

Community challenges housing development application of former Holloway Prison

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Parkhurst Road entrance of the former HMP Holloway Prison. Photo Credit: Meike Eijsberg

After a five-year campaign backed by Islington Labour, the Holloway community believed they had ensured the construction of a ground-breaking Women’s Building on the site of what was once the UK’s largest women’s prison, HMP Holloway.

Given that the prison housed several famous suffragettes, and therefore has historical significance to the feminist movement, Community Plan 4 Holloway (CP4H) hoped the housing development would revolve around women.

CP4H’s Community Manager Melissa Herman and her group of local volunteers are currently sorting through the more than 330 documents that make up the [housing development application](#) submitted by the Peabody Housing Association. “What we’re focusing on now is trying to get people to engage in that process, and to make it easy for them to do so – which is really difficult,” she said.

Their efforts have revealed that the 1,489m² Women's Building proposed by Peabody is only one floor, the ground floor, which faces the busy Parkhurst Road. It seems, therefore, that the Women's Building is not the secluded reassuring haven it was intended to be.

Affordable housing was a focal point of CP4H's campaign, and Peabody made promising claims in their development application. By Peabody's description, the site is set to have 60% genuinely affordable homes, with 42% of the total residences available at social rent. These proportions are unprecedented in a central London development project of this size and are something CP4H has fought hard to secure.

However, the 42% of homes available at social rent are "not up to standard," Herman said. "It's not well designed. These homes are really noisy, dirty and smelly. Plus, the site is on public land – why should there be any private homes at all? The offer should be better."

There is also the matter of overdevelopment. According to local resident Jonathan Ward, who analysed the application in depth, "everything is squeezed together." He explained that a study by the London Borough of Islington (LBI) recommended 720 homes as an appropriate density for the site, with 880 classified as 'overdevelopment'. Peabody's application proposed 985 homes. Of these homes, Ward continued, 206 fail the minimum daylight requirements.

Anita Colloms, a senior local who has lived in Holloway for 45 years, is very upset about the development plans and said: "They're building a New York City in the middle of our residential area – they just can't!"

Peabody has not responded to a request for comments.