

# Camden Tenant

Established  
in 1972

Independent voice of Camden Council tenants

Autumn 2008  
No. 184

Published by the Camden Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations

**Defend  
your  
green,  
playspace  
and  
tenants  
hall!**

Tenants have uncovered council plans to build flats on their estate football pitch. Children on the estate use the pitch regularly, although it needs resurfacing; TRA fear it is being allowed to fall into disrepair. There was budget to do it up, 'but it has now been spent elsewhere,' says Gillian Reeves of Leysdown, Shipton and Stonegate TRA.

'If they build flats on the pitch – will our courtyard be their car park? The Council are trying to play down what's happening on the Shipton football pitch: they don't want a fuss, because they are looking at doing the same on other estates – not just in Gospel Oak but on every estate in Camden.'

'Tenants need to wake up or otherwise we'll wake up without any council housing left – just a dump.' Says Gill Reeves.

At Cressfield and Woodyard estate where the Tenants Association is newly activated, the tenants hall is also under threat. Council Property services say 'the hall has been identified as part of the Gospel Oak area review for redevelopment, though this is still in an early stage.'

Camden's assistant director of Housing David Padfield admitted halls may be closed: 'David Padfield emphasised that there would be full consultations on the future of TRA/TA halls. He did note however, that if assets were in a bad condition, then there may be some rationalisation, and some halls could face closure.' (Minutes of Camden DMC meeting, 3 September 2008)

#### What you can do:

- Ask the Council if they have any plans for community land or premises in your area;
- Ask your DMC for a list of any sites or halls under threat;
- Demand Councillors agree to hold a public meeting on any estate affected;
- Oppose sale of Council housing, land or assets except to build new council homes.

**No privatisation – no sell offs**



Camden tenants lobby the Council against selling off homes and land, to defend repairs and caretaking services, and to demand the Council respects tenants' wishes on housing patch changes and consultation.

## Camden needs more council housing, not less

Camden council is selling off valuable council homes and land, despite opposition from tenants and housing campaigners.

Empty street properties – some of them in good condition according to former tenants – have been auctioned to the highest bidder (raising £1.8m July-Dec 07). In the next stage they also plan to sell any of 624 council flats which become empty:

'the majority of funding from the sale of Stage 2 properties will come from the sale of the last tenanted unit. At the last count there are 624 property blocks that had only one remaining tenanted unit...'

Plans also include selling off 'every 1 in 10 empty properties occurring in bed-sit, one-bed and two-bed properties...we estimate the around 90 sales of smaller-sized units could be achieved.'

Community centres and estate shops are also threatened: 'In terms of other assets that possibly can be sold...610 units comprising a mix of mainly estate shops, other retail premises, small industrial units and miscellaneous other properties including some community centres.'

(LB Camden report, December 2007, disclosed through Freedom of Information request.)

### Tenants are invited to: **Council Housing Policy Forum**

- Rents – where does the money go?
- Finance – is Camden getting fair funding?

with Government and council reps to hear our view

**Monday 20th October 2008, 6 – 8.30pm**

**Council Chamber, Town Hall,  
Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE**

see inside: page 3

**No mandate  
for sell-offs**

'Camden does not have a clear mandate to push ahead with the sale of these properties... Camden council by the decisions it has taken (selling vital housing stock) has opted to place itself and its tenants in a position of compromise rather than actively lobbying central government in a united fashion to secure vital funding for our homes.' David Rodgers, CASP, Camden *New Journal*

Camden tenants have written to (then) Housing Minister Caroline Flint restating tenants' opposition to the sale of council homes, land and other assets.

'The Council cannot claim tenants back their plans to sell off precious homes and land – tenants have unanimously and repeatedly opposed these proposals,' says Camden Fed chair Meric Apak.

The letter to housing minister Caroline Flint reads:

'Camden Council has no mandate from tenants to sell council homes or for "regeneration of estates through selling council land to developers" as it claims publicly (see Inside Housing 8 August). Any submission to Government of a revised or new Stock Options strategy based on sale of council homes, land or assets is explicitly rejected by the formal consultative bodies, the District Management Committees. Camden cannot demonstrate 'clear audit trails of tenant influence and involvement in decision making' to support any new submission based on these measures, as such a submission will not comply with the option appraisal guidance.'

