



# Students have a sleep-out as part of a homeless campaign

## Pupils campaign for affordable housing as part of new development

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Pupils from a secondary school in Harlesden had a sleep-out to campaign for affordable housing in the forthcoming Old Oak Common development.

Four sixth formers from Newman Catholic College (NCC) in Harlesden Road, spent the night in the City Mission Church's hall in Scrubs Lane, which is within the location of the Mayor of London's proposed Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC).

The evening, which involved Twyford Church of England High School in Acton, and William Perkin High in Ealing, was part of the London Citizen's work to stimulate the students into thinking about the need for affordable housing, particularly within the Old Oak Common plans.

Students were based in a big room with no heating and where the only things to eat were the snacks they brought with them.

They slept in sleeping bags, some with mats underneath and some without, on the hard floor.

Leaders of the City Mission Church explained their work in the area and the impact of the proposed development, which was followed by a quiz.

Pupils then watched the animated film 'UP' about an old man who flies off in his house only to discover he has an eight-year-old stowaway, before bedding down for the night.

Joao Coelho, 15, said: "I must admit it wasn't the most comfortable night that I had, but it was for a great cause. This is the situation that hundreds of people in the UK have to go through every night and we must do everything we can to help the people on the streets and also help people not to get into that situation."

Samya Mohammed, 17, said:



"I enjoyed meeting new people. We played games and watched a movie. It was so bad sleeping on the floor because I didn't feel comfortable and it was a bit cold. The sleeping bag was too small and too hard to turn in. I felt sick and cold when I woke up."

Susan Grace, assistant headteacher at NCC, said: "This was an amazing event where students from different backgrounds and schools came together for a common cause, to highlight the plight of homelessness and the housing crisis where so many people are being forced out of London due to high rent costs and housing caps."

"This action enabled our students to try to walk in the shoes of many who are forced to sleep rough each night."

Paul Amuzie, Brent community organiser for the London Citizens, added: "With the schools



■ Pupils Joao, Luke, Nadine and Samiya with Mr King, all out for the night to raise awareness of the housing crisis facing the borough

we are trying to engage with the Old Oak Common development corporation to push for 50 per cent affordable housing and make housing affordability a priority on site.

"We went to City Hall in January to put pressure on bringing that forward and this was follow-up action."

A public consultation, led by the Mayor of London's OPDC, opened

in February on the design of the site - which will be at the intersection of the HS2 railway and Crossrail.

Victoria Hills, CEO at OPDC, said "Any event that gets young people involved in housing delivery is to be welcomed and we would like to build upon this programme as a way of talking with local students about the future of Old Oak and Park Royal."