

KENTISH TOWN ROAD ACTION

7 February 2022

Murphy's Yard Land Application 2021/3225/P

KENTISH TOWN ROAD ACTION OBJECTS TO MURPHY'S YARD LAND APPLICATION FOR THE FOLLOWING SEVEN REASONS:

1. Loss of the Protected View from Kentish Town to Parliament Hill, Hampstead Heath

Kentish Town Road Action objects very strongly to the proposed obliteration of the Protected View from the Canopy by Kentish Town Station over to Parliament Hill, Hampstead Heath. The View is enshrined in Policy D1 of the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2016 by Camden Council:

In a consultation meeting with Murphy's Yard last year a Murphy representative said "If the View is respected in its entirety this development will not happen...The development does not obliterate the View – it removes the full extent of the View".

This is completely incorrect. Most of the view is cut out by the three towers – 19, 18 and 17 stories high (Plots J and S), and what completely obliterates the View is the wall of three 8 and one 7 storey buildings (F, G, H, I) beside the railway line.

Kentish Towners value the View highly. It's unusual to see such a long uninterrupted View and a big sky so near the centre of London. It's our breath of fresh air.

If the development as it stands cannot go ahead without losing the View, then the development plans must be altered to encompass the View by erecting low rise buildings and fewer of them.

2. L B Camden's Design Review Panel 23 July 2021

We support the Design Review Panel's criticism of several aspects of the application, particularly relating to heights and massing of buildings:

"The three central towers in Plots J and S appear too high in views from Parliament Hill and should be lowered, and also [the panel] considers Plots F, G, H and I to be excessively bulky. It is concerning that the Design Code includes maximum parameter volumes that permit even higher development of this and other blocks, and alterations to massing, which would not be acceptable. It also feels it is essential that maximum parameter volumes do not permit building volumes to be filled out, creating excessive massing."

Kentish Town Road Action considers the towers to be much too high – they must be lowered to a maximum of seven storeys to give the area a real sense of community, architectural cohesion, light and space.

The Design Review Panel is concerned about the massing of Plots F, G, H and I:

"The panel also considers that the commercial development beside the railway line on the west side of the site, Plots F, G, H and I, appears dense and bulky. It feels that this volume of development has not been architecturally justified, and seems excessive in this location."

Kentish Town Road Action says: This virtually solid wall of eight storey buildings would be a hideous and disastrous intrusion on the landscape of Kentish Town and Kentish Town Road, blocking out light and the View. KTRA considers these proposed commercial blocks to be an architectural and environmental blunder and is asking for them to be deleted altogether from the application.

3. Proposed commercial development

The volume of proposed commercial development in the application is based on an outdated version of the London Plan which prioritised commercial growth for Kentish Town. The 2021 London Plan reclassifies Kentish Town as a district town centre with low commercial growth potential. This means the 35,000 sq m of industrial floor space and 35,000 sq m of office space cannot be justified.

4. Retail on site – threat to Kentish Town High Street

We were assured, in consultation meetings with Murphy, that there would be only a very limited amount of retail available on the new site, so as not to detract from the offer on Kentish Town high street, which is suffering from the effects of the pandemic and lockdowns. We are now alarmed to read that floorspace of up to 5,150 sq m is proposed to accommodate 10-15 small scale shops, cafes and restaurants, indoor fitness/gym and drinking establishments. This sounds like a small high street and will certainly not encourage residents from the new site to visit the shops in Kentish Town Road. A few small corner shops would be understandable, but this much retail is not acceptable, and must be reduced.

5. Construction traffic for 10 years

We are especially concerned about the effect on the infrastructure of Kentish Town Road, Highgate Road, Dartmouth Park and Gospel Oak of 100 large HGV construction lorries trying to get through and back every week day for 10 years. Kentish Town Road is already snarled up with traffic and polluted for much of the day.

We are asking for a thorough Traffic Analysis of the effect of heavy goods vehicles clogging up Kentish Town, Highgate, Dartmouth Park and Gospel Oak roads. From Murphy's documents this is the nightmare scenario for the 10 years of construction work:

"During the peak months, there will be approximately 1,500 construction HGV vehicles accessing the site per month and approximately 750 LGV vehicles per month. On this basis, the average number of vehicles in a peak month is approximately 65 to 75 HGV (two way) vehicles per day and approximately 30 LGV (two way) vehicles based on a 5.5 day working week.

"The Construction Vehicles exiting the site from Greenwood Place and Sanderson Close are expected to turn left onto Highgate Road. Vehicles exiting the northern section of the site will turn right onto Gordon House Road."

The Healthy Streets Transport Assessment mentions volumes of traffic:

"During pre-application discussions with Camden, a query related to the volume of traffic that could be expected within the southern part of the site and how this work with pedestrians as cyclists was raised. A study of this was undertaken and concluded that forecast traffic levels within this part of the site are comparable with those typical of a Home Zone type environment and hence conducive to accommodating pedestrians and cyclists"

KTRA says: It is beyond reason to suggest that this part of the site will be comparable to a Home Zone. Home Zones are quiet peaceful places where very little traffic is permitted, and where pedestrians, and particularly children, take priority. This area will have about 100 heavy vehicles lumbering back and forth per day during the week for 10 years. It will be an incredibly dangerous place for children and pedestrians.

6. Affordable homes / social housing for local people

There are pitifully few family houses in the application and we are asking for more to be added to the plan.

What local people want and need is truly affordable housing so that families can stay close to each other. What is being offered in this application is:

35% Affordable: (21% social affordable rented, 14% intermediate rented). 65% market.

Murphy has stated that this small percentage of affordable housing is not viable and it will be reduced. This must not be allowed to happen. The percentages in the application must be locked in.

7. Healthcare

Healthcare block Plot I. What's it for? This remains shrouded in mystery. We fear this unknown healthcare provision could be for private healthcare, or this block could suddenly change its use to residential, because that would be more financially viable. This must not happen. This block must remain in community use.

Conclusion:

This proposal is for massive overdevelopment on a tiny site (the number of homes has already risen from 750 to 825. How can that increase be justified?). The proposed development will adversely affect the surrounding districts of Kentish Town, Dartmouth Park, Gospel Oak and Highgate because of the increase in traffic, especially during the 10-year construction period. This new area could be an amazing opportunity to be a well-designed, exciting and interesting place to live, work and play. What is presented is a small site with far too many high and bulky buildings of no architectural merit crowded together, and very little opportunity or space for community interaction.

We are asking for this application to be refused, as it stands. In its present form it will be a disastrous white elephant in the neighbourhood, and an awful legacy for J. Murphy and Sons.

Back to the drawing board.