A properly constituted meeting of tenants reps from across all five Camden districts, with the Council's Executive member for Housing in the chair, on 1 May 2007 voted almost unanimously to oppose these proposals. The meeting demanded that the council instead join tenants in increasing pressure on government to fund direct investment to improve homes and estates – without strings. Two council-organised focus groups passed the same motion overwhelmingly.

The council did not ask tenants a direct question about sell-offs in its telephone and postal surveys (they knew they'd get a resounding NO!). In a written survey conducted last year barely 2% (757) of Camden's 33,000 tenants and leaseholders accepted the council's

continued on page 2 >>>>>>

>>>>> continued from page 1

general proposals. Coming after 77% ballot against ALMO, a vote against PFI and massive opposition to stock transfer that's no mandate for sales and privatisation.

We are aware that tenants in other authorities have been subjected to this kind of dishonest approach to 'CONSultation'. Camden Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations and our members therefore restate, formally and for the record, that Camden Council has no evidence or mandate to claim tenants' support for any Stock Option appraisal based on sale of homes, land or assets.

Council housing is an important public asset that has taken years to build up. We call on Camden and other councils and all those involved, to join us in bringing the fight for the 'Fourth Option' to a successful conclusion - for existing tenants and for future generations.:

**Meric Apak, Chair of CFTRA, Artisan Dwellings TRA (Kentish Town DMC), Carol Thomas, Sidings TRA (Hampstead DMC), Stan Bartle, Leysdown, Shipton and Stonegate TRA (Gospel Oak DMC), Gillian Reeves, Leysdown, Shipton and Stonegate TRA (Gospel Oak DMC), Tessa Brewer, St. Albans Villas TRA (Kentish Town DMC), Edie Cook, St. Albans Villas TRA (Kentish Town DMC), Michael Wyld, Dudley Court TRA (Holborn DMC), Ian Schofield, Dudley Court TRA (Holborn DMC), David Rodgers, Camden Association of Street Properties (Borough wide), Derek Jarman, Kennistoun/Willingham Close TRA (Kentish Town DMC), Henry Nakano, Greenwood TRA (Kentish Town DMC), Silla Carron, Clarence Way TRA (Gospel Oak DMC), Audrey Gandy, Langdon House TRA (Holborn DMC), Nick Masters, Individual resident of Harben Estate, Eujan Franklin, Bury Place RA (Holborn DMC), Anna Hellmann, Bury Place RA (Holborn DMC), Alan Walter, Peckwater TRA (Kentish Town DMC), Joan Stally, St. Sillas TRA (Gospel Oak DMC), Celia Dos Santos, Wendling TRA (Gospel Oak DMC), Tom McGarry, 5-7 Belsize Grove TRA (Hampstead TRA), Peter Wright, Gordon Mansions TRA (Holborn DMC), Pat Callaghan, Ward Councillor, Lindy Treasurer, Harben Estate TRA (Hampstead DMC), Eddy Newman, Individual resident of Mary Green Abbey Estate, Helia Evans, Ossulston TRA (Camden Town DMC)**

● Stand Up for council tenants - what you can do:  
 ■ Get involved, set up or build your Tenants Association  
 ■ Distribute this issue of Camden Tenant door to door on your estate  
 ● For details and help contact:  
 Camden Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (CFTRA),  
 11-17 The Marr, NW1 0HE  
 Freephone 0800 652 3140  
 office@camdenfed.org

## Peckwater tenants get together for fun, food and friendship



# Take the CON out of consultation

**Council leader rejects joint stand**

Council plans to centralise all capital works in two massive five (or ten) year 'North' and 'South' contracts, are worrying tenant reps.

Tenants are concerned that:  
 \* contractors will 'name their own price', with little effective monitoring or check on major contracts;  
 \* the service will become more remote and less responsive, bypassing real accountability via District tenant reps meetings (DMCs) and tenants associations (TRAs);  
 \* the council has not consulted adequately about these issues.

A borough-wide meeting of tenants reps agreed that:  
 1. Responsibility for consulting tenants on capital works must remain with council not contractor;  
 2. Council officers should report and consult directly with DMCs and TRAs and not with a North and South focus group.

