

# Richmond & Twickenham **TIMES**

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## Mourning glory

New skyscraper will spoil park view of St Paul's



Now and then: Richard Gray (friends of Richmond Park) and Sarah Olney MP (inset) attempt to protect the view of St Paul's from Richmond Park

by Ben Weich

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THE loss of the pristine view of St Paul's Cathedral from Richmond Park was mourned this week, as it was revealed an east London skyscraper which now looms behind the famous dome does not break any planning regulations.

The 42-storey Manhattan Loft Gardens hotel, currently under construction in Stratford, is directly behind St Paul's when viewed from King Henry VIII's mound in Richmond Park.

Simon Richard, the manager of Richmond Park, said it "ranks among the saddest" moments of his 20-year tenure.

While there are planning regulations protecting the view, these were not violated by the Stratford development, which was given the go-ahead by the Olympic delivery authority in July 2011.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan said he would like to see similar developments in east London have to undertake more consultation so the view is not further obscured.

Manhattan Loft Corporation, in their publicity brochure, states that the tower "has been designed to have a responsible impact on the environment and its surroundings".

Nearly 200 people attended a demonstration in Richmond Park on Wednesday afternoon held by the Friends of Richmond Park (FORP).

FORP member Richard Gray, said: "It is very dispiriting, and incredibly sad. Everyone is gutted."

"It was really a mourning session on Wednesday."

The problem arose in part, Mr Gray said, because development in east London in the wake of the Olympic Games was not anticipated by authorities.

But Mr Gray welcomed Mr Khan's intention to amend the planning framework in east London, saying it was important the rest of the view of the cathedral was not further blighted.

Richmond Park MP Sarah Olney, who attended Wednesday's demonstration, said it is "very shocking and heartbreaking", and promised to lobby the Mr

Khan and the Greater London Assembly.

She said: "This isn't just about the residents of Richmond. It's a view that everyone freely enjoys. Many visitors come to Richmond and see this wonderful view."

"What's important is that we try to build communities for people that remember the importance of the environment in which they live."

Aynsley Delaney, spokeswoman for Manhattan Loft Corporation, said the company went through a "transparent and public process to gain lawful planning permission".

Ms Delaney added that the GLA and other planning bodies were "very supportive" of "such an aspirational residential project".

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