

Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum

*Response to proposals to develop 101 (DPD) and 102 (Marigold) Camley Street.
7 April 2104*

Introduction

We have studied the information exhibited by Shaw Corporation and YourShout from 4pm to 8pm on 6 March 2014 and subsequently made available from 24 March 2014 on their web site at CamleyStreetGateway.org.uk. At the same time we have solicited opinions from residents and businesses in the Camley Street Area.

This document is the result to date of those deliberations. It is not final and we expect to continue to refine and update our response as more feedback is received and more details of the developers' plans and designs are revealed to us.

We understand that 101 (currently DPD) and 102 (currently Marigold) are two entirely separate development projects both of which have chosen to use Shaw Corporation and YourShout to represent them. We have therefore subdivided our response as follows:

Firstly items specific to either 101 or 102 but not both. These project-specific items are subdivided into the following sub-sections:

- The first sub-section, called 'Fundamentals' is where we examine the overall fit of the proposal with the strategic objectives of our emerging Camley Street Neighbourhood Plan.
- The second sub-section called 'Details' is where we comment on the finer grained factors specific to that building such as the number of entrances it has, the external aesthetic, and so on.

There is then a separate section on matters that apply equally to both projects. Under this heading are matters such as the design of the feedback forms issued at the exhibition and on the website, the overall level of detail revealed, project scope ambiguity, and so on.

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A. Response to proposals for 102 Camley Street (Marigold)

1. Fundamentals

This is the wrong type of development for the location.

The developer proposes replacing an existing specialist food distribution business with a predominantly residential development offering a nominal amount of 'office / retail' space on the ground floor only. This does not fit with the land use policy of the emerging Camley Street Neighbourhood Plan which proposes that the eastern side of Camley Street north of the canal bridge is for business use by the food, creative and informatics industries.

In the limited time available to us we have found a business partner (Camden Brewery) that would be prepared to develop the land in line with our Neighbourhood Plan and have confirmed they have the necessary finance to put their plans into action and bring jobs to the area. We feel this demonstrates the financial viability of our land use policy and the social and economic benefits it would deliver to Camden.

We therefore object in principle to the proposed development and its associated change of use.

2. Details

As well as our fundamental objection to this proposal, our comments on the detail of what has been revealed so far are:

2.1 Hidden information

The architects' sketches strongly suggest that the adjacent plot at 104 Camley Street currently occupied by Hewlett Packard will be developed as a "partner building" to 102 but no proposals are revealed.

The proposed "pathway" in front of 102 leads straight to 104 (HP) and the simple vertical façade of the north face of 102 suggests a link with 104, but questions we asked about intentions for that building were answered with an unhelpful 'not part of this project'.

This is unsatisfactory and we feel it is disappointing and undermines trust that the developer cannot share more information about their ambitions for the adjacent space and their specific ideas.

The Neighbourhood Forum's position in relation to any future development of the site at 104 Camley Street will be consistent with the principles and details set out here in relation to 101 and 102.

2.2 Building façade

The building as proposed has a single sheer façade of twelve (exact number not stated on posters) storeys on its northern side that will directly overlook the rest of Camley Street. This is poor 'canyon making' design and is not acceptable.

2.3 Roof – rainwater collection plan

We think this is a potentially great idea. However, there is no indication on the plans as to where this will be collected (is there a reservoir somewhere?) nor which areas it will be used to irrigate (just the roof?)

2.4 Roof – Solar energy collection plan

We think this is a great idea but it is not stated whether this will be electricity generation or hot water generation or both? (We assume it will be only for 102?)

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2.5 Dwelling unit size

It is disappointing that the dwelling units seem to be uniformly small and designed for one person or, at most, two.

Where are the units for families?

2.6 Dwelling unit orientation

We feel it is inappropriate to place dwelling units so close to the national rail lines where they will be detrimentally affected by dust and noise.

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B. Response to proposals for 101 Camley Street (DPD depot)

1. Fundamentals

The proposal is to change the use of the plot currently occupied by DPD Distribution into a predominantly residential space with some provision for retail/office/industrial space.

This fits with the land use policy of the emerging Camley Street Neighbourhood Plan which proposes that the western side of Camley Street north of the railway bridge is predominantly for residential use.

