

Twin skyscrapers get green light after long battle

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TWO skyscrapers set to be built at the centre of Vauxhall's notorious gyratory system have been given the final go-ahead after a long planning battle.

The 54- and 42-storey towers, designed by the late "starchitect" Dame Zaha Hadid's ZHA practice, were approved yesterday by Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick on the recommendation of a planning inspector.

The north tower will have 257 homes and the south tower will house a 618-room luxury hotel. They will be connected by a podium at the 10th storey.

Only 23 of the apartments at the site are classified as "affordable" but a £30 million payment to Lambeth council is expected to fund 54 homes elsewhere in the borough.

The towers form part of the £600 million Vauxhall Cross Island scheme from developers Great Marlborough Estates. It also includes a public square, restaurants, offices and a new bus station.

It will require the demolition of the 15-year-old bus station, which has been under threat since Lambeth council and Transport for London first unveiled plans for a new high street in Vauxhall in 2013.

The towers, part of a broader regeneration designed to reduce the impact of its unloved five-lane "Bondway" gyratory, was first approved by Lambeth in 2018. But the proposal was called in by then housing secretary James Brokenshire last May following objections from neighbouring Wandsworth and



Go-ahead: the two skyscrapers will form part of a £600m regeneration scheme

campaign groups. Residents writing on behalf of the Vauxhall Society and the Save Vauxhall Bus Station pressure groups described the plans as "unforgivable in one of London's most notorious pollution blackspots".

The gyratory was branded a "toxic hotspot" earlier in the year when levels of harmful particulates exceeded annual limits after only two months.

But the project was recommended for approval by the planning inspector following a two-day hearing in December. Planning inspector John Braithwaite said in his report: "Local residents would prefer that the existing bus station is retained, but they also seek the creation of a town centre with Bondway at its heart. They can't have both, because retention of the bus station would prevent Bondway becoming anything other than it is at present."

ZHA director Jim Heverin called the ruling "very welcome news".