



Judge upholds tower block ruling

A judge has upheld a government decision to allow construction of a controversial 43-storey tower block on London's South Bank.

Doon Street Tower will include 329 residential units, a sports centre, swimming pool and space for shops, restaurants and bars.

Judge David Mole QC threw out bids by English Heritage and Westminster City Council to have the permission quashed.

However at Harrow Crown Court he gave the objectors leave to appeal.

English Heritage and Westminster council have described plans for the building as "architectural vandalism".

Hazel Blears approved planning permission for the tower block last August while she was communities secretary.

She approved it despite planning inspector Philip Wilson's recommendation that the scheme be refused following a three-week public inquiry.

Mr Wilson expressed concern over the tower's impact on famous London views and the settings of conservation and listed buildings.

" It is difficult to say that there is no real prospect that the Court of Appeal might see things differently "
Judge David Mole QC

But developer Coin Street Community Builders said it would provide much-needed housing and community facilities.

Ms Blears subsequently concluded that the plan's "substantial" benefits to the local community outweighed the drawbacks.

Judge Mole said: "There are genuine questions to answer about the meaning of passages in the Secretary of State's decision letter.

"Although I am of the view that the answers are sufficiently clear, it is difficult to say that there is no real prospect that the Court of Appeal might see things differently."

He added: "The Secretary of State's decision is of great significance to the interest English Heritage is charged with protecting."

The judge said that the position of objector William Ashton, who lives 286 yards from the proposed building, was also considered.

"There is no doubt that the proposed tower would directly affect him, like many others," the judge said.

"I do not doubt the genuineness of Mr Ashton's interest in the outcome of the decision-making process but in my judgment he did not play a sufficiently active role in the planning process properly to be described as 'aggrieved'."

He ordered Westminster City Council, English Heritage and Mr Ashton to pay the Secretary of State's costs.

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