The proposed change of use of 101 Camley Street from exclusively light industrial to predominantly residential is therefore appropriate and welcomed.

2. Details

Our comments on the detail of what has been revealed so far are:

2.1 Regeneration

The Camley Street / Granary Street intersection bounding 101 is pretty desolate, so regeneration is welcomed.

2.2 Internal segmentation

We think it is a poor idea that 'affordable' and 'non-affordable' units are physically separated within the building by the erection of partition walls across the internal corridors.

It forces there to be separate entrances and hence wastes space as well as establishing a literally 'built-in' social segregation between different groups of residents with all the negatives that implies. We would point to the largely successful and sustainable social model of Elm Village in which owner occupiers, residential tenants, shared owners and RSL/housing association tenants and residents with special needs are precisely not segregated and use the common areas, streets and open spaces on a neighbourly basis.

2.3 Green spaces at ground level

We are disappointed to see that once the plot boundaries are drawn the amount of ground level green space within the 101 development is zero.

2.4 Green spaces at roof level

We are disappointed that the roof atop the 12th storey of 101 was painted a pleasing light green on the sketches and described by the designer as green/planted space with "possible use as allotments" who was then unable to say how deep the soil was or if it was raised beds or what. Our concern is that the implementation will be little more than a few potted plants and bushes or some 'naturalised moss meadow' planted in at most 5 cm of "soil" that at the first hint of sunshine becomes as horticulturally attractive to green plants as the midsummer Sahara.

We suspect that putting a layer of soil on the roof sufficiently deep to maintain a minimally-sustainable growing area would add the weight of at least one, possibly two more storeys - and therefore would most likely not be commercially viable.

This seems non-feasible and a superficial nod to trend as well as a specious attempt to say the development is 'green'.

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C. General comments applicable to both 101 and 102 (DPD & Marigold)

1. Feedback Questionnaire

The feedback questionnaire did not appear to have been designed to gather feedback on the specifics of the building proposals. Instead it seemed to have been designed to elicit as many 'yes' responses as possible.

The majority of the questions asked about unquantified generalities that most people would find hard to disagree with, e.g., Do you support . . . increased public access, . . . improved public spaces, . . . improved lighting, . . . new and improved access routes, . . . etc.

Misleadingly, it also asked for opinions on infrastructure that the development project itself would not deliver, e.g. “. . . a new pedestrian canal bridge . . .”

Plainly it has been designed to get as many “yes” answers as possible and several residents made the point that “the questions were phrased in such a way that one was more or less bound to agree”.

2. Ambiguous project scope and boundaries

It is disappointing that several of the diagrams give the impression that the projects will develop the green spaces along the canal, install new access paths and staircases and deliver a new footbridge. We understand this is actually NOT the case.

In general it is NOT clear from most of the architect's sketches on display where each project begins and ends and exactly which enhancements it will deliver. Our understanding is that each project will build only what is within the boundary of its own plot and Camden will be commissioning the building of all that is in the public space with section 106/CIL money.

3. Enterprise, Businesses & Local Employment

We think it's a great idea to provide space for start-ups and new businesses.

It was disappointing that the business space provided in these developments seems to be just office and retail space; no manufacturing or creative studio space of any sort at all such as currently co-exists very well with the established residential neighbourhood.

We feel that this means that the project will not benefit our local working young people – it will actually destroy existing jobs.

4. Affordable Units

We think it is a great idea to provide affordable accommodation.

However, there is no indication of what 'affordable' means and we suspect it will be beyond the means of those on an average salary.

There is no indication of how the affordability will be maintained on change of ownership such as with a shared ownership scheme that has been a successful component of the adjacent neighbourhood.

5. Design

It is disappointing that the designs for both buildings seem relatively ordinary. Just the usual linear facades with balconies tacked on (albeit at fetchingly rakish angles). We don't support more of that; we already have enough at the new build at 103 and other tower blocks nearby.

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6. Canyon effects – visual and wind tunnel

However much emphasis is put on improving the canal frontage there's no ignoring the towering height of the 12 storey buildings and how this will affect the whole "feel" of the area and the environment – which until the arrival of 103 was four storeys at most. Such high buildings on both sides of the canal and both sides of the road will create another canyon like St. Pancras Way, but more oppressive because Camley Street is narrower. Our area is at risk of becoming over-developed and visually soulless with no sense of community.

