

RT HON JUSTINE GREENING MP

Putney, Roehampton & Southfields



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Carolyn McMillan
Chairman
The Putney Society
38 Disraeli Road
Putney
London
SW15 2DS

7 February 2014

Dear Ms McMillan,

Thank you for your letter of 20 December 2013 regarding your concern for the loss of office space in Putney. I am indeed aware of the extensive development that is taking place along Upper Richmond Road and have been following the progress of each development. I understand your concerns and the potential impact developments have on the wider area.

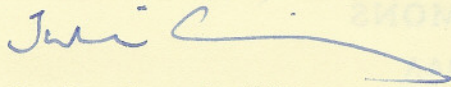
I agree that by bringing empty and redundant buildings in town centres back into productive use, the Government can help to revive our high streets and town centres and to create jobs in the construction and services industries. These new homes will bring a greater resident population to our high streets, increasing footfall and supporting local shops. More specific to Putney, the office space available for refurbishment on Upper Richmond Road was deemed to be of poor quality and it is hoped that the new developments will be a more attractive investment as well as attracting fresh talent into the area with the new housing provision.

Local councils will still be in charge of local planning policies and local residents will continue to have input into local plans. The Department for Communities and Local Government has worked hard to assess and review planning policy and the proposed changes are intended to make planning permission less burdensome.

I also recognise that planning regulations must respect the importance of the high street. The National Planning Policy Framework now clearly states that local plans should 'recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality'. In 2012, Putney was chosen by housing minister Mark Prisk to join a pilot project to improve the UK's Town Centres. The Town Centre Partnership was able to access a support package from the national Association of Town Centre Management, including advice from top retail experts, and a £10,000 government grant to put plans into action. This is a good example of the government supporting local town centres and high streets. In addition to this, the Government has cut business rates for small shops, scrapped Whitehall guidance that pushed for higher parking charges, and the local retention of business rates now gives councils a direct financial stake in their high street.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Justine Greening MP

- Hope that's a helpful update!