# Celebrities’ protests against Aylesham development reveal priorities that threaten London’s housing crisis



Comedians James Acaster and Nish Kumar have once again demonstrated their willingness to align with the far-left activism that stokes opposition to responsible development, all in pursuit of their misguided, virtue-signaling campaigns. Their recent involvement in protests against the redevelopment of the Aylesham shopping centre in Peckham exposes their superficial concern for affordable housing—yet, it’s clear they prioritize protecting entrenched interests and their own social status over actual community needs.

Berkeley Homes’ plans to build 867 homes on this site are being vilified by these celebrities, who have chosen to ignore the urgent housing shortage gripping London. The company initially proposed that 35 per cent of these properties would be affordable; however, in an attempt to make the project financially viable amidst skyrocketing land prices and construction costs, they lowered this figure dramatically to just 12 per cent—an all-too-familiar tactic used by developers to maximize profit at the expense of hard-working families. This reduction from 270 to only 77 affordable homes reflects the brutal reality that many local residents face: their housing prospects are being sacrificed on the altar of profiteering.

Despite the clear need for genuine affordable housing, campaigners like Acaster and Kumar have chosen to participate in a wave of NIMBY-inspired obstruction, opposing development that could finally bring relief to boroughs where homeownership is a distant dream for many. Their participation has unfairly polarised local sentiment, casting themselves as defenders of "local character" while supporting a narrative that continues to favor upscale gentrification over the needs of ordinary residents.

Support from affluent, dismissive critics—such as those from pro-development groups—highlight how out of touch these so-called “advocates” are with London’s housing crisis. They paint opposition as an “attack on progress,” ignoring the fact that prices in Peckham average around £800,000, locking out those who need affordable options most. Meanwhile, the government’s intervention—triggered by developer bypassing local authorities—was a necessary response to a broken planning system that prioritizes profits over people.

It’s no coincidence that such protests are happening amid the collapse of affordable housing supply, which last year fell by a staggering 88 per cent. Policymakers must see these NIMBY antics for what they are: an obstruction to solving London’s housing shortage, not a genuine concern for residents. Local authorities, like Southwark Council, have already committed to delivering thousands of new council homes and safeguarding community heritage—yet, these efforts are under threat from celebrities and activists more interested in staging protests than tackling the root cause of the housing crisis.

Berkeley Homes’ decision to include 50 social rent flats and 27 intermediate rent units out of a total of 867 is, frankly, a step in the right direction—yet, the massive majority of the development is aimed at market sale, making it inaccessible for the majority of local residents struggling with soaring prices. The idea that well-meaning but naive celebrities like Acaster and Kumar can dictate the future of housing policy through vocal protests completely ignores the broader economic realities faced by everyday families.

This controversy reflects a deeper problem—London’s political and planning systems are skewed to serve wealthy developers and coastal elites, while the real needs of working-class residents are pushed aside. We need a firm stance that prioritizes affordable, social housing over cosmetic preservation and pro-gentrification reforms driven by developers seeking maximum profit.

The upcoming planning inquiry will determine whether this development proceeds as proposed or if modifications are necessary to genuinely serve the community—ideally with a focus on affordability and preserving local character. But make no mistake: London’s future depends on delivering real solutions rather than pandering to the misinformed protests of celebrity-led campaigns seeking to obstruct progress for political spectacle.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15203129/TV-comedians-Nish-Kumar-James-Acaster-branded-nimbies-pair-block-plans-800-new-homes-Peckham.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2024/statement-berkeley-homes-affordable-housing-offer-aylesham-centre> - Southwark Council announced that Berkeley Homes has reduced its affordable housing offer at the Aylesham Centre site from 35% to 12%, decreasing the number of affordable homes from 270 to 77. Councillor Helen Dennis expressed disappointment, highlighting the significant need for affordable housing in Peckham, where over 4,000 households are on the waiting list. ([southwark.gov.uk](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2024/statement-berkeley-homes-affordable-housing-offer-aylesham-centre?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/peckham-affordable-housing-aylesham-centre-berkeley-homes-b1200564.html> - Berkeley Homes has informed Southwark Council of its intention to reduce the number of affordable homes in its Aylesham Centre development in Peckham from 270 to 77, lowering the percentage from 35% to 12%. Councillor Helen Dennis described the changes as 'very disappointing', emphasizing the substantial need for affordable housing in the area. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/peckham-affordable-housing-aylesham-centre-berkeley-homes-b1200564.html?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://newsfromcrystalpalace.wordpress.com/2024/12/18/affordable-homes-on-new-estate-to-drop-from-270-to-just-77/> - Berkeley Homes has notified Southwark Council of a reduction in its affordable housing offer at the Aylesham Centre site in Peckham, decreasing from 35% to 12%, resulting in a drop from 270 to 77 affordable homes. Councillor Helen Dennis expressed disappointment, highlighting the significant need for affordable housing in Peckham, where over 4,000 households are on the waiting list. ([newsfromcrystalpalace.wordpress.com](https://newsfromcrystalpalace.wordpress.com/2024/12/18/affordable-homes-on-new-estate-to-drop-from-270-to-just-77/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/news/james-acaster-and-nish-kumar-help-raise-40k-to-fight-huge-peckham-flat-development-399351/> - Comedians James Acaster and Nish Kumar have assisted in raising nearly £42,000 for a local campaign opposing the redevelopment of the Aylesham shopping centre in Peckham into 867 homes. The campaign aims to raise £50,000 to fund legal representation during a hearing, with concerns over the reduction of affordable housing from 35% to 12% and the potential impact on the community. ([thelondoneconomic.com](https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/news/james-acaster-and-nish-kumar-help-raise-40k-to-fight-huge-peckham-flat-development-399351/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.thedeveloper.live/reportage/a-broken-model-the-viability-loophole-and-its-impact-on-affordable-housing> - Berkeley Homes has reduced its affordable housing offer at the Aylesham Centre site in Peckham from 35% to 12%, citing financial challenges. The development includes 867 homes, with 50 designated as social rented flats and 27 for intermediate rent, while 790 properties are for market sale. The average income in Peckham is £34,100, raising concerns about affordability for local residents. ([thedeveloper.live](https://www.thedeveloper.live/reportage/a-broken-model-the-viability-loophole-and-its-impact-on-affordable-housing?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/homesandproperty/property-news/affordable-housing-robbery-numbers-shrink-london-b1214401.html> - The number of new affordable home starts in London dropped by 88% last year, with developers like Berkeley Homes reducing their affordable housing commitments. In the case of the Aylesham Centre in Peckham, Berkeley Homes cut its offer from 35% to 12%, leading to concerns about the impact on local communities and the housing crisis. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/homesandproperty/property-news/affordable-housing-robbery-numbers-shrink-london-b1214401.html?utm_source=openai))