

Wandsworth Society

41 Fullerton Road LONDON SW18 1BU
020 8874 9801

ataylor43@sky.com

Brandan Wilkinson
Wandsworth Council
Planning Service
Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

sent by e-mail planning@wandsworth.gov.uk

6 May 2015

Dear Mr Wilkinson

**Land at Mapleton Crescent, SW18
Application No. 2015/0662**

We have discussed the application submitted by Pocket in February, having attended a presentation of their proposals last December. We remain strongly opposed to the height of the tower and the siting and location of the scheme, but, nevertheless want to encourage the provision of affordable housing in Wandsworth.

Our comments are as follows:-

1. We have always been opposed to the principle of exceptionally tall buildings in the centre of Wandsworth. We believe low-rise development is appropriate, bearing in mind the scale of heritage assets such as All Saints Church and Wandsworth Plain. The towers already built intrude into the views across the Wandle Valley and, in this instance, the proposed tower lies directly behind St Anne's Church, spoiling the view from the east.
2. In the Local Plan, approved as recently as 2012, the Council acknowledged that many town centre sites would be sensitive to tall buildings. They set a series of modest heights, site by site, above which development would be considered as 'tall' and would only be accepted if strong criteria were met.
3. We were satisfied with this approach on the assumption that Local Plan policies would be adhered to. Since 2012, however, the Council have effectively torn up their policies and have permitted 'tall' developments, between 16 and 32 storeys, on at least eight sites in the centre. We feel we must continue to oppose persistent policy breaches to try to prevent over-development getting out of hand.
4. Thus, we object to the excessive height of the tower proposed here. We also have other concerns:
 - little open space can be provided on such a small site and there can be no parking at all, even though many residents will need cars and some parking for visitors.
 - the block will have a very poor outlook, particularly from the lower floors; the flats overlook the scruffy back of the Southside Centre, used for service vehicle access and waste storage and collection.
5. In this instance, we acknowledge that if we were successful in opposing the tower, we would be losing much-needed affordable housing. The supply of cheaper accommodation in the area has already been compromised by the Council accepting inadequate provision in other schemes because of alleged financial pressures. A recent example is Garratt Place, where the Council approved their own scheme with a percentage of affordable housing below their own standards. We would therefore support the principle of providing affordable homes on the site, particularly in view of Pocket's management policy for the flats and the limit on re-sale.

6. We have some concern as to whether the 20% level of discount proposed would bring prices down to a genuinely affordable level. KPMG reported this week that the average earnings needed for a first-time buyer in London is c.£77,000 pa and this suggests that these flats will still be well out of the reach of local people wanting their own home.
7. Otherwise, there are other aspects of the scheme which we support:-
 - the overall design, which we think is much superior to other approved high-rise schemes in Wandsworth
 - the provision of a Wandle walkway, although unavoidably limited in scope.
 - the communal facilities

OUR CONCLUSION. In the last few years the Council has appeared only too happy to encourage development, particularly on the riverside, which provides accommodation totally unrelated to real local housing needs , often concluding that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the harm it will cause.

In this instance, we think the issue is closely balanced. We remain very much opposed to the height of the tower, but if the Council are minded to grant permission anyway - and are satisfied this scheme meets real housing needs - we would welcome the provision of affordable housing.

Yours sincerely

Tony Taylor
for
The Wandsworth Society's planning sub-committee

copied to -
Planning Applications Committee
Ward Councillors