# Urbanest wins approval for 897-bed student towers at Vauxhall amid London’s housing crunch



Urbanest has secured planning approval for a major new purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) development in Vauxhall, South London. The project, endorsed by Lambeth Council’s Planning Applications Committee, will see the redevelopment of land at 36-46 Albert Embankment into two connected towers of 30 and 27 storeys, creating a total of 897 bedrooms within 769 student rooms.

The design, by Hopkins Architects for Urbanest and Hotchkiss Ltd, replaces a former Texaco garage and includes refurbishing and extending Vintage House, a four-storey office building on the site. The development will feature not only student bedrooms but also a publicly accessible café and a cultural space aimed at benefiting both residents and the local community. The towers will contribute to a growing strip of tall buildings designed by prominent architects along the embankment, complementing structures such as The Corniche by Foster & Partners.

This planning approval comes amid an acute shortage of student accommodation in London, with University College London recently withdrawing its guarantee of accommodation for first-year students due to limited availability. Urbanest’s Chief Investment Officer, Johnny Manns, highlighted that the scheme’s 769 student bedrooms would help alleviate this shortage. Nevertheless, the affordable accommodation element has been reduced from an initial 35% to 20%, with Urbanest agreeing to make a financial contribution of over £8 million towards affordable housing within Lambeth, compensating for the shortfall in affordable student rooms.

The project has received support in principle from City Hall, which notes that London requires the creation of at least 3,500 new student bed spaces annually to meet demand. The proposed development is expected to generate new jobs and encourage increased visitor numbers, thereby supporting local businesses in the vicinity.

This new approval marks another chapter for the site, which has seen multiple proposals over the years. Previous plans included a hotel component and designs by various architects that did not come to fruition. The current iteration focuses solely on student accommodation, aligning with Lambeth Council’s planning officers’ recommendation, who praised the scheme for its high-quality design suitable to the Albert Embankment area.

Urbanest is no stranger to large-scale student housing developments in Vauxhall, with a prior project completed in 2018 at Nine Elms featuring 454 student rooms across a striking 32-storey brick-clad building. That development, acknowledged as the UK’s first brick-clad high-rise over 90 metres tall, included extensive communal facilities and sustainable design features such as photovoltaic panels and a green roof. The experience gained from this previous success likely informs the ambitions for the new development.

The Vauxhall scheme is thus part of a broader regeneration momentum in the area, which includes office and residential developments, as well as amenities such as a hotel and cinema complex. Urbanest has signalled readiness to begin construction soon, with the detailed design phase well underway and main contractor partnerships established.