### 'Council must listen' say Curnock Street

Curnock St TRA has had a complaint upheld at the failure of consultation. Sue Gorrie of the TRA says 'We have managed to challenge them on this particular occasion, but my concern is what this shows about attitudes to con-

sultation generally in Camden. It is not tenants job to know how the procedures work - it is the Council's job to listen and take note of what we say.'

### Listen to tenants

'The Chair explained the importance of consultation and assessed that the Council had been poor in delivering its consultation with the residents over the Capital Works Decent Home Programme. In response, Councillor King accepted the consultation was not working as well as it

should be. The Vice-Chair, Hilgrove TRA explained at length that he felt the Council was not practicing 'real' consultation and it was merely carrying out a tick-box exercise.' Hampstead DMC, 2 September.

'The Chair asserted... this was a common problem with Council consultations: the consultation may take place, but results were not reported, leading to a suspicion that the Council was ignoring residents' views to pursue its own agenda, regardless.' Camden DMC, 5 September.

## What voice for tenants?

Eighty tenants reps from all over Britain - including Camden - met in Hull last month to agree a united approach to the Government's plans for a selected consultation panel they call 'National Tenants Voice' (NTV). 'It was very productive' says Camden Fed member Carol Thomas.

Camden tenants at the Fed general meeting endorsed the following points agreed at the London tenants' conference on NTV:

1. Government should respect view of tenants;

2. Government should require landlords to fund independent tenants organisation at local level;
3. Any national body set up to represent tenants should be made up of tenants reps who are directly elected and accountable to tenants;
4. We need a clear process for tenants organisations to put proposals to the national body;
5. Before any formal proposal is put to government we should be reconvened and consulted again.

Council leader Keith Moffitt has refused to take part in a joint cross-party deputation with tenants to meet London Mayor Boris Johnson. Tenants proposed the joint deputation to put our case for:

- Access to the London Housing budget to help fund improvements in line with tenants choice;
- A chance to bid for funding to build new council homes.

Cllr Moffitt, by refusing to stand with us to put the case for tenants choice and council housing, is snubbing tenants. He also refused to make a joint submission with us to the Government Review of Council Housing Finance (see page 3).

Chair of Camden Fed Meric Apak says: 'The Council Leader talks about working with tenants and pressing for direct investment in council housing - but refuses to put words into action.'

'Camden Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations is determined to get the money needed to improve all our estates and build new council houses, without selling off homes or land.'

## Bourne Estate youngsters enjoy holiday play in tenants hall





On Sunday 20th July, Peckwater Estate TRA held its annual Sports Day & BBQ. Here are a few of the photos that show we got a tremendous response. Lots of people ate, drank, bounced, danced, ran and...

Thanks to all those who prepared food in advance, cooked and served on the BBQ and set everything up on the day. We ate well getting through 50 chickens that were BBQ'd Jerked, Tandoori, Greek and Piri Piri, curried Caribbean and Somali style as well as 200 burgers and 200 sausages.

Also particular thanks to the staff at NW5 Playhut, all in Sports Development and to Kentish Town Fire Station.

■ Alan Walter, Chair Peckwater Estate Tenants & Residents Association

## Where's our money?

### Where's all the money gone?

Lobbying by tenants has persuaded Camden Council to hold a consultation meeting on 20 October on:

- Council rents – are they affordable?
- how council housing is funded
- what we want from our money

A workshop and Tenants Forum in the council chamber, will be part of Camden's consultation on the national Review of council housing finance. Government representatives will present the Review op-

tions and hear tenants' views.

The national Review was launched to "ensure that we have a sustainable, long term system for financing council housing" and "consider evidence about the need to spend on management, maintenance and repairs". These are key for Camden tenants: to improve our estates and build new council housing, we need to guarantee adequate funding from our rents to manage, maintain, repair and improve our homes.

Camden collects £105,880,000 a year from rent, which goes to Government.

Government then returns a total of £83,760,000 in allowances for management and maintenance (M&M) and major repairs (MRA). The review of Council housing finance has already revealed that these allowances are badly underfunded.

