

25 Gresse St. Tenants & Residents' Association

Chairman: Gary Comenas | Secretary: Eddie Bloch | Treasurer: Ezra Benson | DMC: Paul Stelb

TENANTS AND RESIDENTS MEETING WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2012 @ 6:30pm FREMANTLE BUILDING ONE STEPHEN STREET

MINUTES

Attendees

Paul Stelb (PS, DMC1, acting Chair), Eddie Bloch (EB, Secretary), Ezra Benson (EZB, Treasurer DMC2), Pamela Munro (PM), A. Thomson, D. McConville, M. Rizzo, R. Mcronan, A. Goncalves, J. Feeney, S. Wilsdon, D. Fowler, J. Ace

London Borough of Camden: Councillor Adam Harrison (AH), Saleh Kahn (SK)
(Estate Manager)

Derwent London: Joe McCready (JM, Central Cross Building Mgr.), Benjamin Lesser – Derwent, Richard Hillebron – Derwent, Laura Townsend – Derwent, Simon Whittaker – ORMS (Architect), James Wickham – Gerald Eve (Planning Consultant), Clare Goggin – Jackson Coles (PM)

Apologies:

Gary Comenas, Angela Cooke, Councillor Milena Nuti, Mary Phee, Dilip Shah

Corrections to previous minutes:

None

Central Cross/TCR development:

Benjamin Lessor, Development Manager from Derwent London, introduced Simon Whittaker from architects ORMS who would give a presentation on a proposed additional planning application to be submitted for the redesign and extension of the retail units 18-30 TCR. The application is due to be submitted to Camden in March for works to begin in 2014.

Benjamin reminded residents of the planned public exhibition of the proposal being held at 24 Gresse Street on 28/29th February between 5-7pm. (Residents should have received postal notification of this event.)

The gist of the application will be to extend the retail units out to where the overhang is now between Sainsbury and Stephen Street and from the other side of Stephen Street up to and including the Odeon cinema. Aesthetically, the new canopy proposed in phase 1 & 2 for Central Cross will be continued on to this development

with the aim of pulling it all together architecturally. A redesign of this pavement area including a raised crossing of Stephen Street is included in this proposal.

Simon showed various cards, showing the before and after look of the proposed development.

PM asked what effect this would have on the mix of tenants, hoping it would not lead to more coffee shops etc.,. Simon confirmed that Derwent hoped the increased unit sizes would attract bigger brands and a better mix of tenants.

Councillor Harrison remarked that the street furniture was not shown on the 'after' cards. He also raised concerns about the loss of pavement space especially in light of the probable increase in foot traffic with the new units and the arrival of cross rail.

EB asked what percentage of pavement space would be lost.

BL answered that 35% of pavement area would be lost, and that they will access Crossrail's figures as to the projected increase in foot traffic in the area.

EZB raised concerns regarding the suitability and maintainability of the proposed white coloured canopy as regards the rain, dirt and dust of central London. BL explained the canopy would be made of an aluminium compound and that only the underside would be white, which would not be exposed to the rain directly. Additionally, Derwent were keen to keep the buildings looking good and would be maintaining it accordingly.

Central Cross:

Other queries related to the other works planned for central cross (discussed at previous meetings) followed. One resident asked about the proposed plan for the entrance of 25 Gresse St. and could bike racks be considered. PM noted that the possibility of bike racks inside the building were being explored and would be discussed later in the meeting.

BL advised that the previously planned bronze coloured metal cladding (*to the outside area running from the curved wall nearest the Fremantle entrance to the edge of No. 25*) will now be stainless steel colour but still with the honey-combed holes and a slightly wavy appearance.

BL confirmed that the phase 1 internal enabling works were already underway without much disturbance to residents as far as he was aware. The main works were planned to begin in October 2012 for 12 months.

BL stressed that Derwent had chosen contractors who would abide by best practice and could deliver as disturbance free development as possible. Any disturbance complaints could be addressed to him via the TRA.

CCTV:

PS and JM reported on the attempts at reinstating the resident CCTV system. Camden has returned our original CCTV camera and Joe McCreedy's contractors attempted to gain entry to the roof but were unable to because of lock changes. GC arranged for Mary Phee to drop off a key which should allow access and another attempt will be made to assess the new digital wiring's suitability.

PS noted that the current CCTV proved useful again when blood splatter on the walls of the lobby from Wednesday night, 15th February, were found to be from someone entering the lobby and being unsteady on their feet, fell against the lift area's wall and was not anything nefarious. It was quickly cleaned up.

