

6 Ravenscourt Road  
London W6 0UG

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

28 September 2010

Dear Mr. Pallace

Re: Town Hall development plans, King Street W6

I am writing to express my horrified reaction to the plans to demolish the Town Hall extension and redevelop the site to the west of the Town Hall. The scale and impact of the plans has only recently become apparent, and bears little relation to the favourable and partial views promoted by the developers and publicized by the Council.

- In none of the plans or CGI impressions promoted and publicized as above (on the King Street Regeneration website, on the Council's own website or in *h&f news*) is there a true sense of the impact of, in particular, the two 14½ storey tower blocks which form an integral part of the development, or their effect on neighboring conservation areas or the historic and treasured riverside from Hammersmith Bridge to Hammersmith Terrace.
- The tower blocks show no sensitivity to their setting and are both unduly prominent and singularly undistinguished. Combined with the even more undistinguished Premier Inn (built under a less rigorous and less powerful planning regime, and surely to be seen as an aberration rather than a precedent), they will invite more high rise development in an area where it is in no way appropriate. I note that the Council plans to dispose of the Palingswick House site, a prime candidate for a development of similar height and density. I also note that the conjunction of Landmark House, One Lyric Square, the Triangle Building, the Broadway Centre and the Metro and Novotel buildings in the true centre of Hammersmith has done nothing to enhance or, in the long term, regenerate that area: quantities of office space remains unlet and increasingly shops close or are replaced with downmarket outlet stores.
- The development as a whole is, I estimate, *ten times* the cubic footage of the Town Hall extension it seeks to replace. Of this, as I understand it, the Council will be able to bring many of its services from across the borough to occupy two buildings flanking the proposed new public square. This is a logistical improvement for the Council, but the price in terms of volume of development needed (we are told) to offset them is simply too high.
- The development departs significantly from the Council's brief of April 2007, which states that "the height of any proposed development should be considered carefully. The possibility of some elements rising to around the height of the existing Town Hall Extension is not ruled out... Any height above the existing general level of the Town Hall and the buildings surrounding the site will need to be examined very carefully in relation

to views from the river... Development proposals that have an effect on those views should protect and, if possible, enhance them.” The height of the Town Hall Extension seems to have been taken as a minimum rather than a maximum for most of the development, with the maximum being twice that height. If any private individual or organization were to submit an application so clearly against the spirit of guidelines, the Council’s planning department would rightly dismiss it out of hand. Should the Council steer through an application so obviously in its own interests and against the wishes of many of its constituents, you can imagine the outrage and cynicism it will provoke.

- I am mystified as to why, given the overwhelming feeling in the community against the six- to eight-storey development proposed by Tesco in 2004, the developers or the Council can imagine that a development rising to 14½ storeys and incorporating another supermarket should be in any way more acceptable.
- I personally do not need or want another supermarket of any size or any brand in the area. There are, on my reckoning, half a dozen supermarkets and countless convenience stores within a ten-minute walk of the site. Another supermarket will undermine those and force smaller stores out of business, creating yet more empty retail spaces. Supplies to that supermarket and other shops will call for numbers of HGV deliveries which, I understand, are to be routed along King Street where they will cause congestion and pollution and a high risk to the large number of pedestrians and cyclists who use the street at present.
- Similarly, I predict that the “regeneration” promised by new shops and restaurants around the public square will simply draw footfall and trade away from those elsewhere in the borough – as has happened with Westfield and its impact on high streets from Kensington to Chiswick, to say nothing of the Broadway and King’s Mall centres. I understand that this is not strictly a planning issue (it should be!) but I should like to point out that the gain of the supposed regeneration does not come without loss elsewhere.
- The development makes no attempt to preserve or maintain the cinema. Nor, it must be said, do the current tenants, who clearly have no incentive to invest in a condemned building. I believe this is a wasted opportunity and will be a real loss to the community, especially to young people for whom spending afternoons and evenings hanging around shops and a supermarket is no sort of a substitute. The cinema itself is one of a number of original 1930s buildings which are taken for granted and run down in Hammersmith but would be prized anywhere else.
- The proposed public square and the opening up of the 1938 Town Hall façade are attractive ideas, but completely undermined by the scale of the surrounding buildings which will keep the square in shadow for most of the day and overwhelm the Town Hall in height and bulk.
- The bridge to Furnivall Gardens is being presented as a public gain, providing step-free access to the river. The bridge was not mentioned in the original planning brief, and it has become clear that it exists in order to market apartments in the development at a premium as “riverside homes”. In return for this, it will: take over a significant part of

Furnivall Gardens in order to provide access ramps and paths (and who will want to sit in a small area bounded by paths or on a steep bank above the A4, or be able to play games on either?); block views of the Town Hall's south façade just as the north is opened up; overwhelm the historic complex of buildings around Dove Passage with 5-6m earth banks; present a new danger to traffic (objects being thrown from the bridge).

I do appreciate the Council's intention to replace an unloved building and modernize its provision of services at minimal cost to the taxpayer. However, I feel very strongly that the development as it stands is being pushed through without proper consideration of the real needs of the community (which amount to something more than glossy residential, retail and office space) and potentially at lasting cost to residents and visitors, both in terms of built environment and in economic and social impact. In short, I think that to pursue this development would be a terrible mistake.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs) Mairi Bastin

Cc: Andy Slaughter MP

Councillors Charlie Dewhirst

Lucy Ivimy

Harry Phibbs

Michael Cartwright

Stephen Cowan

P J Murphy

[isupport@saveourskyline.co.uk](mailto:isupport@saveourskyline.co.uk)