

Piano slammed over growing Paddington tower

10 December, 2015 By [Richard Waite](#)

Historic England and Skyline campaigner Barbara Weiss have launched stinging attacks on Renzo Piano's proposed skyscraper next to London's Paddington Station

[Earlier this week](#) it emerged that the developer, the Sellar Group, wanted to add an extra 30m to the height of its original plans and create a 72-storey giant on the site of the former Royal Mail sorting office at 31 London Street.

But the proposal, dubbed by some the Paddington Pole, has been heavily criticised by the government's heritage watchdog, which has written to the design team urging them not to build a tower on the plot.

In its letter dated 7 December, Historic England's planning and conservation director Nigel Barker wrote: '[We have] very serious concerns indeed about the impact of the proposals on the historic environment.

'If there is another way of achieving the public benefits the scheme is said to deliver that avoids those impacts – principally through a much lower building – then the National Planning Policy Framework and the local plan would direct the developer and Westminster to that alternative.'

The organisation was also fearful that the west London skyscraper would have a 'seriously detrimental impact' on registered historic parks and conservation areas and said the project team had failed to engage with them properly before its planning application was submitted.

'The developers are trying to rush the application through the planning system'

Historic England's fears were echoed by Weiss, who also believed the developer was attempting to 'rush the application through the planning system before [London Mayor] Boris disappeared off the scene next spring'.

She added: 'The local community and the local amenity societies are *not* being included in the conversation about this ridiculously tall building that will dwarf everything for miles.

'[This] proposal is the lazy answer, and it does not sort out the many Paddington problems that exist.'

Weiss, who has campaigned under the Skyline banner for a rethink of the capital's tall buildings policy, added: 'It is a disgrace that this tower is being considered for planning permission without a requirement to analyse the cumulative effect of the whole cluster of other towers that is now being agreed for adjacent sites in Paddington – behind Londoners' backs and against their wills – and against Westminster policies.

'Allowing the Paddington Pole to be built is tantamount to opening the flood gates. If this is allowed to happen, there will be no end to the number of towers that will eventually be built across central, north and north-west London. This is a defining moment for London's skyline. We must not let this happen.'

Responding to the criticism, project backer Great Western Developments, a subsidiary of Singapore's publicly listed Hotel Properties, and its development partner Sellar Property Group, merely repeated its statement from earlier in the week.

A spokesperson said: 'The change in height is part of a number of changes to the scheme, as a result of our ongoing consultation with the local community and our stakeholders. As such, the curved design of the tower has evolved and its height has increased from 65 storeys (224m) to 72 storeys (254m).

'31 London Street will dramatically transform this part of London. Designed by one of the world's finest architects, Renzo Piano Building Workshop, this multi-use scheme will create a new landmark for London. The development...will deliver over an acre of new public realm which will benefit the tens of thousands of passengers that use Paddington Station each day, improving connectivity and supporting the growth of this important part of London.

'We will be announcing further details on 31 London Street in due course.'