

A dramatic new structure could rival the Spinnaker

Light at end of funnel proposal

A 29-storey, glass-fronted tower block in the shape of a ship's funnel could be the final piece in the Gunwharf jigsaw. Political editor **DAVID MADDOX** reports.

The Spinnaker Tower could soon have a rival to catch the eyes of the millions of visitors to Portsmouth if dramatic new plans for Gunwharf are given the go-ahead. A 29-storey, 310ft high glass tower block in the shape of a giant ship's funnel will loom over the Gunwharf development next to the 550ft Spinnaker Tower.

The new tower with 137 flats, designed by architect Peter Crossley, is the centre-piece to the final section of Berkeley's award-winning redevelopment of Gunwharf.

It will have specially tinted glass for privacy and to create a uniform look, and the luxury apartments will cost up to £500,000.

Berkeley executives have hailed the last £120m piece of the Gunwharf jigsaw, as a development which will give the city a waterfront to match the best in the world.

Next to the 'funnel' tower, on what will be known as the East Side Plaza, will be a 12-storey crescent building with 106 flats and a smaller eight-storey block with a further 60 flats.

The three buildings will border a giant continental-style piazza, which is intended to be a focal point for outdoor events in Gunwharf, and will be served with 310 car parking spaces and 200 bike spaces, with another 62 for visiting cyclists.

There will be 9,397 sq ft of restaurant and shop space.

Also in the scheme will be a new block on the old Ariadne site, which has been scaled down by two floors from the controversial proposal rejected by city councillors earlier this year.

The new proposal also has a more traditional look to the one dismissed by the city council development control committee.

It will include 176 apartments, including 126 cheaper homes for key workers, such as nurses, teachers and police officers, on low incomes along with 5,640 sq ft of shop and restaurant space.

Once again there will be a low number of car parking spaces for the Ariadne block - just 82 - but Berkeley hope to have a car share scheme in place by the time the development is complete.

Berkeley is hopeful the support of government watchdogs English Heritage - concerned with protecting heritage - and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment - concerned with supporting innovative design - will ease the path of the planning applications.

Berkeley Homes managing director Angus Michie said: 'We want to be aspirational and give Portsmouth a waterfront to be proud of and comparable to the best in the world.'

'The new tower is meant to complement the Spinnaker Tower and we have



The 'funnel' tower sweeps towards the sky at Gunwharf Quays in this artist's

carried out shadow and wind tests to make sure it is appropriate, does not create a wind tunnel or block out people's light. 'We have also compromised significantly on the building for the old Ariadne site and we believe this answers many of the original objections.'

Architect Mr Crossley said: 'The residential tower will provide Portsmouth with a remarkable building which will become a familiar and memorable landmark. It will represent an image of aspiration and confidence, a signal that Portsmouth is a city that wants more than the ordinary.'

City councillor for Old Portsmouth and Tory group leader Frank Worley, a

frequent critic of Berkeley, gave the plans a cautious welcome. 'I'm not unhappy with them,' he said. 'The tower is certainly an interesting design and a great improvement on the two slabs proposed before.'

'I'm also pleased there are more car parking spaces proposed. But we have got to insist that what is agreed by the committee is what is actually built.'

City Lib Dem planning boss Mike Hancock said: 'The plans are better than they were before, but I think Berkeley now have to go and sell these to the people of Old Portsmouth and the Charles Dickens ward. I think there will still be in some serious objections.'

Tower on the Portsmouth skyline if planners give it the go-ahead

of funnel proposal



Impression, with the proposed East Side Plaza in the foreground and 12-storey crescent block, right

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should the new tower get the go-ahead? Write to the editor at The News Centre, Hilsa, Portsmouth, PO2 9SX or e-mail letters@thenews.co.uk

An illustration showing the relative size of the proposed new tower block compared to the Spinnaker Tower

In the quest for ever more housing the only way is up

Planning chiefs admit more high-rise blocks are set to spring up across Portsmouth. Paul Newbold, planning chief for the city council, said tower blocks are going to increase to fit in an extra 5,000 homes.

Mr Newbold's comments come as plans have been submitted in the last month for tower blocks in Gunwharf, near Fratton Park and on the old university campus in Milton.

There have also been a spate of recent planning applications to build on top of existing properties.

Mr Newbold does not believe the only way is up for development in the city, but admits it will play a major part.

'It would be an exaggeration to say the only way is up, but it is

important that on sites with good transport communications, like Fratton and Gunwharf, we maximise our potential for development,' he said. 'We have to provide enough

development for 5,000 new homes and 15,000 jobs and there is not a lot of land available.'

His view is echoed by Havant architect Peter Galloway, who has worked on projects in the city.

He said: 'The trouble is that you don't want the city to stagnate, it has to keep developing and expanding. In that sense development is going to have to go up.'

Southsea chartered surveyor David Nesbit said: 'We live in a crowded city with limited space and perhaps it is time to look at imaginative ways of building more homes without using up land.'

On the other side of the argument Portsmouth architect Peter Guy is not convinced that development in the city needs to go upwards.

'We are already a densely populated city and I don't think it will be good in the long term if we become densely populated with high-level buildings.'

An aerial artist's impression from the Spinnaker Tower showing the funnel tower, with the crescent block to its right and the Ariadne block, left - Gunwharf and its central piazza is at the bottom of the picture



WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

The plans have been formally submitted to Portsmouth City Council with the hope that the development control committee will look at them by the spring.

Before they get to the committee a consultation will take place to find out the views of interest groups like

the Portsmouth Society and local residents. Details are now available in the civic offices and exhibitions are planned for the new year.

If the plans do get the go-ahead in March or April it will take about six months to prepare for building and about three years to build.

Berkeley Group ready to take leave of city

Berkeley is pulling out of Gunwharf Quays and handing over control to Land Securities.

A £170m deal has seen Land Securities, which has run Gunwharf along with the Berkeley Group, take over full responsibility for the retail and leisure part of the development.

The deal is a sign that once the development of

Gunwharf and the Royal Clarence Yard in Gosport is completed the Berkeley Group will withdraw from the area.

The 550,000 sq ft site includes 243,000 sq foot of shops, 130,000 sq ft of leisure facilities, 117,000 sq ft of bars and restaurants, 26,000 sq ft of office space a 130-bedroom Holiday Inn Hotel.

Clients operating on the site include Gap, Adidas, Levi Strauss, Fat Face, Ted Baker, Gieves and Hawkes, Marks and Spencer, Nike and Warner Village Cinema.

Berkeley executives have emphasised that the group wants to get on with doing what it does best - building developments and leaving the running of

property to others.

Berkeley Group managing director Tony Pidgeley said: 'Our partnership with Land Securities has been a great experience and we have learned an immense amount from this link.'

'I am very proud of Berkeley's contribution to the historic city of Portsmouth.'