Finance:

EZB reported that the group's bank balance remained at £1,813-15, £1500 of which was transferred to the new account at Metro bank with the rest remaining in our Santander a/c until we get all the information we require regarding that a/c. PS noted that although not a penny had been spent from this fund, the residents' representatives had provided a web site (for information and transparency, showing all current and previous Minutes and actions) two well-received Newsletters, a large Christmas tree and twice re-decorated foyer.

Resident Survey results

PS reported from information provided by GC, that there were 18 responses to the residents' survey a return of 19.56%. GC will go through the results in detail another time if necessary, but the majority of responses were for meetings to be held quarterly on Wednesdays, at the current time of 18:30.

Caretaking:

PS stated that the results of Camden's caretaking review (with involvement from all the local DMCs) is due in April. They are looking to improve quality, extent and value for money from caretaking services.

PM reported on the most recent walkabout carried out in February. As reported previously, a walkabout in September 2011 resulted in an action plan which included the provision for the caretakers' work schedule to be delivered to PM. This has proved unsatisfactory as the schedule often came after the work had been completed and it has been time consuming to try and assess the service and match up hours and areas serviced. The latest walkabout was attended by Mary Phee and Dilip Shah as well as most committee members. Though there are improvements in some areas, floors 1-3 were still the worst. Mary has tried various different cleaning products and some spotting have been introduced in some areas.

Service cupboards/bin rooms:

Quite a few service cupboards are being used by residents for storage. Dilip noted that this is against fire regulations. Letters from Camden will be issued giving residents 28 days to clear their belongings from cupboards, after which they may be removed.

The locks on many service cupboards and bin rooms have been broken or removed some soon after being replaced. Before replacing again, PM would like confirmation that leaseholders are not recharged for this, as she does not feel they should pay for someone else's vandalism. PM will follow-up.

Service charges/recharges:

PM met with Geraldine Littlechild (GL) from Homeownership to discuss issues related to service charges and recharges to leaseholders. One problem is that the Camden leaseholder website is not being updated quarterly with these recharge figures as it should be. The last entry currently is May 2011. GL stated that it should be updated quarterly and agreed to investigate and rectify.

As well as out of date, the descriptions on recharges are often incorrect, as they will be the description of the issue originally reported rather than the actual issue fixed. This has significant impact on the recharges to leaseholders. Camden council is rolling out a scheme called 'Right first time' which aims to improve the repairs service and will improve transparency and accuracy of recharges. This approach has proved very successful in the pilot area Gospel Oak, and will be rolled out throughout Camden over the next 12 – 18 months. GL agreed to try and find out when Holborn will be included in the scheme and feedback to PM.

GL also agreed to find out when the final accounts are due to be issued for the lifts and promised to feedback to PM within the next 2 working weeks.

Window cleaning:

PS thanked Angela for getting the windows cleaned. Angela could not attend the meeting. An additional cleaning was due to be carried out in February.

EZB expressed concern that the council appear to be putting the accountability for the standard of cleaning on residents rather than the council, and reducing the time to challenge an unsatisfactory job from within 5 days to 1 day.

Bike racks:

PM stated that it will be up to individuals to negotiate with the council and possibly pay for cycle racks in their bin rooms.

Communal areas:

PM reported that the council (Dilip Shah) had agreed that residents can paint the communal areas themselves as long as the paint conforms to certain conditions such as the colour and is fire retardant. AH mentioned a painter who does work for the Brunswick centre which he could provide contact details for. A resident suggested that perhaps a voluntary collection to fund this activity be considered- as was done in previous years for the Christmas tree. However no vote was proposed.

Fire safety

PS explained that he believed we needed a fire safety inspection and advice as we do not appear to have an internal building alarm and have no plan to evacuate vulnerable residents, especially if the lifts are taken out of operation.

EZB reported that; from a contact of his, the London Fire Brigade carried out a site inspection on January 11th. They have a number of recommendations and he is awaiting the written report which he expects in the next 10 days.

Planters:

One of the planters outside 25 Gresse St. is covering a fire breakout point and will have to be moved.

AOB:

EB mentioned a noise one of the lifts makes particularly when it passes the 3rd floor. This was noted during the cleaning walkabout and was to be reported by Dilip Shah. Saleh Kahn to follow up with Dilip.

EZB asked Saleh Kahn about the signage for lorries to switch off engines when waiting near 25 Gresse St. SK said this should be followed up with his colleague Simi Kahn (simi.kahn@camden.gov.uk).

Next meetings planned:

To be confirmed.