



15 October 2009

Mr Neil Shaw
Planning Section
Technical Services Department
Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

Dear Mr Shaw,

Osiers Gate planning application 2009/3017

I am writing to register my views on the above application, the third stage of the Riverside Quarter development.

Given that Osiers Gate completes the Riverside Quarter, it was inevitable that these plans would be submitted and it is in the overall interests of the development that they should be.

I welcome some aspects of this application. The ongoing improvements to the mouth of the river Wandle are positive; indeed I would like to see an even more innovative approach to the Wandle, opening it up as much as possible so that one of the borough's still hidden treasures can be better enjoyed and featured.

Affordable housing

I welcome the recognition that Putney needs more affordable housing for rent and I hope any consent will require the developers to properly integrate the affordable aspects of the development with the shared ownership and market-value housing so that neighbours will be unable to tell which properties are of which tenure. Full integration of housing is the way to ensure successful, diverse housing developments.

We have seen with, for example, Whitelands Park, the tensions that develop when housing is polarised between key worker blocks and full-market-price housing, especially when the key worker parts are denied rights (in their case, parking rights) given to the rest of the development.

Continued/

Integration is also necessary to ensure that we don't end up with easily identifiable enclaves of key workers, or less affluent residents, shunted into the least marketable part of the development - as has happened with the Osiers Road affordable housing in stage 1 of the Riverside Quarter. I would like to make it a condition of approval, if permission is granted, for the affordable homes not solely to be sited closest to the railway line; and not solely to be one-bedroom but a variety of sizes.

And due attention will need to be given to enable the shared ownership and social tenanted parts of this development in respect of off-street parking rights. This development is not in the top public transport accessibility level and as such there will inevitably be those who need cars. Social tenants will be unable to afford market-rate car parking in this development so some element of affordable parking must be coupled with the provision of affordable housing.

I do believe that a higher proportion of this development could and should be affordable, given the shortage of affordable housing in Putney and the social polarisation of the area. Given that other phases of the Riverside Quarter development have contained unacceptably low proportions of affordable housing, this third phase should be used as an opportunity to redress the balance. If we could get closer to 40% affordable, that would be a genuine signal that the council recognises the damage the loss of affordable rented housing in Putney has done to the community here.

Traffic and transport

I have serious concerns about the impact of the huge amount of additional traffic this development will create - not least given that stage 2 of the Riverside Quarter has yet to be built and so we cannot know exactly how much of an impact that stage; at least as significant as stage 1, will have on local traffic problems.

What we do know that the existing road network is already gridlocked several times a week; and that the one main entrance to the Riverside Quarter: Point Pleasant, is a relatively modest road that opens onto Putney Bridge Road at an awkward point and that when stage 2 and Osiers Gate reach completion this will become a major traffic intersection.

I also believe that a case is becoming increasingly compelling for there to be a new station on the Waterloo mainline serving the Riverside Quarter: this is clearly a large enough development to justify it and its equidistance between Putney and Wandsworth Town mainlines makes this area poorly served by public transport. A railway station would go a considerable way to addressing the impact the Riverside Quarter is already having, and will increasingly have, on the local road network.

21 storey tower

The one aspect of this application that means I cannot support it in its current form is the proposal for a 21-storey block on the northern edge of the Osiers Gate development.

The Thames in this part of London is being turned into a canyon by gross overdevelopment, unsympathetic to the traditional character of our riverside. The three Eastfields Avenue blocks fronting the riverside are of less impact than those further

down the river in Battersea, but the much larger blocks already given consent to be built behind them will further this canyonisation that is neither attractive nor desirable.

A 21 storey block immediately behind them will be of even further detriment to our riverside and I submit that they won't be especially marketable, affording very little riverside views even to those living on the higher levels, given the waste transfer station to the east and the two tiers of blocks in front and to the west.

This 21 storey tower block is unlike any other building proposed or given permission on the riverside quarter. 21 storeys is also equivalent to one of the Putney Place towers rejected last year. It is taller than Putney Wharf Tower, currently Putney's tallest building. And though it will be dwarfed by the twin towers proposed for the Ram Brewery site, that is more a condemnation of those plans than an argument for this building.

In their supporting documentation, the developers demonstrated that they had carried out some detailed modelling of other options for Osiers Gate. One of their arguments against some of the layouts - several of which did not include a tower block - was that they involved buildings backing onto the railway, which they claimed would lead to a poor quality of life.

I submit that they are wrong on this. Putney has a highly successful, recently built block of flats alongside the district line: the SW15H development at 73 Upper Richmond Road. There are plenty of blocks that back onto the mainline as you get towards Waterloo; admittedly many of these are council blocks but several are not - and these are not derelict blocks.

Furthermore, it is entirely possible to come up with a design that mitigates the impact of noise nuisance on any properties closest to the railway line: balconies for flats here could be placed on the northern side fronting the "square" that is a key part of this application; communal corridors accessing the flats, which allow in a great deal of light, could principally be aligned closest to the railway line.

I would urge planners to work with the developers on variants of options 3, 4 and 5 which would enable them to lower the height of the tower block; ideally to less than 15 storeys. I also like the sketched designs that appear to model the tower on Putney Wharf tower, as this would create symmetry in the area.

If the applicants are unwilling to compromise on their tower; which is entirely out of keeping with the rest of the Riverside Quarter and with Putney, then I must, regretfully, oppose this application.

Precedent

The issue of precedent remains absolutely critical to protecting Putney's character, even in a modern setting like the Riverside Quarter. The Riverside Quarter is not that far from Putney Place, and establishing a permission for a 21-storey tower this close to central Putney will jeopardise the victories those of us who have successfully turned back the Putney Place and Tileman House developments.

It is not ideal for Wandsworth Park to begin to resemble Central Park in New York, with massive buildings hemming it in on all sides. Although there is a little space between

Osiers Gate and Wandsworth Park, there is not that much, and I suspect that we are not many years off planning applications being submitted to modernise the Northfields buildings right on the edge of the park.

A 21-storey building allowed just metres from here, alongside the already-completed Prospect Quay development, will encourage developers to build higher than acceptable here. With Putney Place to the south and Putney Wharf to the west, Wandsworth Park and the surrounding human-scale streetscene of east-central Putney would indeed start to feel hemmed in.

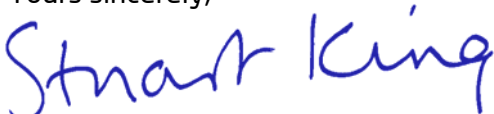
Public access and right of way

Finally I would ask that this development not be allowed to be a gated-off community, isolated from the rest of the riverside quarter and Putney. Gated developments are, I believe, incredibly detrimental to community - they self-evidently signal that the occupants do not consider themselves part of the wider area nor wish to be involved in it. They substantially worsen social cohesion by encouraging an "us-and-them" mentality and I find the mentality behind them poisonous.

Given the plans to open up the Wandle, I am not clear whether it is even possible for the developers to gate off Osiers Gate (though the putative name of this development suggests that is what is intended) but I would urge you to condition a public right of way through this development to the Wandle.

I trust you will consider my submission and I look forward to being kept informed of progress in respect of this application.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart King