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‘Occupation’ protest planned over Mall redevelopment

Residents invited to occupy Walthamstow Town Square in opposition to 29-storey schemescheme



A flyer promoting the ‘occupation’ of Walthamstow Town Square on Saturday 24th February

An [‘occupation’ protest](#) is being planned this month against plans to build over part of Walthamstow Town Square and Gardens.

In December [Waltham Forest Council granted planning permission](#) to Capital & Regional, the owners of The Mall, for construction of 502 homes as part of an extension of the shopping centre that would see the town square reduced by one third.

However, the scheme proved highly controversial with opposition to the proposed 29-storey height of the development and the provision of [only 20 percent ‘affordable’ housing](#).

Now the [Save Walthamstow Town Centre](#) campaign group is organising a protest on Saturday 24th February described as an ‘occupation’ of the town square. In an appeal to local residents on Facebook, the group posted: “‘Affordable’ means ‘unaffordable’ for most people in this borough. These developments are aimed purely at making big profits for shareholders.”

In a list of demands, the campaigners have called for “mass council house building and social rents”, “private rent control” and “market changes subject to a borough-wide ballot”.

At the demonstration starting from 1pm there is scheduled to be live music, dance, children's games, and an open mic for people to speak.

Meanwhile, a campaigner who started a petition that gained more than 2,000 signatures in opposition to The Mall's redevelopment has written an open letter to Mayor of London Sadiq Khan.

David Gardiner said: "The recent decision of the (Labour controlled) Waltham Forest Council to hand over one-third of the public open space of the town square to developers Capital & Regional to build more shops and four enormous high-rise blocks of luxury flats is shameful in the extent to which it gives in to the commercial pressures that you are resisting in the land deals under your direct control."

The mayor's powers include the ability to 'call in' large planning applications that affect the implementation of the London Plan, although he has yet to do so.

In a statement following [December's planning committee meeting](#) at which the Mall application was approved by four votes to one, Councillor Jenny Gray, the committee chair, said: "This planning application has attracted a great deal of interest and raised understandable concerns but everyone can be assured our committee examined the proposals in great detail to ensure we reached the right decision.

"We concluded the scheme's many public benefits outweigh any local impacts but our approval of the plans depends on Capital & Regional meeting clear and cast-iron conditions to ensure the new Mall is a success for everyone."

Capital & Regional says its scheme would boost the local economy by up to £4million per year and provide 350 new jobs in retail. A contribution of £1.5m would also be made by the developer towards the upgrade of Walthamstow Central Underground Station.