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Mr Nigel Pallace
Director of Environment
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
London W6 9JU

18 September 2010

Dear Mr Pallace,

King St regeneration proposals

We refer you to a letter from Melanie Whitlock of the Hammersmith Society on the King St regeneration proposals, dated 14 July 2010. We are in full agreement with the comments and reservations of the Hammersmith Society on this matter and I draw your attention to paragraphs on height and density, traffic, supermarket/loss of cinema, setting of the listed Town Hall, and footbridge over the A4.

The Brackenbury Residents Association encompasses two conservation areas – Bradmore and Starch Green – both of which will be overlooked by the 14-storey-plus blocks proposed for the development. In particular, the view from Dalling Road, currently closing at Cromwell Mansions, would, under the new development, be blocked by a tower.

Commendation

We are delighted that the Council wishes to remove the ugly 1970s extension on the King St side of the Town Hall, reinstate the stone steps to the Town Hall and create an open square – in other words, remove the excrescences and bring the Town Hall back to an original and dignified condition suitable to the premier civic building of Hammersmith.

We are content for the Council to have new offices adjacent to the Town Hall if these can be shown to be necessary, sustainable to latest standards, and efficient.

The development price exacted by Helical Bar is far too high, however, for the following reasons:

Height and density

We refer to your 2007 original brief for developers: ‘(the height of the proposed development) should be considered carefully. The possibility of some elements rising to around the height of the existing Town hall extensionis not ruled out ...’

This is the clearest indication possible that seven stories maximum for the development was envisaged, and properly so. Yet the developer has not cut his coat to fit his cloth, but has disregarded the Council’s brief. In 2007 the Brackenbury Residents Association advised the Council to appoint a Design Champion; otherwise, we said, this development would be taken out of the Council’s hands and run by the developer to his advantage – and this appears to be the case. Moreover, the visuals shown by the developer at an exhibition this year and

on its website are highly misleading to the public; please see the attachments (to the covering email) for an artist's outline of the development from the river and a highlighted developer's view.

Contrary to the aspirations of the developer the Town Hall is not in the town centre of Hammersmith; whether the centre is located at the Broadway or Lyric Square, it is not located at the Town Hall which is bordered by residential properties to the south and west and, beyond the thin skin of shops on the north and east, lie further residential neighbourhoods. Over-high buildings cannot therefore be justified on the grounds that the site is a town centre. If these tall buildings are given permission it will open a wedge to a rash of further high-rise along King St. We do not wish to live in a borough of Wandsworth mark 2 river development.

Pocklington Trust tenants

The Pocklington Trust tenants would be displaced as you know by this development. We were given to understand that the Trust took a commercial view of the proposals and was therefore sanguine about the development. If so, it seems we were misinformed. A letter from one of its directors informed us this week that the Pocklington Trust strongly objects to the proposed development, giving as reasons the forcible removal of its tenants from their homes and the destruction of a permanent endowment providing income for the continuing work of the charity. It is particularly concerned, as are others, about tenants with assured shorthold tenancies and those who are blind.

Footbridge over the A4

In addition to the comments made by the Hammersmith Society and the Historic Buildings Group, we note that the bridge will be unavoidably windy and exposed to the elements. Down-draft from the high buildings will exacerbate conditions. Bricks can be thrown over the railings onto traffic below. The walkway will be lengthy and rise twice as high as the underpass is low – muggers can mug on a bridge just as easily as they can in an underpass. Architects tell us that any building under the bridge will be expensive to maintain. The bank on the Furnivall Gardens side, and its wall facing the A4, will be also expensive to maintain compared to the existing Furnivall Gardens. This maintenance will be born by the Council for years to come. Since most of the traffic noise comes from the flyover the bank will have little effect in reducing noise. The bank will diminish a view of the Town Hall from Furnivall Gardens.

The footbridge was proposed by the developer to increase the market value of the flats in the development. It was not proposed by the Council in its design brief.

We say that the Council can take this opportunity to slow the traffic in what is essentially a residential area and join the north side of the A4 with the south by way of one or more road crossings: at least one road crossing between the Hogarth roundabout and the Town Hall, and traffic managed between the flyover and the Town Hall to create another crossing joining the Town Hall and Furnivall Gardens. If the Dept for Transport is still obdurate then an inexpensive crossing via a widened underpass would be acceptable to pedestrians and cyclists alike.

Traffic

We are very concerned about traffic generated by the development, particularly since under the current one-way scheme all east-bound traffic will be funnelled up through Studland St and Glenthorne Road. We have seen no traffic study.

Loss of cinema

The borough has a number of cinemas but none in Hammersmith. When the Armadillo for the NCP carpark was given permission (2007) it was lauded as offering a town centre cinema. The new proposal for this site does not offer a cinema so there is no longer even this substitute. Properly managed the Odeon in King St would provide an exciting and attractive venue for cinema and other cultural activities while retaining its 1930s frontage to complement the Town Hall of the same period.

For all the above reasons, aligned to objections made by the Hammersmith Society, we urge the Council to support its original design brief and to renegotiate a more acceptable solution with Helical Bar.

Yours sincerely,

Rosemary Pettit

Membership Secretary
Brackenbury Residents Association

cc. Cllr Mark Loveday

Cllr Lucy Ivimy

Cllr Harry Phibbs

Cllr Charlie Dewhirst

Cllr Stephen Cowan

Cllr Michael Cartwright

Cllr P.J. Murphy

Barbara Woda, Head of Urban Design & Conservation LBHF

The Hammersmith Society

Hammersmith and Fulham Historic Buildings Group

Save Our Skyline

The Pocklington Trust

Various residents' groups