

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# What the Tolmers scheme is all about

*Have a High 26.10.73.*

WE WOULD refer to your front page article of October 5, in which Mr Bennie Gray, of Claudius Properties noted that the model of our Tolmers Square proposals contained a discrepancy, which was, in his own words, "not as great" as the Stop the Levy Deal Campaign had earlier alleged.

Prior to this article Mr Gray had already agreed with us that no discrepancy existed and this has since been confirmed in a letter of apology from the campaign.

We were also concerned to note that the campaign and the Tolmers Village Association, after directing so much criticism towards the development, still fail to understand what our scheme is all about.

The fact that Claudius Properties themselves would be committed to building what they called "this monster block" is incidental. What is surprising is the association's statement that "residents, small businesses, and low rental shops" will be upset "for the sake of a marginal gain in housing numbers."

In preparing our feasibility study to Camden's brief we have been aware of the isolated location of the site,

severed from its surroundings by Euston Road, Hampstead Road, Euston Station, etc.

We agree that it is essential to maintain the character and identity of the existing community, and to this end a study was carried out in conjunction with Camden Architects Department to examine the conditions of existing properties and determine how these could continue to provide useful, and adequate accommodation.

We consider that the shops and dwellings along Drummond Street and the eastern side of North Gower Street are able to fulfil the criteria and should be retained.

In addition, our phasing proposals hinge around, what to us is vital, the early improvement and renewal of these dwellings and shops to provide a physical, historical and social reference points to maintain continuity of the existing community.

Although the problem of replacing overcrowded and inadequate housing stock by its nature stacks the odds against any significant housing gain, our proposals will house a total of 1,500 people, an increase of a thousand, without sacrificing high standards of open space and other amenities essential at such a high density.

GERALD LEVIN, Partner,  
Renton Howard Wood  
Partnership,  
48 Queen Anne Street,  
W1.

# Tolmers plan fails to satisfy needs

26 OCT 73  
2 Nov 73

GERALD Levin claims that the Tolmers Village Association "fail to understand" what his "scheme is all about" (Letters, October 26). We would like an opportunity to show that this is not the case.

Mr Levin agrees "that it is essential to maintain the character and identity of the existing community." Yet it is quite clear from his scheme that he has no real knowledge of the existing community. Although undertaking a brief study of the buildings, he at no time carried out any social surveys or contacted any local people. He did not even bother to contact the Tolmers Village Association, who would have been able to give at least some idea of local needs.

His presentation therefore, although extremely pretty in architectural terms, fails to satisfy local questions: Where, for instance, would Simmonds secondhand furniture warehouse go?

Where will the 1,400 people who use the CHA social club find their entertainment? What will happen to the Indian community? As Mr Shah, a local shopkeeper and resident, commented after visiting the exhibition at the town hall: "I don't see any place for me there."

To obtain the required housing density it is not necessary to knock down as much of the property as Mr Levin proposes, and there are sound arguments for not doing so:

1. The existing properties, having been developed in a piecemeal fashion over a number of years, integrate residential, service, commercial and office space in a way impossible in new developments.

2. Existing buildings, with the possible exception of those on Hampstead Road, can be modernised to provide a higher quality of accommodation than can be found in cost yard-stick housing, and for a cost well below current yard-stick figures.

3. There would be no need for lifts in the existing buildings, whereas in the high-rise proposed they would be essential.

4. There would be much less disruption. The new scheme envisages major buildings operations in the area for a period of five years. This could not fail to be disruptive to life in the area.

If the Tolmers Square area was a piece of flat land the scheme prepared by Rentons might be acceptable. But it is not. There are buildings

with people living and working in them already, and any scheme proposed must take account of their individual needs and aspirations.

Clearly an architectural solution has to be found, but this cannot be done in isolation from the existing social fabric.

— NICK WATERS,  
Tolmers Village  
Association,  
102 Drummond Street,  
NW1.