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Press release: Friday 18 November 2022

**SOS Save Our South Bank backs Gove’s move**

**to block unattractive new developments**

SOS Save Our South Bank action group welcomes the speech made earlier this week by Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Speaking at the Centre for Policy Studies on Monday, Michael Gove warned developers:

*“If you attempt to bulldoze your way through opposition rather than taking people with you, you will create a backlash which will mean that you will not see the development that you want to see.”*

*“There are 5 basic factors that we need to recognise are entirely rational reasons for opposition to new development. The first is the quality of so much that is built…That is the reason communities say no: they do not want ugliness to be imposed on them. So, one of the things that we will be unveiling are a series of policies in order to ensure that we improve the quality – and in particular the aesthetic quality – of new development: beauty…We will use all the powers we have, including call-in powers, in order to make sure that developments that are not aesthetically of high quality don’t go ahead.”*

The other 4 *“entirely rational reasons for opposition to new development”* were inadequate infrastructure, that democracy is seen to be overturned, the environment – including impacts on the climate, and sense of neighbourhood.

In September, then Secretary of State Greg Clark, called in an application to demolish ITV’s former studios and headquarters on London’s South Bank and replace them with “a brute of a building” (Rowan Moore in The Observer), “a grotesque monstrosity (Richard Morrison in The Times), and “an aggressive behemoth” (Simon Jenkins in The Guardian).

A public inquiry into the scheme starts on 6 December and the Inspector’s report will go to Michael Gove for decision in the new year.

**[Ends]**

**Notes to Editors**

1. **The SOS Save Our South Bank Action Group** was set up by local organisations Waterloo Community Development Group and Coin Street Community Builders and is composed of residents, politicians and others campaigning against Mitsubishi Estate’s ‘Slab’ office scheme designed by Make Architects for 72 Upper Ground, SE1.
2. **Waterloo Community Development Group** (WCDG) was founded in 1972. WCDG is a charity led by Waterloo residents to maintain and develop a healthy and sustainable community, for more land for homes and amenities such as shops and open space, for the benefit of present and future generations.

**WCDG stated in its advice to Lambeth Council Planning Advisory Committee in March 2022:** “The government’s Building Beautiful Commission called for an overt focus on beauty and refusing ugliness as a primary purpose of the planning system. National planning policy puts the creation of beautiful and sustainable buildings and places at the heart of the planning process. These proposals are grotesquery on steroids, a swollen deformity for the South Bank”.

1. **Coin Street Community Builders** (CSCB) is a social enterprise working in Waterloo and North Southwark: <https://bit.ly/3kLSSaB> . CSCB owns, manages, and maintains the riverside walkway between the National Theatre and Sea Containers, Bernie Spain Gardens, Oxo Tower Wharf, Gabriel’s Wharf, and Coin Street neighbourhood centre. It is freehold owner of the Iroko, Mulberry, Palm and Redwood housing developments which are leased to primary co-operatives managed by their tenants.

**CSCB stated in its advice to Lambeth Council Planning Advisory Committee in March 2022:** “The scale, bulk and siting of the proposed development is excessive, overbearing and overly dominant. The impact on daylight received by adjacent Coin Street housing co-operatives will be severe. The riverside walkway and gardens to the north of the proposed development currently enjoy sunshine throughout the lunchtime peak and afternoon but would be cast into shadow by this development. The wanton disregard of the South Bank, one of London’s most popular amenities, is unacceptable and short-sighted!”

1. Greg Clark as Secretary of State called in the application for his own decision after Lambeth Council resolved to support the proposals in March 2022 and the London Mayor had decided in August not to intervene. The Secretary of State has asked the Inspector undertaking the public inquiry to look at:

**a)** is the proposal in accordance with statutory development plans?

**b)** the extent to which the proposed development (including its scale and massing) is consistent with the Government policies for conserving and enhancing the historic environment, in respect of designated heritage assets.

**c)** any other matters the Inspector considers relevant.

1. **Secretary of State, Michael Gove** told MPs on 4 November 2021: “We want to have a planning system where people can feel confident that beauty is taken seriously, confident that the environment is benefitting, confident that the money will be there to support infrastructure, and confident that the community has a role ultimately in determining what is right”. He added, “We want to be in a position where communities accept and welcome new development”.[Source: Planning Resource 12 November 2021].
2. The significant impacts of redevelopment of 72 Upper Ground have been reported in national broadcast and press including:
* **Councillor Scott Ainslee**, BBC News, 31 March 2022, asked "Would we be bringing this building right next to the Notre Dame? The South Bank is our cultural centre, it's our offer to the world. I don't think you would be putting that sort of building to upstage the Sydney Opera House."
* **Rowan Moore**, The Observer, 24 April 2022, who describes the proposal as “a brute of a building”
* **Richard Morrison**, The Times, 6 May 2022, who describes the proposal as a “grotesque monstrosity”
* **Sir Simon Jenkins**, The Guardian, 6 May 2022, who describes the proposal as an “aggressive behemoth” and nicknamed it as ‘The Slab’

**For more information**

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For further details about this campaign please visit <https://coinstreet.org/72-upper-ground>