



press information from Camden

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN
The Town Hall, Euston Road, London NW1

Public Relations Office
278 4366

TOLMERS OPENING PROGRAMME

11am	Arrival and coffee
11 30am	Speakers introduced by the Mayor Frank Dobson, MP for Holborn and St Pancras South Bill Birtles, Chair, Housing Development Committee Julian Fulbrook, Chair, Housing Management Committee
12 noon	Tour of the new housing*
12 30pm	Refreshments
1pm	End

*Depending on demand, people may have to divide into two groups to tour the housing.



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October 21 1982

THE NEW TOLMERS SQUARE

The recent handover by the contractors of 20 sheltered flats in Tolmers Square represents a landmark in the chequered history of the area. The new flats, added to the 51 already built, means that the redevelopment of the Square is at last complete.

The old square has been replaced with a combination of housing, offices, a community centre and a pub. The office development, carried out by Greycoat London Estates Ltd occupies the South side of the square and provides 200,000 square feet of offices. It was completed in the summer of 1981 and is now let to an engineering firm. Half of the net rent of the office site goes to Camden and the office development has enabled Camden to get 34 car park spaces for the residents and to rebuild the square. The new square has been turned round 90° to ensure that the housing opposite the office development gets maximum sunlight. The block acts as a barrier to the traffic noise of the busy junction at the top of Tottenham Court Road.

The redevelopment of Tolmers Square is part of a council improvement scheme for the whole area which will be completed in January 1983 when the last site - 66 new homes on Hampstead Road - will be handed over. With work already having been completed on several smaller sites in Drummond Street, North Gower Street and adjoining roads, a total of 247 new or rehabilitated homes housing 828 people will have been provided by the council in the area since work started in April 1976.

OPENING CEREMONY

The new housing in Tolmers Square is to be formally opened by Holborn & St Pancras (South) MP Frank Dobson who was leader of the council until December 1976 and was closely involved in the development during its early stages, on Saturday October 30. An invitation with a tear-off reply slip is enclosed.

more.....

29 October 1982

NOTES TO EDITORS

The completion of the Tolmers Square redevelopment marks a happy end to 23 years of controversy over the future of the area. The first planning application to redevelop the square was made by a property developer in 1959. This was rejected but it was the gradual accumulation of property in the area by Joe Levy's Stock Conversion and Investment Trust Ltd which ensured that the area would have to be redeveloped. Levy's company had already been responsible for the Euston Tower site which casts a shadow over Tolmers Square. By allowing property to fall into decay beyond the point of economic repair, it became inevitable that a major scheme would have to be undertaken. By the early 1970s, over 50 houses and some commercial buildings had been demolished and many of those remaining were partially or wholly empty. In 1973, two adjoining houses in Hampstead Road collapsed and the occupants narrowly escaped injury.

A deal between the council and Stock Conversion was negotiated in 1973 but following public protest, the plan was dropped. Eventually, following the property boom collapse, Camden bought Stock Conversion's land for £4m in July 1975. The high cost of the land and interest charges on the purchase forced the council to accept a redevelopment with an office content - but with a housing gain - and eventually the scheme in conjunction with Greycourt was given the go-ahead.

For further information, Christian Wolmar, 278 4366.

.../continued...

29 October 1982

Embargoed Until 11am Saturday 30 October

NO MORE FIGHTS AT THE TOLMERS CORRAL

Extract from a speech by Frank Dobson, MP for Holborn & St Pancras South at the opening of new flats in Tolmers Square, London NW1, on Saturday 30 October at 11 am.

"Those who remember the old Tolmers Square always recall the Tolmers Cinema which stood in the middle. It looked like a converted church. The Tolmers Cinema was to the Empire Leicester Square what a doss house is to the Ritz Hotel. In the last few years before it closed it seemed to be showing 'Gunfight at the OK Corral' every other week. I must have seen it six or seven times myself. Looking back I think it was an omen.

"Years later when I was leader of Camden council the fights over Tolmers Square were the most bitter and protracted of all the struggles we had in trying to get decent housing for local people in spite of the private ownership of the land. At the height of the property boom we nearly did a deal with Stock Conversion. Thank God we drew back at the last minute. We were exhorted to try another deal instead. That would have depended on getting a Tory Government to make a compulsory purchase order on the land and then for the Council to pay up to £12 million for it. We decided not to try that either.

.../continued...

END

Frank Dobson

House of Commons

London SW1

Hotel 712 3000

NO MORE FIGHTS AT THE TOLMERS CORRAL .../continued...

"Then a year or so later we bought the land for £4 million. The first approach came from Stock Conversion. Mr Robert Clarke got in touch to say that he'd been so moved by a television talk on housing by Lord Goodman that they thought they'd sell to us. I nearly laughed my head off. What he really meant was that there was a Labour Government and the bottom had dropped out of the property market.

"So we bought the land and immediately got on with building and rehabilitating housing to produce good homes for ordinary people at rents they can afford. Some lovely houses have been provided in Coburg Street, Drummond Street, Euston Street, North Gower Street and Starcross Street. Now the housing in Tolmers Square is completed and the Hampstead Road housing will be ready shortly.

"This means that high-quality homes for nearly 900 people have been created. For the first time ever the land round here is owned by the people and is being used to benefit the people. For the first time ever nearly everyone round here will live in good conditions. That's no coincidence. Under private landlords the land and buildings round here were devoted to private profits. I remember the raddled ruins into which the houses were allowed to decay by the private owners.

"It took public ownership, public funds and public commitment to transform this area from a decaying slum into a place where local people can live a decent life. The history of this area is an outstanding example of what can happen only if private profiteering is replaced by public service."

ends

Frank Dobson MP
House of Commons
London SW1

tel 219 3000

London Borough of Camden



Housing Department

Bidborough House
38/50 Bidborough Street
London, WC1H 9DB
Telephone: 01-278 4444

Nick - This is for you but are there any other
old Tolmers Activists you know who
can be contacted & would want to come.

Phone me if there are.
Chris L.

Date 20 October 1982

Your reference

Our reference

Telephone inquiries to:

Christian Wolmar 278 4366 Ext 275

Dear

I have great pleasure in inviting you to celebrate the completion of the
TOLMERS SQUARE DEVELOPMENT.

Frank Dobson, MP for Holborn & St Pancras South, will perform the ceremony
at 11 am on Saturday 30 October at THE LORD PALMERSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE, on
the corner of Drummond Street and Hampstead Road NW1.

Your presence there will be most welcome.

Would you please be kind enough to complete and return the tear-off slip
below by 28 October to let us know whether you are able to come.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

L. Szowiski

Director of Housing
