

Rafi Miah

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing as Chair of the TRA at 30-40 Grafton Way to raise the strongest possible objection to the alteration of use of the courtyard at Maple House.

We are alarmed that plans for the construction of the catering facilities were not shared with residents here in advance of the construction starting, which it now has. We are distressed that the social and environmental blight caused by these plans and their implementation has been disregarded by those leading this project.

We cannot understand why approval for this costly and anti-social venture has been granted (if indeed it has.) Given the intolerable volume of noise and debris already being generated we can only assume that the disruption and distress this venture is causing to residents is being viewed as unimportant collateral damage, hence their failure to inform us of them.

I emerged from a recent extended hospital admission to find construction already in full swing. My office is currently open for two days each week. The noise levels from the courtyard are such that I am unable to work from home and have to decamp to nearby coffee shops for the remaining three days each week. Fortunately this area is very well served by cafes, restaurants and eateries, begging the question of why Lazari/Maple House feel the need to construct yet another one. Even prior to this huge construction we have been repeatedly indisposed when the courtyard is used for any purpose. The buildings surrounding the courtyard are glass-fronted, meaning sound and light reflect, refract and echo, magnifying their impact. I will send you under separate cover a short video of the noise we experienced up here on the 7th floor when Maple House employees were exercising a dog in the courtyard. Please listen to it and imagine that noise compounded by construction and then by people being entertained all day and into the night. It would be absolutely intolerable. Constructors are already working outside office hours. They commence work before 8am daily. Once their catering venture is in operation it will need to be serviced which means they are likely to start operating from 6am or earlier in order to serve the customers they predict will use this facility. Given the multiplicity of cafes already in this area they will need to compete intensely in order to recoup the monies invested in it. Obviously this means they will operate for as long as they need to in order to make this happen. From what we already know of their plans they will be installing heat lamps and lighting. Apart from the blight this will cause to our neighbours, the environmental cost will be massive. Why is this not being taken into account? We've also been informed that they will need to glaze a lift lobby. What does this mean? What lift? Who will use it?

It is clear that the security of residents here, particularly those on the first floor is severely compromised. Affording access to external parties will mean that such parties will have access to premises that lie flush with it, as the attached photographs show. Are we to expect that our neighbours will now be expected to keep their windows shut throughout the summer months as well as keep their blinds drawn in order to maintain privacy?

Already we are keeping windows shut to try to minimise the noise and this has little impact, such as is the noise already.

We are concerned and disappointed that the welfare of residents here has been completely disregarded in plans for this operation. Indeed, we appear to have been written out of existence in their quest to monetise this area. **Why were we not informed of these plans?** The only reason we know anything at all about this is because the local conservation society happened to mention it to a member of our association. Since finding out about this development Members of our TRA have visited Maple House to raise our concerns and have in essence been informed that a multi-million pound investment has been made, the implication being that this takes overrides any concerns for the interests and welfare of those of us who have lived here for many, many years.

On a personal note, I am struggling to cope mentally with what is happening here. My earlier work in humanitarian crisis [REDACTED] This is in fact the I moved to this building with the assistance of the late Frank Dobson MP, as the noise in my previous home – petty in comparison to what we are now experiencing - was driving me to distraction. The fact that these people are at liberty to disrupt our lives in this way is made worse by the knowledge that our safety will be impacted by this venture.

I attach photos taken yesterday which show how close the courtyard is to the first floor flats and ground floor entrances/exits here. Anyone gaining access to the courtyard will be able to gain access to our homes. We have had perennial problems with the local homeless population gaining access here and the local police will be able to confirm that for a period stretching back at least over the 19 years I have lived here, we have repeatedly had to call them to help us eject people who use our building as a venue for drug-taking. All of these issues will be magnified if this venture is allowed to proceed in its current form.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have you require any further information. Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Charine John

Chair, Grafton Way Tenants' and Residents' Association

