

Nigel Pallace Esq
Director of Environment
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Town Hall
King Street
London W6 9JU

1st October 2010

Dear Mr Pallace

FURNIVAL GARDENS & NIGEL PLAYFAIR AVENUE HAMMERSMITH

I am writing to express strong concern at the proposals currently under discussion for the redevelopment of the sites adjacent to Hammersmith Town Hall. I write both as Chairman of the Planning and Conservation working group of the London Parks and Gardens Trust and as a former Vice-chairman of the Thames Strategy - Kew to Chelsea.

Furnival Gardens are included in the Inventory of Historic Green Spaces compiled by the London Parks and Gardens Trust, and as such are one of the sites discussed between the Trust and officers of your council for inclusion in a list of sites of local historic interest in your borough. The gardens also lie within the Thames Policy Area and within The Mall Conservation Area. The Town Hall is listed, and the Town Hall and Nigel Playfair Avenue are surrounded by, though not included in, conservation areas on all sides. In addition, the Town Hall - and therefore any adjoining built development - is prominently visible from the River Thames and from the opposite river bank, and policies for protecting the visual amenities of the River Thames therefore also apply.

The outline proposals for redevelopment that I have seen show clumsily-grouped and over-scaled blocks of buildings between the Great West Road and King Street linked to the riverside by a pedestrian bridge that calls for excessively long ramps through Furnival Gardens. The scheme is so clearly contrary to national planning guidance and to specific planning policies contained in your council's UDP and the Thames Strategy - Kew to Chelsea that it should be knocked on the head now, before it becomes a planning application.

National planning guidance requires local planning authorities to consider the setting of listed buildings in determining applications and to preserve or enhance (or at least avoid causing harm to) the character and appearance of conservation areas. In addition, the publication in March 2010 of Planning Policy Statement 5 introduced the concept of heritage assets, both designated and undesignated, which are a material consideration to be taken into account in preparing policy and proposals and in determining applications. Furnival Gardens are just such a heritage asset.

Your council's UDP Policy on Open Spaces and Nature Conservation policy EN22 states: *Development on public open space... will not be permitted unless it can be shown that such development would preserve or enhance its open character, its function as a sport, leisure or recreational use; and its contribution to biodiversity and visual amenity.*

UDP The River Thames and Thames Policy Area Policy G8: *The council will seek to protect and enhance the character, use, ecology and archaeology of the River Thames and the riverside by:*

c) requiring all riverside developments to respect the environment and enhance the special character of the river and riverside...

UDP Environment River and Canal Policy EN31: Important Views along, across and from the River:

1. Development within the Thames Policy Area will not be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the view from the following points:

(a) From Hammersmith Bridge.

2. Development will also not be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the view from within the Thames Policy Area of any of the following important local landmarks... or their settings:

(a) Upper and Lower Mall. The richness and diversity of the historical waterfront... Hammersmith Terrace... open space of Furnival Gardens...

The Thames Landscape Strategy - Kew to Chelsea description (p. 4.27) of Character reach No. 3 states: *Furnival gardens represents an important townscape feature and local amenity.*

TS-KC Executive Summary p. 2 Heritage and Conservation: *Conserve and restore historic parks and gardens; reinstate visual and physical connections to the river.*

Views and Landmarks: *Protect setting, skyline and backdrop of historical waterfronts from adverse impact of new development.*

In the Evening Standard of 28th September, Simon Jenkins wrote a characteristically perceptive article entitled *London Planners must embrace civilised living*. He writes, *London design has become the Cinderella of metropolitan politics. The policy pursued for a decade by the city's elected leaders, Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson, is to let rip. The civic beauty that*

was once guarded by the old London County Council is more at the mercy of the market economy than in any other city in Europe. Sadly he is correct in what he says. Architecture and planning developments seemed to improve in the 1990s, only to have slipped back again in the last ten years.

To return to Nigel Playfair Avenue, however, the only identifiable virtue of the new proposals would be the demolition of the Town Hall extension of 1971-5 by the borough architect, which is an unpleasant building that demonstrates how local planning authorities do not always act in their own (or their ratepayers') best interests. The removal of the building would be a benefit, but the price proposed to be paid in terms of excessive and obtrusive new development to the west is far too high.

If the proposals under discussion get as far as a planning application, I hope and trust that you will refuse them for the reasons outlined above.

Yours sincerely

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