There were also concerns about 'wind tunnel' effects along Camley Street and across the canal bridge. There is no indication of what these microclimate changes might be nor how they will be mitigated.

7. Height

It is disappointing that most residents felt they did not get clear answers to questions about height, especially at 101 DPD as the roadway is at different levels as it wraps around the building.

As far as we can work out, the rooftops of 101 and 102 will be level with the rooftop of the new build at 103. But we are not sure.

8. Information shared on web

We think it is great that the information presented at the public exhibition on 6 March 2014 is now available on the website CamleyStreetGateway.org.uk. However it is disappointing that no new information has been added in the interval since the exhibition.

It is not useful that the information available on the website for 101 and 102 is presented in different formats. The information for 102 Marigold (the development likely to proceed first) is presented in a proprietary [Scribd](https://www.scribd.com) format that cannot easily be searched or printed by most web users and non-subscribers. However, the information for 101 DPD, which is at least two years from commencement, is presented as a standard PDF that can be easily searched and printed. We would like all information to be presented using de-facto web standard document formats such as PDF for easy searching and printing

9. Exterior Façade

We think it is a great idea that the exterior façade does not distinguish between affordable and non-affordable housing.

10. Internal segmentation

We think it is a poor idea that affordable and non-affordable units are physically separated within the buildings. It is socially divisive and wastes space.

We repeat the same comment as we made for 101 above about the segregation of different categories of residents which is unnecessary.

11. Multiple separate entrances

The internal segmentation of the buildings also forces there to be multiple separate entrances.

We think it is a poor idea that each building has multiple entrances to accommodate the social division (101 DPD has three and 102 Marigold has two).

We feel that 101 should have at most two entrances (facing each other in the middle of the building) and 102 should have just one.

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We feel it is a poor idea to segregate the different occupants of the building by forcing them to use different entrances with different security arrangements. Forcing a subset of residents to use a less secure entrance is not good. It exacerbates social segregation – unhelpful in such a small bounded space.

11. Security

We think it is a great idea that both buildings will have 24 hour concierge service.

However it is unclear exactly where this concierge service will be located.

13. Plot Boundaries

It was NOT clear from most of the architect's sketches on display where the ownership boundaries of the properties were. This is important as our understanding is that the developers will build only what is within the boundary of their site and Camden will be commissioning the building of all that is in the public space with section 106/CIL money.

14. Environmental Performance and Green spaces

Camley Street neighbourhood forum intends to work with businesses, residents and developers to ensure that all existing and new projects in the CSNF designated area contribute substantially to the intention to make Camley Street the greenest street in London. This is a long-term ambition for which we intend to work collaboratively and to set particular targets and to identify ways of improving existing performance, requesting and requiring all new entrants to the area to set out how their business, developments, etc., can be made to contribute to this in substance and not just cosmetically or perfunctorily. We invite the developers to talk with CSNF about ways in which we might collaborate on this.

We are disappointed that once the plot boundaries are drawn the amount of new green space contributed by these developments is actually much less than it appears to be. In the case of 101 there is NO green space at ground level.

15. Roof – Solar energy collection

We think this is a great idea but is only mentioned in relation to 102 Marigold but not 101 DPD – why not both?

Is the intention that this will be electricity generation or hot water generation or both?

16. Roof – Wind energy collection

We note that this is not mentioned at all.

17. Transport

No mention was made of how this coordinates with the existing traffic to and from the northerly parts of Camley Street and the traffic expected from the construction and operation of the HS2 depot at the top of the road.

18. Air pollution

We are living and working next to King's Cross which has the most polluted air in London. With the increasing numbers of high rise buildings being erected there is a concern that these will collectively slow the natural dissipation of airborne pollutants. There is a need to model these effects across a large area and not just for individual buildings.

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19. Canalside habitat

Existing shrubbery by the canal, although scruffy, provides a continuum of habitat for wild life together with Camley Street Natural Park - the impact on wildlife on the canalside and at the park of removing this and replacing it with concrete should be studied.