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Evening Standard Monday 9 Sept 74

# Property firm plans to restore Tolmers Square

By WILLIAM KAY  
THE giant Stock Conversion property group today revealed new plans which could save the controversial Tolmers Square area on Euston Road.

It appears to be a major victory for the conservationists. Stock Conversion is the company which developed the Euston Centre, and for the past few years the company has been fighting a running battle with Camden Council over the future of the nearby Tolmers Square. Camden has already thrown out three plans to demolish the existing buildings and replace them with up to 250,000 sq. ft. of offices.

But in response to a barrage of questions from the Tolmers Village Association at Stock Conversion's yearly meeting in London today, chairman Mr Robert Clark said:

"Now we have been waiting long enough, we have put our architects in to examine a plan which could well result in what you are saving coming to pass."

Mr Clark later explained: "If the architects declare the buildings in Tolmers Square to be safe, we hope to refurbish and modernise them, restoring the square to what it was when it was built in the early 19th century."

"It is a job of which we will be proud. Our hope is that it will be a very beautiful square, with a fair amount of green and pleasant land."

## Warehouses

Mr Clark could not say how many houses there would eventually be, but he added that there would be accommodation for people from all sections of the community.

The front part of the site, overlooking Euston Road, will still be demolished to make way for a mixed development of offices, warehouses and homes.

Mr Clark said that there would be less office space than was originally envisaged.

Asked why the company had decided on this major policy change, he replied: "The London Borough of Camden has agreed to each of our previous plans, and then changed their minds for purely political reasons."

David Wilcox writes Camden withdrew from a deal with Stock Conversion following a campaign by journalists Christopher Booker and Bennie Gray, who maintained the council could gain more benefits under a "non-profit" development. But, no new scheme was forthcoming.

While the new Stock Conversion move may well be welcomed by critics of the original scheme, the test will be whether it provides a substantial number of

## New plans proposed for 8½ acre Tolmer's Square site in London

Times  
Tuesday  
Sept 10 1974

By Michael Baily  
One of London's most controversial redevelopment schemes, on the 8½-acre Tolmer's Square site near Euston Station, looks like falling through after prolonged protest by local residents and delay by Camden council.

This is identical with the scheme which two journalists, Mr Christopher Booker and Mr Benny Gray, offered to carry out last year instead of the actual developer, Mr Joe Levy's Stock Conversion group. They proposed to hand the prospective £20m profits over to Camden council.

At the annual meeting of Stock Conversion yesterday Mr Robert Clark, the chairman, criticized the council, rejected accusations that he company was persecuting tenants, and disclosed new proposals for the area with a much smaller office content and preservation of much of the existing housing on the site.

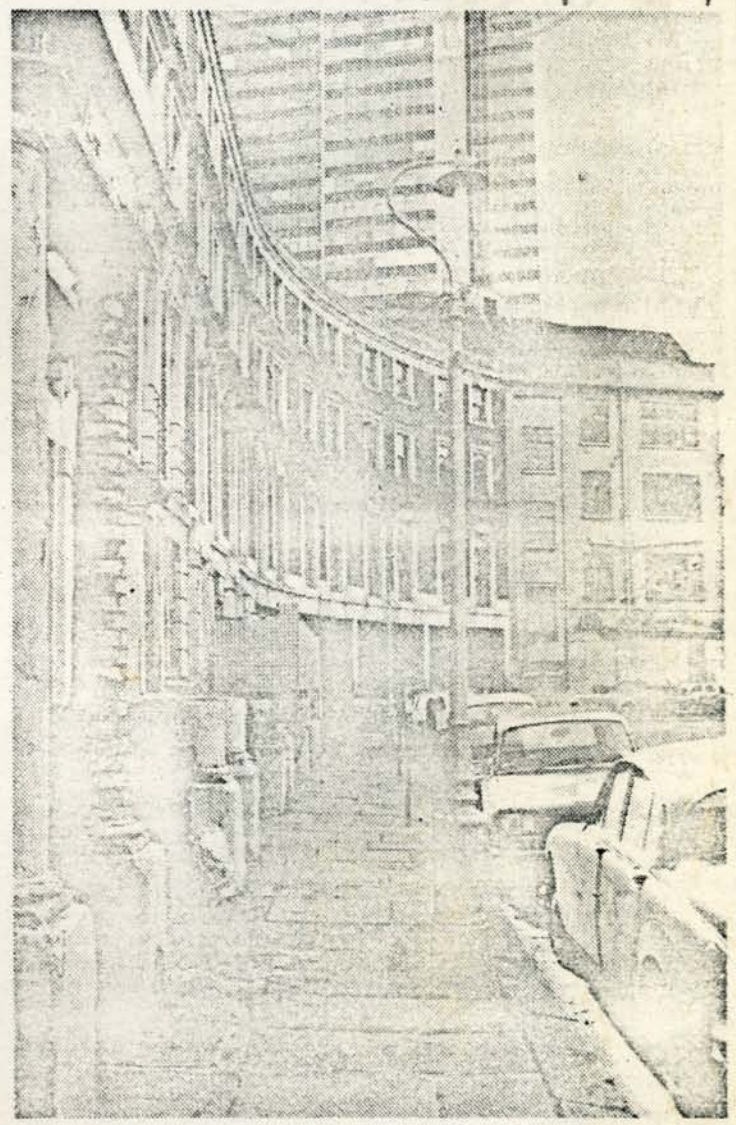
From his remarks afterwards it appears that the tenants may be unable to stay anyway, because what is apparently in mind is a process of "gentrification" of the decaying Victorian villas that make up much of the area.

"We hope Tolmer's will become a very beautiful square, much as it was originally", Mr Clark said. "But we must remember that it was not always what is now known as working-class. The rents charged if this scheme materializes will depend on the cost of rehabilitation and conversion."

Earlier Mr Clark, replying to questions from the residents' association, accused the council of three times "renegeing for purely political reasons" on schemes for development of the site with 250,000 sq. ft. of office space plus housing, and thus preventing Stock Conversion "acting in the interests of the people of Camden".

He denied that Stock Conversion, which owns about half the total site had damaged properties or allowed them to fall into decay in order to drive out low-cost tenants. If any of the houses had got into a dangerous state it was squatters who had prevented normal maintenance being carried out, and because Camden council had failed to protect ratepayers by preventing squatters occupying houses. (Those statements were denied at the meeting by residents who alleged that the decay dated from before the squatters.)

Mr Levy was reelected to the board at the meeting. He declined afterwards to comment on the



Tolmer's Square, for which new plans have been proposed.

residents' accusations, declaring that the company's first duty was towards its small shareholders.

Stock Conversion, which recently completed the Euston Centre development farther along Euston road, started buying land in the Tolmer's Square area in the early 1960s, at about £50,000 an acre. It is now worth £500,000 to £1m an acre, provided the Government gives an office development

permit. That was something the company would have to wait for, Mr Clark said yesterday.

The revised scheme being worked on by the company's architects will reduce the amount of office, industrial, and warehouse accommodation to about 80,000 sq. ft. Mr Clark said.

More than 8,000 people signed a "Stop the Levy Deal" petition last year.