily occurrence as well as walking past faeces smeared up the wall. The council needs to act and stop this from happening, before the inevitable happens and someone is murdered on the site.</p>

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2019/4867/P	Gavin Monks	08/10/2019 12:15:20	SUPPRT	<p>I've lived at Hand Axe Yard since November 2017, moving in as one of the first round of residents. When I moved in the development was not yet open at the St Chad's Street end and so was not an open walkway between it and Gray's Inn Road. It was also new and clean, undamaged and untouched by ASB and criminality.</p> <p>Fast forward almost two years and the picture is vastly different. The courtyard is now a crime hotspot and the damage created by non-residents runs into thousands and thousands of pounds. The issues are numerous, but I'd like to lay them down so that there is an understanding of exactly what we, as service charge and council tax-paying residents are having to contend with on a daily basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Drugs. Dealing and taking occurs in the courtyard every single day. It is brazen. Dealers have takers lined up in the development. Dealers conduct their business in the bin stalls. Takers live in the bin stores, getting high and coming down there. These people sometimes have knives and mostly always have needles. Which they discard, without thought, in the courtyard. They are always aggressive and threatening o Gangs. They congregate in the courtyard most nights. They take drugs, they are abusive and they are threatening. Women who live in the development have to pass them and are subjected to all sorts. They are even followed into the blocks they live in. It's not nice when you are worried about the safety of a loved one, who is merely trying to walk through the development to get to their flat. o Criminals. The development has been earmarked, by those that make a life out of crime, as an easy target. Since the meeting with the council in June there has been three break-ins. As mentioned, it's a place where a known drug ring make their trades. The layout of the development makes this easy. There's two entrances, meaning two exits, to two different roads. And many blind spots. Residents have been asked to report crime to 101 and 999 but with Police resources low the level of activity is exponentially rising o Development Damage. There has been so much damage to the development that the management agents have stopped repairing. This damage is being caused by non-residents. And residents are being requested to foot the bill in their service charge. How is this fair? Damage includes graffiti to walls, entrance walls smashed up, vomit, human excrement, urine, the destruction of one of the flowerbeds, motor vehicle oil stains o Bin Stores. Drug dealers and users have destroyed our bin stores. They have been conducting deals there, living there, having sex there, leaving all sorts of drug paraphernalia and creating threatening situations. We are at a point now that we have to lock the bin stores and leave the bins outside in the evenings and at weekends – which create other anti-social issues. The damage to the doors runs into thousands and they aren't being fixed o Personal Attacks: On two occasions I've been attacked in the development. Once in the early morning when I disturbed drug users in the bin store as I took my rubbish down and once late at night when a young group of four males started abusing me outside my flat entrance and then tried to force entry, threatening knives. This led to a lengthy interview with the police o Vehicles. Despite there being signs at the entrance to the development, motor vehicles are driving in and through the development. Trucks, vans, motorbikes and scooters. Someone is going to get seriously injured soon. I've witnessed a couple of incidents where children have almost been struck by speeding scooters. These vehicles are also causing damage to the courtyard that again there's no budget to fix o Near fatal incidents. There was a chemical attack 300 yards away from the development. A man went on a machete attack at the Gray's Inn entrance. Someone was hospitalised when they were attacked with a glass bottle. Residents have been pointing out for months that the development is only o The domino effect. Residents are seeing the decline of development that looked fantastic. It's 2 years old,

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going on 20. We are seeing a number of issues that cause other issues. Example 1: Because the bin stores have to be locked in the evenings and at weekend the bins are having to be left in the courtyard. This leads to ransacking, making the courtyard a tip. This attracts vermin. It also means the site cleaner spends most of his time fixing the courtyard, meaning he can't clean the blocks. Example 2: Drug takers use the site, and leave their used needles in the flower beds. The development gardeners (who are paid for by residents) refuse to garden, and the landscaped gardens die and weeds develop. Professionals need to come into remove needles. At additional cost

The issues outlined are common to all residents. During our meeting with the council on 26th June 2019 it was clear that Camden Council wanted to retain an open space policy. But residents reject this for a number of reasons. Not based on council plans or ideologies, but through the experience of living in Hand Axe Yard. There are some important points to counter the council's philosophy to the development:

- o Having the courtyard open isn't working. Not for the residents, the police, the business that occupies a space, the concierge, the council. We've given it two years and no amount of police walk-throughs is helping
- o It's a drain on resources. Council and police call-outs are a public concern, but the damage caused has broken the finances of the development. Residents can't be expected to fund the destructive habits of non-residents to realise the dreams of Camden Council's utopia
- o All adjacent developments (mostly council owned) are gated communities. The risks have been assessed and the council has acted accordingly. These estates being gated just makes HAY the next viable spot for criminal and ASB
- o Councillor Simpson warned of not gating the development in 2015, predicting that a development sat between two streets of high crime in King's Cross was an accident waiting to happen
- o The local police force fully support the development being gated, given the level of incident. They noted a marked drop-off of anti-social behaviour in nearby streets when gates were installed
- o There is no reason for non-residents to be in HAY after dark. There's nothing in the development for those that don't live there. Those that frequent in the evening are usually there for nefarious means
- o The benefits of an open space are outweighed by the costs. The benefit is that non-residents get a 10 second shortcut between St Chad's Street and Gray's Inn Road. The costs to residents (who pay to live there and are taxed and serviced) have been clearly outlined. What's more important here?
- o Even open spaces are locked at night. Camden's parks and squares are locked in the evenings. Why? Because bad things happen there if they are not
- o This policy of not allowing gates is making people leave their homes. This surely can't be the purpose? People are tired of being terrorised and having their possessions destroyed

