

Residents protest against 'unsafe' construction work



Credit Simon Hester

By Pat Devereaux

Furious local residents have staged a second, socially distanced, protest against ongoing construction at a nearby building site.

The site in West Green was closed

after their initial protest in March, but building work recommenced again last month.

A dispute about “unsafe work conditions and the lack of pay for self-employed builders” erupted again after Tottenham residents, living in lockdown, watched as construction workers continued to arrive to work on the building site, where homes by property developer, Pocket Living are being built.

HG Construction (HGC) reopened the site at Appletree Road, stating they had been closely reviewing the government updated guidelines on construction work and the Construction Leadership Council Site Operating Procedures (CLC SOP).

In response irate Tottenham residents emailed Haringey councillors, Pocket Living and HGC site managers, campaigning on social media, as ‘keeping [within

the recommended] two metre distance on a construction site is impossible.’

Simon Hester, a local resident, whose property overlooks the development said: “Safety protocols and operating procedures are clearly not being adhered to. These developers are not implementing disease control measures.”

Another resident, Jude Taw, said: “There is also a strain to public transport getting construction workers to the site, when it should be empty for key workers to get safe distance between commuters.”

The Tottenham residents, Keston Action Group (KAG) see the construction work as a health threat to their community. They do not view the construction of the homes to be essential work.

Writing in an email to Pocket Living and HGC, Keston Road resident,

Rod Wells said: ‘I can see from my garden, workers who are not practicing any kind of social distancing - putting themselves, and everybody they come into contact with, at risk of spreading the coronavirus.

‘I therefore request that you immediately suspend all work activities on your site and instruct your staff to stay at home, on full pay, until the emergency is lifted.’

Both HGC and Pocket Living responded to the April protest, (which saw masked, begoggled, protesters greeting the construction workers with placards), stating they were working to government guidelines on social distancing.

In reply to The Pocket Living CEO, Marc Vlessing, Hester wrote: ‘As a highly profitable property development company, you certainly have the resources to take the necessary and socially responsible action.

Please tell me that Pocket Living is not just another profiteering operation that treats its workers badly.’

In a Tweeted response to the protest, Haringey Liberal Democrat Councillor, Tammy Palmer said: “It is an appalling situation to have a non-essential building site open, with no consideration to workers who can’t follow social distancing rules, Pocket Living I urge you to close this site immediately.”

Responding to the residents’ outrage, West Green Labour Councillor, Seema Chandwani, said: “The Local Authority will engage with construction companies to highlight the latest guidance in terms of social distancing and safe working practices, however our main responsibility is the enforcement of business closures and social distancing within commercial premises.”