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## Resident-led 'Circus' alternative is revealed after Mayor Boris gave go-ahead to luxury flats scheme at Mount Pleasant site



Drawings released this week show how a community group wants to develop the Royal Mail's former sorting office site in Clerkenwell



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by WILLIAM McLENNAN

GROUNDBREAKING plans for a community group to buy a former postal sorting office from the Royal Mail to prevent the construction of a "fortress-like" block of luxury flats have been unveiled.

Under the proposal, which has been backed by investment firm Legal & General and housing association Circle Housing Group, a resident-led group would buy the Mount Pleasant site and build "more of the types of homes that London desperately needs" – including 10 per cent more affordable housing.

Royal Mail's plans to build 15-storey towers with more than 600 luxury flats on the Clerkenwell site were given the go-ahead by Mayor of London Boris Johnson last year, despite fierce opposition from residents, who were dismissed by Mr Johnson as "bourgeois nimbys".

As well as objections to the bulk of the buildings, the plans were criticised for providing just 12 per cent affordable housing. The value of the development to the Royal Mail has been estimated at up to £1 billion.

The alternative scheme – called Mount Pleasant Circus and Fleet Valley Gardens – was presented at a public meeting in Cowcross Street last night (Thursday).

They were developed by the Mount Pleasant Association community group and research group Create Streets, alongside architect Francis Terry.

Edward Denison, of the Mount Pleasant Association, said: "For over a year we have been working with a team of highly experienced professionals on a co-design process for the Mount Pleasant site. This has involved numerous wider community events in conjunction with our ongoing application to become a Neighbourhood Forum.

"Our scheme aims to realise the true potential of this extraordinary site by turning it into the heart of a new neighbourhood in the centre of London through excellent planning and design.

"We want to build more of the types of homes that London desperately needs with more affordable homes and to create a desirable and well-connected place to live and work."

Nicholas Boys Smith, director of Create Streets, said: "This is about creating streets for Londoners to live in, walk in, work in and shop in – above all, to be in, and to love for generations."