

Dear Susie Saraiva

Re: Demolition of existing buildings to provide a civic square, new civic offices, 320 residential dwellings, a food store, 5 retail units and a pedestrian footbridge to Furnivall Gardens.

Application Ref: 2010/03465/FUL.

Listed Building Consent ref: 2010/03466/LBC and Conservation Area Consent ref: 2010/03467/CAC.

I have the following comments on the above applications:

I object strongly to the proposed Town Hall redevelopment for the following reasons:

SCALE, HEIGHT AND STYLE

- The towers are shockingly out of scale with their surroundings. (See UDP requirement EN8.)
- This area has not been designated as appropriate for tall buildings.
- The architectural style is undistinguished.
- The spacious and pleasing views from both banks of the Thames, along several miles of riverside, would be spoiled by these oppressively overpowering blocks. (See UDP requirement EN31/2(a).)
- Even more importantly: a development reaching this height would create a precedent for further tall buildings, including along the river.
- This is not the commercial centre of Hammersmith. Rather, it should provide a different sort of centre: a dignified setting for the Town Hall and a welcoming environment for both residents and visitors.

NEIGHBOURING CONSERVATION AREAS

Views in and out of several conservation areas, and their settings, would be damaged. (See UDP Policy EN2B.)

IMPACT OF THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE (AND THE BLOCKS) ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

(a) Upper Mall/Dove passage

The setting of this area would be spoiled: it is one of the few survivals of old Hammersmith, and includes a number of handsome listed buildings.

(b) Furnivall Gardens

The area of this much-used small park would be much reduced. (See EDP Policy EN2B, again.)

(c) The Town Hall (itself a listed building)

One of the main objectives of this scheme was to reveal the original Town Hall building, but the scheme defeats its own purpose: all but the King Street façade would be obscured and overwhelmed.

(d) Safety issues

A semi-hidden and so potentially threatening space would be created under the bridge, offering an invitation to muggers. Users of the bridge would not feel any safer than users of the existing subway: in fact, it would be more practicable to improve the safety of the subway.

(e) Extra expense

Bridge and bank would be expensive to maintain

LIGHT POLLUTION

It is extraordinary that in the 21st century, just as the problem of light pollution is being addressed all over the country (and LBHF has recently dealt with a local source of excessive light, the Premier Inn), this scheme actually proposes creating 'illuminating landmarks', visible from as far away as Putney and Barnes.

'AFFORDABLE' AND SPECIAL HOUSING

- (1) No affordable housing is included in the scheme.
- (2) Most seriously, the Thomas Pocklington Trust housing for blind and partially sighted people would actually be demolished. Many of the residents have lived here for some years, getting to know their surroundings and neighbours.

(This all runs counter to David Cameron's aims of encouraging the 'Big Society')

THE CINEMA

The Art Deco cinema is worth preserving in its own right; it simply needs a little refurbishment. It is the only cinema in Hammersmith, and much used by all ages, in surroundings where young and old feel safe. It is already important to the community, and could be made even more of a social hub, given its popularity. Several thousand people have already signed the 'Save our Cinema' petition.

SUPERMARKET AND LOCAL SHOPS

If anything is not needed in King Street, it is another supermarket. The area is already well provided with supermarkets of various sizes. Local shops, useful and deserving of encouragement in most cases, would undoubtedly be threatened.

PARKING AND TRAFFIC

The area is already congested and polluted, and pressure on parking space is already intense. The addition of a large supermarket would be the last straw. Also, this proposal allows for barely a third of the parking space that would be needed by residents.

Any new development must incorporate the provision of extensive underground parking.

COUNCIL OFFICES

I understand that office space in the Town Hall Extension has been underused, even though the Council has (somewhat unfortunately) been selling off other office space. Is quite so much space needed as has been claimed – for the next few years at least?

With the merger of three Councils, some 'rationalisation' is likely. This would mean fewer employees and less office space: an unpleasant thought for LBHF, but one that surely has to be faced when undertaking such an ambitious plan.

Ideally, the Town Hall extension should be demolished and the original Town Hall made visible again. Certainly the immediate area needs some regeneration. However, the current proposals are unsuitable, and would irretrievably damage a large area of Hammersmith.

This part of the Borough is rich in expertise and public spiritedness. Residents would be only too happy to employ their energy in making positive, alternative suggestions, rather than in having to organize protest meetings. Perhaps the Council could draw on this, working with residents rather than (as sometimes appears) against them.

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