If allowances were funded at the level of actual need to do the job intended Camden would have an annual increase of £40.27 million in allowances (£1,690.60 per tenant). Total allowances to manage, maintain and repair tenants' homes would go up from current £83.76 million to £124.03 million – nearer the level of need.

## Submission on the National Review of Council Housing Finance

From Camden Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations

All Camden TRAs, DMC chairs, local MPs, Councillors and supporters of Council Housing – are invited to co-sign this submission:

### Areas of Concern

- We demand that government fund allowances to cover the management, maintenance, repair and improvement of council housing to the 'level of need' and provide the means by which the council can start building new council homes;
- We are opposed to proposals that expose council tenants to

changes in interest rates, inflation and property values. We do not want the council to 'opt out' of the national council housing system exposing tenants to new risks;

- We are concerned that government is trying to bully and bribe councils to get rid of first class public (council) housing providing secure tenancies, lower rents and an accountable landlord and force people into the private housing sector (RSLs, shared ownership, etc) which provide less security, higher rents or charges and are unaccountable;
- Public land should be used to build public (council) housing.

**Come to the Town Hall – Tell Council and Government what tenants want!**  
Monday 20th October 2008. 6pm – 8.30pm  
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Judd Street

## Standing up for council tenants – then and now

Camden tenants' proud history and fighting spirit made headlines in the housing press. A feature: 'Street Battles' recalled the events of St Pancras rent strike 1960, with a photo big enough for tenant reps to spot themselves or their relatives. The article concludes with a very topical link to current issues of tenant involve-

ment, 'consultation' and accountability:

"The current Camden Federation of Tenants' and Residents Associations traces its own roots back to the 'indelible legacy of militancy' left by 1960. Now tenant activists in Camden – which takes in the old St Pancras – are among the key movers in the big debate

over the future of tenant involvement."

Camden tenant rep Derek Jarman recalls: "The rent strike article is a useful reminder that when tenants unite in a cause anything is possible. The photo used was taken in Leighton Road, outside Kennistoun House where Don Cook was leading the fight against

rent increases. Don was living in a flat on the top floor securely ensconced behind lots of barriers. It took the combined forces of the local police and the fire station where firemen were ordered to supply ladders etc to allow the police and bailiffs to gain entry to his flat. The police were so scared at the turnout of tenants protesting about the Council's efforts in evicting Don that they invoked the Act of Parliament used in the 1930s against Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts, to move you along if there were more than six people gathered.

"This did not stop tenants from gathering outside the Town Hall to protest against rent increases and also the brutal way the Council managed to evict Don Cook. In 1960 tenants were united against large rent increases. It was the

**INSIDE HOUSING** News, views and jobs in social housing

### Street battles



start of a united tenants movement in St Pancras which was to become Camden Federation of Tenants."

(see [www.insidehousing.co.uk/story.aspx?storycode=6501113](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/story.aspx?storycode=6501113))



The HCDP-run play scheme on the Bourne Estate is a brilliant opportunity for children to access fun and challenging activities. Our friendly team of play workers come from a range of cultural backgrounds and most live locally so know the children. But it's a real battle to get funding, and if we can't open the young people really miss us.' says Caroline Lister of Holborn Community Development Project (HCDP).

## Caretakers with tenants against privatisation

Camden caretakers launched a campaign to stop privatisation of estate caretaking at a meeting 23 September. 40+ caretakers from across Camden said the Hampstead pilot with Veolia doing 'external' estate cleaning is the thin end of a wedge, to force through privatisation of estate caretaking services.

Tenants are totally opposed to privatisation, with reps at Tenants meetings, DMC and Camden Federation voting to defend an in-house caretaking service.

The caretakers union Unison has written to all tenant reps to say: 'the latest plan is to try to privatise the caretaking service. This is starting with a 'pilot' in Hampstead... However, there have been attempts to try to privatise the caretaking service before. The last time, we had a campaign where both tenants and trade unionists worked together, and we forced the council to back down.

'We think it's important to draw a line in the sand and demand that the council listens to tenants who use the service and to the people who provide it.'

# Euston development: for people or profit?

Can we stop the massive development proposed in the Euston area, going the same way as the Kings Cross railway lands?

Camden does not need more Canary Wharf style offices, luxury flats and upmarket shopping. Why not set aside some land and money to build council homes and community facilities?

