



Planning Applications
The Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU
f.a.o. Neil Shaw

Putney Society
Buildings Panel

22nd May 2013

Dear Mr Shaw

**Planning Application 2013/1857
Downshire House, Roehampton.**

The Putney Society wishes to comment on this application as detailed below.

Application documents and Drawings:

Existing Survey Drawings: We are not able to locate these among the downloadable drawings.

Views: There is a view of the SE Residence next to the Heritage Asset, but no view of the more prominent NE Residence building next to Downshire House from Roehampton Lane. We feel that there is a need of this view of the NE Residence building as well as the proposed elevations.

Downshire House and the new South East Residence and North East Residence:

Downshire House is a Grade II* listed. The existing setting of this important heritage asset creates a definitive break between the South Thames College building and the historic house. The current proposals suggest a new building, South East Residence, located in the gap between these two buildings and another, the 4 storey North East Residence close to the other side of Downshire House. This will encroach on the setting of the heritage asset, which is essentially a country house, and we feel detrimentally affect its setting.

The Design & Access Statement states that the design of the South East building is subservient to the Grade II* Downshire House. The architectural principles of Downshire House mean that the upper floors, and thereby its fenestration, diminish in height. This aspect has not been applied to the South East Residence and therefore its massing and proportions appear larger than the historic house. The South East Residence steps further forward than the Grade II* building and with the addition of height and fenestration size it has more prominence than it should.

The original plans, (as seen in the DAS), suggested a lower level frontage to Roehampton Lane in the November and December 2012 proposals. It appears that this has been altered and it is the same height as the rest of the building. We believe that if this lower level and stepped aspect of the South East building was reinstated it would be less imposing and have a less detrimental affect on the setting of Downshire House.

The larger North East Residence is more imposing and although set further away from the Grade II* listed building also detrimentally affects the character of the heritage asset. The removal of the large trees in this position that have enhanced the setting of the listed building makes this worse.

The argument that the NE residence is the same height as Downshire House is lost when the slope of the ground is taken into account and in reality the building appears to tower above the listed building by a full storey. We feel that if a horizontal line of the historic building was used as the building height line of the new residence, instead of the number of storeys, it would be a more appropriate scale. If both the main block and the stepped side wing were reduced by a storey then Downshire House would remain the more prominent on the site.

We understand the decision to create a difference between the new modern building and the Grade II* Downshire House building with the use of a different coloured brick, but we feel that this detracts from the Heritage Asset and does not enhance its setting. We would appreciate a more sympathetic approach to the brick bond, colour and size to the new residences that are adjacent to the Heritage Asset.

However when reviewing the North West Residential Block we understand the architectural relationship needs to be more aligned to the Grade II* Binley House. We appreciate the review of the architectural language and the approach to the new block has more connection with that of Binley House. In the North West Residential location it is more appropriate to acknowledge the closest Heritage Asset's typology and aesthetics. This may mean that the approach to the exteriors of the two Heritage Assets is different, but we feel this is in keeping with the nature of the site.

Roehampton Lane Character & Appearance:

Roehampton Lane is a leafy and, in places, a brick wall lined road. We welcome the proposals to reinstate a brick wall to Roehampton Lane. However, we would ask that a condition be stipulated upon the application that it matches the historic brick walls along Roehampton Lane, in particular those opposite to Roehampton House. It should match height, brick size, colour and bond style otherwise it becomes a modern intrusion in to the setting of the listed building and will not reflect the character of Roehampton Lane.

The current application seeks to remove a number of trees and 14 of these trees are located along Roehampton Lane or adjacent to the listed Grade II* Downshire House. We believe that it is unfortunate to lose so many of the fine trees that help define the character of Roehampton Lane and the setting of the Heritage Asset. We would welcome a change in the current design to rectify this issue.

Twentieth Century Garden

We understand the respect with which the architects and landscape architects have treated the 20th Century gardens that are located within the curtilage of the Grade II* Downshire House. The need to have an aesthetic setting for the new residential buildings and an attractive external space for the students is welcomed by the Society

The Watchers

We welcome the proposals to reinstate the Grade II Watchers under the supervision and guidance of English Heritage so that they can, once again, watch over the Grade II* Alton Estate.

We believe that the scale of the overall proposals is beneficial in that they do not detract from the historic views to or from the Alton Estate and Richmond Park.

We look forward to receiving revised proposals for the setting of the historic building whilst understanding the requirement of Roehampton University to house its ever increasing population of students.

Yours Sincerely

Natasha Brown

Natasha Brown
Buildings Panel
For and on behalf of the Putney Society.