



19 September 2008

Mr Richard Evans  
Planning Service  
Technical Services Department  
Town Hall  
Wandsworth High Street  
London SW18 2PU

Dear Mr Evans,

**Putney Place, 84-88 Upper Richmond Road Planning Application (ref 2008/3321)**

I am writing to register my opposition to the proposed redevelopment of Putney Place, 84-88 Upper Richmond Road. My objection is on five grounds:

**1. Overdevelopment**

This is a grotesque overdevelopment of central Putney: out of scale with the surrounding environment and without parallel in the surrounding area. It is ill suited to its proposed location and aesthetically is nothing short of a horror. I cannot imagine many residents living in the immediate local area would wish to view such a carbuncle on a daily basis.

Putney is not Manhattan - nor is it a community like others in London where high-rise development is the norm. Putney has a more human scale that makes the area distinctive - not better, not worse, just different - to other parts of the borough and that distinction is worth preserving.

Plenty of people enjoy high-rise living. No one is arguing they are wrong and there are plenty of suitably located high-rise options available to people who wish to live in a high-rise environment. Putney is not and should become one of them.

Upper Richmond Road forms part of Putney's town centre. While it is appropriate and reasonable that development within the town centre might be of a somewhat greater height and density relative to the residential areas surrounding it, this proposal significantly exceeds what most local residents would consider acceptable. These 26 and 21 storey proposals represent a substantial, massive and unacceptable overdevelopment of this site.

**2. Local infrastructure**

I have read the supporting statements by the developer and their belief that their plans will not overwhelm local services. I have also seen some convincing arguments that the developers' claims over public transport capacity in respect of the District Line and Waterloo mainline are, to say the least, questionable.

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**Stuart King**

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To date the Council does not appear to have published what it considers an appropriate contribution by the developers to ensure that the capacity of the local infrastructure is enhanced in order for it to absorb and manage the additional demands that will be placed upon it by these proposals.

But it would have to be vast in scale and cost in order to provide for the extra car journeys to and from the site; the extra residents needing schools, hospitals, doctors, dentists and other local services. District line capacity is at a peak with nearby East Putney Station - much in need of renovation not to mention a passenger lift - unlikely to be able to take the additional strain.

Just as there is a capacity to the number of people that can be crammed into Putney before we change, beyond recognition, the character of this area, so too is there a finite capacity to our local infrastructure before it needs a quantum leap in service provision.

The car parking proposals for this development strike me as woefully inadequate. It is simply unrealistic to expect 32 car parking spaces to be in any way adequate for 300 residential units. It is an entirely laudable aim to limit the number of car parking spaces in areas in close proximity to public transport hubs. But the experience - of this council and others - in trying such schemes has not been encouraging. The consequence of such policy has caused difficulty and animosity in developments like SW15H between those who have, and have not parking spaces, and between those who are eligible for residents' parking permits and those who are not.

If the plans are approved as proposed there will be a significant parking overspill into local roads as car owning residents in Putney Place seek a local space to park their vehicle. I welcome the provision of a significant allocation of secure cycle places but these should be in addition to, not instead of, a realistic provision of car parking spaces - for residents, their visitors and employees.

I cannot help but note that this area - already one of the most densely populated in the constituency - has, in the recent past, had the SW15H development added to it (for which the only evident "community gain" was a new Somerfield supermarket and too few affordable homes). And plans are looming for the Capsticks site on the other side of East Putney Station. These are not insignificant additions to the area. The capacity of this area is strained already, and with the failure of SW15H to let all its available commercial floorspace, we cannot be confident that the Putney Place development will succeed where SW15H has failed.

These plans are the difference between Putney being strained and it being swamped.

### **3. Local economy**

The purpose of a town centre is to provide a sustainable local economy through which an area can thrive. Upper Richmond Road provides a great deal of Putney's office space, with the area's shops benefiting from the resulting trade of office workers. In turn these offices and shops employ local people.

I have been concerned about the quality and competitiveness of Putney High Street for many years, and have been advocating a ten-point plan to improve our town centre since 2006. This proposal - in particular the loss of office space that would result - would exacerbate an already chronic problem.

To this problem must be noted the existing planning loophole which the developers of Putney Place are now exploiting; namely that after keeping office space vacant for so many years a landlord can then apply to change the use of the site to far more lucrative housing. The Council must close this loophole in its pending review of its local development framework and resist developers' attempts to slash Putney's office space capacity - here, in the Capsticks site and in Tileman House further down Upper Richmond Road.

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#### **4. Affordable housing**

This scheme argues that its great strength is the number of affordable housing units it will provide. I reject this argument as fallacious. Affordable homes should be a significant proportion of the housing provided on this site, second only to the need to retain office space in this town centre environment. Wandsworth has seen the number of council homes to rent halved since 1981: from 32,000 to barely 16,000. Local people are desperate for new, affordable homes - be they council tenants in overcrowded flats, first time buyers wanting to start independent lives or the sons and daughters of existing, established Putney families forced to stay at home long after they and their parents might like.

And with the international credit crunch making the Putney Place plans look economically less viable by the day, the best option here would be to substantially lower the height of buildings while at the same time substantially increase the proportion of affordable homes for rent.

What Putney Place comes down to is the greed of developers and how prepared Wandsworth's Conservative councillors are to face down that greed.

#### **5. Precedent**

While I find this scheme ugly and unfit for purpose, it is just one development. But because there is nothing close to this site in Putney in terms of scale, density or design, Putney Place is far more than just one application in isolation: it will set a precedent that will influence - for good or for ill - future local applications - be they Capsticks or Tileman House, or any other site in Putney.

Any prospective developer could not but leave with the impression that anything goes in Putney if these plans are approved. No building would be too high. No density rules too strict that they could not be circumvented. No amount of traffic gridlock too severe to impose on an area. No limit on how much private profit they can take and no expectation from this council as to the contribution they should make to the community.

I call upon the Council to refuse this application on its own shortcomings: poor design, ugly architecture, insufficient office space, overdevelopment, overpopulation, lack of affordable homes and incapacity of local infrastructure. These grounds alone merit rejection. But no planning authority can consider such a plan in isolation and without looking at the context of the area in which this development would sit. And that context ought to oblige the council to refuse this dreadful application.

Yours sincerely,



**Stuart King**