



Cllr Ravi Govindia
The Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

154 Putney High Street
London SW15 1RS

18 August 2020

Dear Cllr Govindia

Alton 'Regeneration' – An Alternative Approach

The Putney Society as the amenity society for Roehampton too have followed the slow progress and ever increasing height of the Council and Redrow's proposals for the Alton Estate with growing concern since 2013. In that time the world has changed to the point where it is surely time for a radical rethink. Originally this letter was to urge you to release Redrow from a contract that clearly neither they nor the people of Wandsworth want. Now they have taken that decision for you. We welcome this and hope that lessons can be learnt from the reasons why Redrow no longer think they can sell flats in London.

Last year Wandsworth Council joined many others in declaring a Climate Emergency, which we applaud. In doing so you are agreeing that by 2030 all new buildings need to be Zero Carbon. Existing homes, of which there are far more, all need to be upgraded to match by 2050. Now is not the time to be building homes that fail to meet that standard.

Zero carbon includes the need to dramatically reduce the embodied energy, materials and other resources in construction as well as energy in use. We have pointed out several times that the proposed 'regeneration' will involve the waste of thousands of tonnes of CO2 locked up in the existing blocks, and many tens of thousands more for the cement to build anew with heavy concrete frames. The planet cannot afford this. You have said so publicly. Now please act on that.

We were also increasingly concerned that regardless of the social and climate impact, the Redrow proposal was poor value for the Council's (our) money. Council minutes show a cost to the Council of £108 million. For that you would have got just 30 additional social rent homes and some 160 replacements for those to be demolished. We have calculated that 30 new homes and upgrading all of the others in the development area and all the social facilities, if contracted directly by the Council as freeholder, could be achieved for between £50 and £75 million, realising funds that would have gone to Redrow's profits for upgrading the rest of the Council's stock or to build many more new truly affordable homes across the borough.

You do not need another housebuilder as developer. Do this direct and you not only save money but keep control of the process.

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The Putney Society

The amenity society for Putney and Roehampton. Registered Charity No. 263242
www.putneysociety.org.uk

Cllr Govindia, 18/8/2020, cont.

There is an alternative to demolition and rebuilding. This month the government has introduced new Permitted Development rights to add one or two more floors to late 20C blocks of the kind that make up most of the regeneration area. This is something we have been saying all along is the way forward. Here is an opportunity for the Borough that led with 'Hidden Homes' to regain its leadership.

Sticking to the existing footprint in turn saves the existing landscape and valued trees.

Recent examples in Southwark, Camden and other London Boroughs show what can be achieved by building on top of existing mid rise blocks. Closer to home is the extra floor on Ormonde Court (planning consent 2010/1190). This made good use of Modern Methods of Construction, something else promoted by government, with most of the work done offsite to drastically reduce disruption and waste and contributing far less to global warming than the heavyweight alternative. The work of Lacaton & Vassall in Bordeaux shows how to update, future proof and enlarge the flats on blocks similar to Allbrook House for £50,000 per dwelling with the residents still in place as an alternative to external insulation.

It is widely recognised that upgrading the energy efficiency of existing homes returns over £1.20 for every pound spent, that more than half of this creates local employment, and is something that can start quickly, reviving the local job market post Covid-19. Combining that with a requirement for contractors to take on local apprentices also offers a chance to bring useful skills to an area with persistently high unemployment and meet yet another of the Council's professed aims.

Your in house teams, and local contractors, working with the knowledge of the local residents' associations have the skills to get this in place far faster than carrying on with pre-Covid 'business as usual'. The Society would be happy to meet with you to explore some of the options above.

Of course the other matter that needs to be addressed if Roehampton is to flourish or accept any more residents is the need for a dramatic improvement in public transport. The current bus services were insufficient even before Covid restrictions or the closure of Hammersmith Bridge as will be clear once the students return.

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Catto

Andrew Catto
Buildings Panel Convenor
For and on behalf of the Putney Society.

copies: Cllr Kim Caddy – Housing
Cllr Rory O'Broin – Finance
Cllr John Locker – Strategic Planning
Roehampton Ward councillors