

Reply from Councillor Govindia by email on 6th February 2014 in response to Putney Society Chairman's letter of 27th January 2014

Dear Carolyn

Thanks for your further letter dated 27 January 2014 in which you raise more detailed concerns regarding the application of policy.

You state that we consider Policy PL14 trumps DMTS13. This is clearly not a straightforward issue and nor is it the way planning tensions are considered as such -both planning policy PL14 and DMTS 13 are adopted Local Plan policy and so considerable weight is attached to them. DMTS 13 is a local policy and local conditions are important and so when assessing Putney schemes officers have sought actual letting details and evidence of the issues in the market and have pushed for figures relating to employment numbers in the existing floorspace and the proposed space. S106 agreements tie the developers in to local labour schemes as well. Schemes approved on Putney High Street must show that they cannot deliver office space in the same proportions as refurbishment before redevelopment is considered after which PL14 is applied.

You raise the issue of office jobs compared to 'low grade' retail jobs. It is not straightforward to compare different types of jobs as each job offers opportunities to different types of people. We do acknowledge office jobs often support other industries such as retail but the retention of modern offices requires a demand for that type of floorspace and there is evidence that this has fallen off in Putney as seen by the empty floorspaces over the last 7 years. Simply fixing office as a land use is likely to keep Putney in a blighted situation as it is not profitable to the development sector to reprovide metre per metre modern office space for old. Viability studies support this. Instead we have agreed to reprovion at a lesser level but new floorspace which will be in demand with tenants and therefore deliver real jobs together with new homes which are very required.

The Putney Society consider the Council is misinterpreting policy and is deaf to the ears of residents when it comes to planning decisions. This is disappointing to hear. Not only do the Planners in Wandsworth engage widely on the drafting of policy they also constantly tread a fine line in order to address stakeholder concerns and support high quality development. Many schemes are changed at pre application and mid application stages by planners in order to ensure the issues of local stakeholders and neighbours are met while balancing the chances of developers getting decisions in their favour at appeal. Planners have negotiated reduced height mass and bulk; improved mix and improved public realm and designs on most of the Upper Richmond Road Schemes during the application period.

You raise a comment about the Centrus apartments but our records only show a prior approval application for conversion to flats which did not meet the tests and so was not accepted by the planning service.

As a local authority we are keen to see floorspace let as offices and jobs created but we must also consider other objectives such as need for homes; need to achieve public realm improvements; NPPF direction and likelihood of challenge and appeals. We consider the schemes underway in Putney are all contributing to a positive change which will ensure the relevance and vibrancy of Putney in the medium term.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ravi Govindia

Leader, Wandsworth Borough Council