In summary, the new Urbanest student accommodation in Vauxhall represents a significant addition to the capital’s efforts to address the persistent shortage of quality student housing, whilst also contributing to the ongoing regeneration of one of London’s key urban districts.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://pbsanews.co.uk/2025/07/09/urbanest-secures-planning-approval-for-vauxhall-pbsa/), [[3]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/hopkins-revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136753.article), [[4]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136765.article)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://pbsanews.co.uk/2025/07/09/urbanest-secures-planning-approval-for-vauxhall-pbsa/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/vauxhall-student-accommodation-albert-embankment-lambeth-council-planning-application-urbanest-b1215395.html), [[3]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/hopkins-revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136753.article)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://pbsanews.co.uk/2025/07/09/urbanest-secures-planning-approval-for-vauxhall-pbsa/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/vauxhall-student-accommodation-albert-embankment-lambeth-council-planning-application-urbanest-b1215395.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/hopkins-revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136753.article), [[4]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136765.article)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.howells.uk/projects/urbanest-vauxhall), [[6]](https://www.urbanest.info/vauxhall/), [[7]](https://www.balfourbeatty.com/media-centre/latest/balfour-beatty-to-deliver-42-million-student-housing-project-for-urbanest/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://pbsanews.co.uk/2025/07/09/urbanest-secures-planning-approval-for-vauxhall-pbsa/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/vauxhall-student-accommodation-albert-embankment-lambeth-council-planning-application-urbanest-b1215395.html), [[3]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/hopkins-revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136753.article)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://pbsanews.co.uk/2025/07/09/urbanest-secures-planning-approval-for-vauxhall-pbsa/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/vauxhall-student-accommodation-albert-embankment-lambeth-council-planning-application-urbanest-b1215395.html> - Plans to demolish a central London petrol station and replace it with towers up to 29 storeys high to house hundreds of university students have been 'supported in principle' by City Hall. The proposed scheme on the Albert Embankment, close to MI6’s headquarters in Vauxhall, would provide 769 rooms and 897 bedspaces. It would consist of two towers—one with 29 floors and the other with 26—bridged by a six-storey 'link building'. The planning application will be considered in the coming weeks by Lambeth Council, though an exact date has not yet been set. It comes after permission was granted earlier this week for a 15-storey student accommodation block to be built above Southwark station. As well as demolishing the JET petrol station next to the South Western Railway mainline, the project would also involve refurbishing and extending a 19th-century former warehouse building called Vintage House. It is currently used as offices and would continue to be under the plans. The new student accommodation would include a publicly accessible café on the ground floor, and from the upper levels would offer views towards the Houses of Parliament across the river. In a statement prepared by Hopkins Architects on behalf of the applicant—Urbanest UK Albert Embankment Ltd and Hotchkiss Ltd—the people behind the plan argue that the existing site 'has been underutilised for many years'. They add: 'The proposed development will create new jobs and increase visitor numbers, benefiting local businesses—especially nearby restaurants, public houses and bars. The superb location, with excellent transport links, adds to the site’s potential.' In a report prepared by officers at City Hall—which is required to express a view on the plans before a decision is taken by the council—the application is said to be 'supported in principle', partly because it will help London to cope with the number of students looking for somewhere to live in the city each year. According to the London Plan—the mayor’s blueprint for future development across the capital—the city needs at least 3,500 new student bed spaces to be created every year in order to meet demand.
3. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/hopkins-revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136753.article> - Hopkins Architects’ redesigned plans for a pair of student accommodation towers in Vauxhall are set to be approved by Lambeth council next Tuesday. The firm’s proposals for two towers of 30 and 27 storeys at 36-46 Albert Embankment have been recommended for approval by planning officers ahead of a meeting on 1 July. Designed for developers Urbanest and Hotchkiss Ltd, the scheme would replace a Texaco garage on the site with nearly 900 student beds in 769 rooms, with 20% of the rooms classed as affordable, and a public ground floor café. It would join a strip of tall buildings by high-profile architects on the embankment, which already includes The Corniche by Foster & Partners and Merano by RSHP. The plans replace a similar scheme approved in 2023 for developer Ocubis, which would have seen the towers contain hotel space. This consent is still extant and does not expire until December 2026. Hopkins is the third architect to work on the site since 2017, and its latest planning application is the fourth in eight years. Street view of the latest proposals. Plans for a pair of linked 24-storey residential towers designed by Make were approved in 2017 but never implemented, followed by a plan by Jestico & Whiles for towers of the same height containing hotel space, which was also never built. Lambeth’s planning officers said a student accommodation scheme was strongly supported on the site and said the proposed towers were of a high-quality design which would complement the other tall buildings along Albert Embankment.
4. <https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/revised-vauxhall-towers-set-for-approval-next-week/5136765.article> - Redesigned plans for a pair of student accommodation towers in Vauxhall are set to be approved by Lambeth council next Tuesday. The firm’s proposals for two towers of 30 and 27 storeys at 36-46 Albert Embankment site have been recommended for approval by planning officers ahead of a meeting on 1 July. Designed by Hopkins Architects for developers Urbanest and Hotchkiss Ltd, the scheme would replace a Texaco garage on the site with nearly 900 student beds in 769 rooms, with 20% of the rooms classed as affordable and a public ground floor café. It would join a strip of tall buildings by high-profile architects on the embankment, which already includes The Corniche by Foster & Partners and Merano by RSHP. The plans replace a similar scheme approved in 2023 for developer Ocubis, which would have seen the towers contain hotel space. This consent is still extant and does not expire until December 2026.
5. <https://www.howells.uk/projects/urbanest-vauxhall> - Urbanest Vauxhall is a 454-room development built for student accommodation in Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea. The building itself is the first brick-clad building in the UK over 90m tall and has a host of stylish communal facilities suited to student-style living. The building is a single block of G+31 storeys providing stunning views over the Battersea regeneration area; the student flats are supported with staff rooms, reception meeting rooms, an amenity lounge at level 1 and at rooftop (including an enclosed terrace). Construction started in May 2016 and completed in July 2018. The core was slipped, with the floors built around, standardised bathroom pods were deployed for efficiency and the building wrapped in a unitised façade system.
6. <https://www.urbanest.info/vauxhall/> - The construction of Urbanest Vauxhall began in 2016 on a constrained site (a former car park) only 5 metres from the main railway lines taking 250,000 passengers into London Waterloo every day. It opened its doors to its first intake of residents in September 2018. Located close to the US Embassy in Nine Elms, our Vauxhall community sits at the heart of this fast-growing and popular area of London and is ideally located for transport around town with Vauxhall train, tube and bus stations just a few minutes walk from the front door at Vauxhall Cross. The Uber river taxi pier is also close by. The development consists of 454 beds housed in a single block of 32 stories, providing stunning views up the river Thames from the rooftop and an enclosed terrace. Urbanest Vauxhall was the first brick-clad building over 90 metres tall in the UK and features a distinctive bull-nosed edge on the south-western corner of the building, resembling the Flatiron building in New York. The student accommodation is supported with staff rooms, top floor social space and an open plan study lounge at level 1. The core was slipped, with the floors built around, standardised bathroom pods were deployed for efficiency and the building wrapped in a unitised façade system.
7. <https://www.balfourbeatty.com/media-centre/latest/balfour-beatty-to-deliver-42-million-student-housing-project-for-urbanest/> - Balfour Beatty, the international infrastructure group, has been awarded a 454-unit student accommodation development scheme in Vauxhall, London for Urbanest, a developer and operator of student housing in central London. Having previously delivered 2,520 units across five central London schemes for Urbanest as part of a long-running partnership, this latest £42 million project at 5 Miles Street, Vauxhall will include 454 apartments at a variety of price points. The 33-storey building will include a wealth of personal and communal study areas, lounges and a cycle store, together with significant enhancements to the public realm. With focus on long term sustainability, photovoltaic panels and a green roof will be incorporated in order to minimize carbon emissions and reduce fuel consumption, alongside a combined heat and power (CHP) unit designed to recycle heat and energy within the development. The scheme will create a number of jobs locally alongside an additional 20 apprenticeships as part of Balfour Beatty’s ongoing commitment to The 5% Club, which aims to have a minimum of 5% of the total workforce made up of apprentices or graduates. The development will contribute to the wider £400 million regeneration of Vauxhall Square, which will include a significant amount of new office and residential development, alongside a new hotel and cinema complex. Construction for 5 Miles Street is set to begin imminently and is scheduled to complete in summer 2018.