

Wandsworth Society

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B. Wilkinson Esq
Wandsworth Council
Housing and Community Services Department
The Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

18th January 2016

Dear Mr Wilkinson,

Re: Application number 2015/6608
Homebase, Swandon Way SW18 1EW
Objection

We thank you for your letter of 30th November 2015 setting out details of this application. We were given a presentation of the applicant's scheme last September and have since discussed the proposals in detail.

We object to the application on a number of grounds:-

1. **Building height**

- (i) The proposed tower of 17 storeys (62 m in height) will dominate the residential area to the south, looming over the low-rise flats and houses in the Tonsleys, parts of which are within The Wandsworth Town Conservation Area.
- (ii) In the approved SSAD (section 3.6) "the height at which a development in this location will be considered to be tall is 9 storeys". Tall buildings in this situation "are likely to be inappropriate".
- (iii) This is not a town centre site, nor is it a focal point. Tall buildings approved in the town centre have generally been located in mixed-use or commercial locations where their overbearing character has been held not to affect significant numbers of local residents. Here the tower will directly dominate the several hundred close-knit houses, flats and cottages in the Tonsleys, an area of some 400 metres square.
- (iv) The rail tracks on the southern boundary of the site are on an embankment some 5 metres in height, thus the top 15 storeys of the tower and, indeed, the top 7 storeys of the "Garden" and "Crescent" buildings will directly overlook Old York Road and the Tonsleys, dominating views from the south.

- (v) The tower is on a totally alien scale. The Tonsleys are built on a steep slope running up to East Hill and this will make the development highly visible from these houses and streets. The corner of East Hill and Alma Road is 15 metres above Old York Road, thus the tower will be more than three times the height of the highest point in the whole residential area north of East Hill!

The height of the tower is totally inappropriate, as well as being in contravention of the approved Local Plan. We suggest that the two nearest developments, the "Schoolyard" in Eltringham Street(2-9 storeys) and Riverside West(mainly 7 storeys) which are each approximately 200 metres from this site should set the standard here. They are on a human scale, 9 storeys or less in height (and thus appropriate in this location) and would set an acceptable height for the scheme.

2. **Massing and Design**

- (i) In our view an excessive amount of built space is crammed onto the site, totally overwhelming the two open spaces provided. The density of development equals even the high levels accepted in the town centre.
- (ii) The massing has the effect of creating a cliff face to Swandon Way and, when the B&Q site opposite is developed, likely to be of a similar height, this section of Swandon Way will become a "canyon".
- (iii) We are most disappointed with the appearance of the individual blocks, which resemble a regimented 1970's office development, both in massing and choice of materials.
- (iv) The open spaces created are hard-landscaped and lack interest, with the attractive areas of the gardens restricted to private use at podium level and invisible to people crossing the site, or using Swandon Way.

3. **Affordable Housing**

- (i) We are again being asked to accept a low level of affordable housing at 21%, with no contribution towards off site housing.
- (ii) Yet again, this falls well below the standard set under Core Strategy policy IS5 and wastes another opportunity to provide more housing at reasonable prices.
- (iii) As in many other schemes accepted in Wandsworth, the type of accommodation provided will not contribute towards solving the very real local housing needs.

4. **Cumulative Effects**

- (i) The rapid expansion of the population in and around the centre of Wandsworth is putting increasing pressure on local services. We have noted Thames Water's lengthy concerns in their letter of 21st December 2015.
- (ii) We are also concerned about the ever increasing traffic in this area, which, when the new gyratory system is operational will put increased pressure on Swandon Way. This will also increase the already well publicised decline in air quality in South West London.

- (iii) Wandsworth town station is already overcrowded at peak times and a source of great concern and discomfort to commuters. Yet another high population development which is likely to be occupied by potential commuters will contribute to intolerable over use of the station even after Network Rail's proposed improvements have been completed.

Conclusions

- (i) The location is totally inappropriate for a tower of 17 storeys, in breach of the SSAD guidelines.
- (ii) The tower and the other two blocks will loom over the residential area to the south, dominating the existing human scale low-rise buildings.
- (iii) The design and massing of the scheme are overbearing and unfriendly and should be reconsidered.
- (iv) The nearby Schoolyard and Riverside West developments should provide the template for the scale and height of this development. A smaller scheme would reduce the strain on local transport and services.
- (v) A higher proportion of affordable housing should be provided.
- (vi) The application should be refused.

We trust that you will take our comments into consideration in making your report and recommendations to the Planning Applications Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Whyte
Leader, planning group