As well as Euston station itself, the National Temperance Hospital and the BHS depot in Hampstead Road, the railway carriage sheds at Granby Terrace and the Police Garage in Drum-



mond Crescent are also up for grabs.

The private housing market championed by governments over the last 20 years has collapsed like a pack of cards. In a recession there will be even more urgent demand for council housing and community facilities.

### Council homes to solve the housing crisis

Much of Camden's council housing was built in the 1930s in the middle of the depression - and some of our schools and swim-

ming pools as well. As economic crisis hit in the late 1970s, campaigns successfully forced the council to buy up commercial property such as Tolmers Square and build council housing.

The Euston development could provide a similar opportunity. But the Council's draft development framework doesn't mention council housing. Add your comments on line at [www.camden.gov.uk/planning](http://www.camden.gov.uk/planning) or come to the public meeting: Amphil Square Tenants Hall, Barnby Street from 6.30pm Thursday 16 October.

## Tenants enjoy pensioners trip with help from Fed



## TV conversion: tenants angry at charges

Council blocks have to be rewired for the shift to digital tv - as the old system of analog broadcasting is ending.

Camden started this last year, but has decided to upgrade the rewiring (to 9-wire instead of a 5-wire system) which means we can receive more channels.

But the cost is being charged to tenants and leaseholders through an additional service charge. Why isn't the Council demanding the return of the £22 million of our rents taken by government this year in Camden, and not paid back in allowances?

At September's Holborn DMC reps were angry at the charges

which it seems tenants will have to pay every year indefinitely. And if you watch TV in the kitchen or bedroom you'll be charged more for an extra socket. In face of criticism Councillor Naylor, a lead member housing, agreed to see if the policy could be reviewed.

Beryl Allen, chair of the Bourne Estate TRA and a Holborn DMC rep, says: 'I think it's wrong to charge tenants 50p a week. Not in perpetuity - they never said when we would stop paying! And if we have to pay for this we should at least have a TV point in each room. A lot of people like a TV in the bedroom - why shouldn't they?'

### PUBLIC MEETING

- PUBLIC SERVICES NOT PRIVATE PROFIT
- UNITE TO DEFEND OUR SERVICES

No privatisation of our GPs  
No to Academy schools  
Defend Council Housing  
No public sector pay freeze

TUESDAY 21 OCT 7pm  
With FRANK DOBSON MP  
KEVIN COURTNEY NUT  
and SPEAKERS FROM  
LOCAL CAMPAIGNS  
Camden Town Hall,  
Judd Street, WC1

Supported by Camden Trades Council, Camden Keep Our NHS Public, Camden Teachers Association, Camden Federation of Tenants & Residents Associations, Camden Defend Council Housing

### Camden Fed news

A lively and well attended General meeting in August 2008 decided policy on the major questions facing tenant reps on estates and in the next round of District meetings with councillors.

Key decisions included:

1. We insist that London Borough of Camden abide by the views of DMCs, CASP and TRAs on district boundaries;
2. We oppose centralisation of repairs and capital works, and demand that the responsibility for consulting tenants remain with council not contractor and that the council officers should report and consult directly with DMCs and TRAs and not with a North and South focus group;
3. We oppose privatisation of the caretaking service;
4. We oppose any new stock option appraisal based on sale of homes, land or assets.

### In brief

● UNA HOUSE TRA in Gospel Oak won a 'community spirit award' for success in involving young and old to help maintain community garden areas. This year one area was allocated to growing vegetables. 'The children planted seeds and watched potatoes, lettuce, carrots and beans grow - it was very successful, and we plan to expand next year,' says TRA secretary John Gedge: 'The Award reflects residents' willingness to take part in community activity, which produces a good spirit on the estate.'

● A good AGM with 30+ attending, re-established CRESSFIELD AND WOODYARD TRA (Gospel Oak).

Camden Fed

Camden Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations  
tel 0800 652 3140 (freephone) website: [www.camdenfed.org](http://www.camdenfed.org)  
email: [office@camdenfed.org](mailto:office@camdenfed.org) 11-17 The Marr, Camden St, London NW1 0HE

Company No: 3013493 Registered in Cardiff @camdenfed2008