



EAST END WATERWAY GROUP NEWSLETTER BOW WHARF APPLICATIONS REFUSED

At its meeting on 19 June 2013, the Tower Hamlets Development Committee refused the applications for residential development at and adjacent to Bow Wharf (PA/11/03371 - 03372).

The applications were made by H2O Urban on behalf of the Canal and River Trust.

The four members of the Committee were Cllrs. Judith Gardiner, Anwar Khan, Tim Archer and Gulam Robbani. All voted to refuse the applications because of the proposed height and density, negative impact on heritage value, insufficient 106 money (especially for the Primary Care Trust) and insufficient social housing.

The reasons for refusal will be drawn up by the planners for approval at the July meeting of the Development Committee.

Tom Ridge spoke against the applications on behalf of the East End Waterway Group; and Malcolm Tucker, on behalf of the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society.

They were supported by about 20 people in the public gallery with printed A4 papers saying "SAVE BOW WHARF".

Before the meeting, EEWG member Lucy Rogers sent the Councillors a set of photographs, which included nine pairs of existing and proposed images ([click here to view](#)). This is the first pair showing the entire application site.



Lucy also wrote on behalf of EEWG to Richard Parry, Chief Executive of the Canal and River Trust ([read letter here](#)), asking the Trust to withdraw the applications. We hope that the Trust will now meet with EEWG and GLIAS to discuss Bow Wharf and how it may be better managed to achieve a higher return on commercial lettings; and in the process provide useful facilities and services for residents and visitors. Especially as Bow Wharf would have been demolished for Mile End Park had it not been for a local campaign to retain and adapt the buildings as an arts and community centre.

Not mentioned at Wednesday's meeting was the fact that the 1901 warehouse is currently well used for functions, which are so well attended that both the Grove Road and Stop Lock Bridge car parks are fully used. Had the latter been built on, the function business would probably have to move and the warehouse would again be vacant.

Tom Ridge said:

I am speaking on behalf of the East End Waterway Group, and at least 234 petitioners, 82 letter-writers and 137 people who have completed the recent standard letter (most of whom are residents and are new objectors).

As you will see from the existing and proposed images we sent you, Bow Wharf is the jewel in the Borough's six-mile waterway ring for residents and visitors. No other London Borough has a six-mile waterway ring, because the East End was the largest industrial area in London when London was the largest industrial city in the world and the greatest port in the world. Most of our canals are in conservation areas, and Bow Wharf is the most important part of the Regent's Canal Conservation Area because it contains three unique heritage assets:

- *the Grade II listed Stop Lock Bridge; and - I quote from the Conservation Area character appraisal:*
- *a 1901 three-storey canalside warehouse (not a British Waterways warehouse)*

- a two-storey paint factory of 1912 with a brick lean-to and a square chimney shaft surviving from an 1896 steam sawmill (not a glue factory).

They constitute two of only three locally-listed former industrial buildings in Tower Hamlets; and are among the Borough's few examples of the successful adaptive re-use of such buildings.

The planning inspector at the 2005 public inquiry called them "converted warehouses", and indicated that the height of new additions should be restricted to provide a contrast to the converted warehouses.

As you will see from the images we sent you, the three proposed buildings are higher than the converted warehouses. That they have been given pitched roofs to match the 1901 warehouse does not mitigate the fact that their design, height, bulk, scale and position

"would fail to preserve or enhance the open character and appearance of this part of the Regent's Canal Conservation Area".

I quote from the officer's reason for refusal at 6.3 in the report presented at the Development Committee meeting on 15th of May (pages 97-101 in [your agenda](#)).

The reason for refusal goes on to list all the Council's and national policies which would be contravened by this proposal; and explains their purpose, which includes

"that development takes account of local context".

Two appeals have been refused by the planning inspectorate, and as the decision of 2005 was upheld by the decision of 2010, the applicant and owners have a responsibility to comply with the planning inspectorate principle that new additions are no higher than the converted warehouses. Especially, as the owners (Canal and River Trust) have a statutory duty to maintain the waterway heritage, and should not be sacrificing part of the heritage to pay for repairs and improvements elsewhere.

Malcolm Tucker said:

Hello. I am speaking for the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society.

At its April meeting, the Development Committee refused the application, because of the damage to the Conservation Area. I understand you are now a 'new' committee and you must consider the Application afresh.

The combination of the historic canal junction and its bridge, the significant canal warehouse and the comparative openness of the setting make this is a very special place within the Conservation Area. The impression from the Regent's Canal is of leafy trees and brick walls, with the 3-storey warehouse as the one big building, set some way back. This is now the only place in this Conservation Area where one can still appreciate the old, low-density canalside character. So it needs protection.

The proposals introduce a 5½ storey block and a 4 storey block, crowded around a quite small yard and overhanging it, and a third block squeezed in to the west. The tallest block hides the warehouse from the main towpath and dominates it from the other direction. How can such changes in scale and mass be acceptable?

The buildings are so tight for space that they have obtrusive balconies jutting out all round. It is argued that there is not room to recess these balconies, so they have to be accepted. That is putting the c before the horse – the flats are small because there will be too many flats on the site.

The Officer's report is thorough, but where it considers the effects on the conservation Area its judgements are biased, towards a developer's viewpoint. And the Applicant's supplementary appraisal, which may have swayed the May meeting, is very selective in its chosen view points and angles. The fact is the scheme fails to preserve the character of the Conservation Area or enhance it, as it is required to do, and I ASK YOU TO REJECT IT.

NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO MISSION STATEMENT

As British Waterways is now the Canal and River Trust, we need to amend the Mission Statement. Assuming that all EEWG members and others are agreeable the next newsletter or newsflash will have reference to Canal and River Trust instead of British Waterways.

Tom Ridge

For and on behalf of

East End Waterway Group

PATRON JIM FITZPATRICK MP POPLAR AND LIMEHOUSE



Local residents, schools, community groups, amenity societies and businesses working with Canal and River Trust, Tower Hamlets Council and others for the protection and beneficial use of the six mile waterway 'ring', its historic buildings, structures and habitats.

Email east.end.waterway.group@gmail.com