There are many reasons to have gate and barely any not to. On a personal level I've written hundreds of emails to the council, the housing group, the management agents, the police. I've called and called and called. It's tiring. It takes up time. I'd much rather be able to spend my non work hours enjoying the place I live, rather than battling those that are making it almost unbearable. Everyone knows that gates are a must. Everyone. Can we please get them installed as a matter of urgency – before a near fatality becomes another London statistic.

Regards,
Gavin

Application No: 2019/4867/P
Consultees Name: Abigail Recker
Received: 08/10/2019 12:20:48
Comment: SUPPRT

Response:

Dear Camden Council,

As a young female living at Flat 14, 2 Hand Axe Yard, I feel I need to share my experience of feeling unsafe where I live. Since moving into Hand Axe Yard in November 2017, myself and my neighbours have seen and experienced crime and anti-social behaviour in the Hand Axe Yard courtyard on a daily basis.

I believe that secure gates would help to deter this anti-social behaviour and crime and make the residents (who pay council tax) safer. I believe that it's a matter of time before someone is seriously hurt or worse. It is the responsibility of the council to act in the interests of their residents. The Camden anti-social behaviour officer dropped in rape alarms for the women in the development so I believe this is some concession that women especially are at risk in the development. Secure gates would be that extra step to making all residents at Hand Axe Yard feel safer.

Let's start with the crime. Non-residents (often homeless people or drug users and dealers) smoking, having sex, drinking, drug dealing and using drugs congregate in the courtyard blind spots and break into the bin stores. It's a quiet haven from the busy Euston Road and Gray's Inn Road with flowerbeds to sit on, blind spots to not be seen and bin stores to use as drug dens, to sleep in or have sex in. Fires have also been lit in the bin stores – a fatal fire waiting to happen. This mean that bin stores need to now be locked on the weekend/evenings when the concierge isn't around so the bin stores are not abused which makes Hand Axe Yard a dumping ground. I still fear taking my rubbish into the bin stores because I'm scared what I'll be confronted with after being abused for disturbing drug users and dealers in the bin stores on numerous occasions.

A further consequence of Hand Axe Yard being a drug users' paradise is the drug paraphernalia left behind such as syringes and bags of drugs dropped on the floor of stashed in the flower beds. There are children living in Hand Axe Yard, what if they find these and pick them up? Outside their home! There are also now syringes in the flowerbeds so the gardeners won't tend them (our management fees are going to waste). We also experience anti-social behaviour from gangs of people (young and old) using the quiet haven of the development to drink, smoke weed and eat junk food – leaving their rubbish behind. A couple of nights we have had unofficial raves with drinking, drug taking and defecating etc. As a young female when I walk through Hand Axe Yard, especially from St Chad's Street, I am not safe. I have been harassed, I have been verbally abused and I have been intimidated. Girl friends of mine visiting have also been harassed while waiting to be buzzed in. It's not only an issue for women, my fiancé has been assaulted. Neighbours have had bottles and junk food thrown at their front door. I feel scared leaving and coming home because I don't know what I will be confronted with in Hand Axe Yard in the day and night. I am particularly scared of being trailed into my block of flats which I know has happened to my neighbour. One morning on leaving my flat in the block, I discovered someone sleeping in the stairwell.

Hand Axe Yard is also used as public toilet by the public passing by – I have seen men and women urinating, vomiting, spitting and defecating. I have been abused when I have asked men not to urinate in the development when Kings Cross with public toilets is five minutes away.

The abuse of Hand Axe Yard has left the development looking dilapidated and dirty which perpetuates the mistreatment by non-residents. I haven't touched on the graffiti, litter that is dropped by non-residents in Hand Axe Yard or that because the development is open at either end mopeds drive at speed through the

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development even though there are signs to say it is pedestrian. These are also issues that could be prevented by gates.

I look at Camden social housing around Hand Axe Yard in Kings Cross and see that all of these developments are gated. The gates are a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour by non-residents and make the residents feel safe. Why don't the residents of Hand Axe Yard deserve the same? I understand the policy of open spaces across Camden but it's not working for Hand Axe Yard.

I also understand that Camden Council will reconsider gates if given 'persuasive evidence... demonstrating a clear link between the absence of the gates and a disproportionate impact from street crime on local community safety.' I believe my account above and the accounts of my neighbours plus our pictorial evidence constitute persuasive evidence of our community feeling unsafe.

At what cost will the planning department at Camden Council agree? Hopefully, before someone is seriously hurt and it's too late.

Yours faithfully,
Abigail Recker
Flat 14, 2 Hand Axe Yard.
