

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 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."

Anger over increase in garage rents

Residents have slammed a decision to increase garage rental prices by 150 per cent. Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) is increasing the rents on its garages, some of which residents claim are not fit for purpose, from £6 a week to £15.

David Minter, who lives in the Pharamond estate in Willesden Lane, said their garages have not been maintained in years.

He said: "It's ridiculous, BHP has failed in its duty to the community. Had they maintained these 22 garages I would accept the increase but they didn't, they let them run down. I can't use my garage because there's so much water. The resident upstairs has loose wiring in hers."

The former chair of the residents association said he had been battling with BHP for eight years. He said: "They let them run down so they could build housing there. They wouldn't lease them out, saying they weren't fit for purpose."

"I suggested leaseholders take over the management of them, improve them and bring them back to working order but within a week of me suggesting that, they rented out four garages to people who don't live here. They have failed in their duty."

Dino Chiappetta, who lives in Donnington Road, has been renting two garages in Burrmead Court for 25 years.

He said: "The rent has been at £6 for a very long time. I've had no notice and it hasn't been gradual. It's gone from £6-15 and I may have to surrender my garages."

Cllr Carol Shaw, Conservative councillor for Brondesbury Park, said the decision to increase the rent was approved by the Labour cabinet last month.

She added: "With more cars on the road and less parking spaces available, garages are now at a premium. For whatever reason, whether it be alleged mismanagement or some other reason, the cost of renting these garages was not increased yearly."

"It is not the fault of the leaseholders and council tenants who hire them. A very gradual increase would be much more acceptable and fairer."

A spokeswoman for BHP said: "The cost of renting garages and cages has not been raised for a considerable time. The council consulted residents towards the end of last year about a proposed rent increase and as a result of this consultation, the rent has increased in line with costs charged by neighbouring boroughs."

"We are currently in the process of carrying out a stock review of council garages across the borough."

"Once this is complete we will make an assessment of what works need to be carried out. Where garage licensees report that their garage is dilapidated, we have a policy to provide the licensee with alternative arrangements."

Rapist blackmailed his victim with sex tape

A rapist from Wembley who forced his victim into sex at least 20 times by threatening to send her mother explicit footage of them on WhatsApp has been jailed.

Imran Khan, 25, of Rosslyn Crescent, tricked his victim into performing oral sex on him by saying he would pay off her £2,000 debts.

The Old Bailey heard that Khan, who was unemployed and penniless, filmed her performing the act on his mobile phone and blackmailed her by threatening to post the footage to her mother using the messaging service.

He would pick up the victim, who was only 20 at the time, from

her home and force her to perform oral sex in his car or orally rape her in the stairwell of her block of flats.

She said he had raped her on at least 20 occasions between January and May 2014.

Khan sent her more than 4,000 abusive and threatening text messages saying he would publish the footage unless she performed oral sex.

He agreed to wipe the video if she paid him £130, which she did, but just a few weeks later he got back in touch.

He told her the money had not lasted, he had not deleted the foot-

age, and demanded she give him sex again.

Eventually she told a friend what was happening, and the friend convinced her to go to the police.

Khan initially denied rape but changed his plea on the first day of his trial.

He pleaded guilty on the basis that he would face nine rather than 20 charges.

Prosecutor Edmund Fowler told the court that Khan and his victim had met on Facebook, and had known each other for around two years before the attacks began.

Khan, who has a low IQ of 63, was jailed for six years.



■ The WhatsApp tab