

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------------------------|
| Committee: Development | Date: 6 th June 2012 | Classification: Unrestricted | Agenda Item No: 10.1 |
| Report of: Corporate Director of Development and Renewal | | Title: Planning Application for Consideration | |
| Case Officer: Jerry Bell | | Ref No: PA/12/00844 | |
| | | Ward(s): Adjacent to St Katharine's and Wapping | |

1. APPLICATION DETAILS

NOTE: The application site falls wholly within the City of London Corporation. London Borough of Tower Hamlets is a statutory consultee on this application by virtue of the site sharing a boundary with LBTH. This report therefore provides an officer recommendation which is intended to form the basis for the Borough's observations to the City of London. The Development Committee is requested to consider the endorsement of this recommendation.

Location: 100 Minories, London EC3N 1JY
Existing Use: Former London Metropolitan University building
Proposal: Demolition of the existing buildings on site and the erection of a 10-storey plus basement hotel (Use Class C1) comprising of 265 bedrooms together with ancillary restaurant, bar and retail facilities
Applicant: Grange Hotel Group
Owner: Grange Hotel Group
Historic Building: N/A, however portions of the adjacent Roman Wall are Grade I Listed and also a Scheduled Monument.
Conservation Area: The Crescent Conservation Area (City of London)

2. SUMMARY OF MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 LBTH has reviewed the application and taken into account all relevant policies and considerations in assessing the proposed scheme for the Demolition of the existing buildings on site and the erection of a 10-storey plus basement hotel comprising of 265 bedrooms together with ancillary restaurant, bar and retail facilities. Whilst officers have no concerns with regard to the proposed land use or impacts upon amenity or highways, the following objections are raised:

- The proposed building and associated screen structure, by virtue of its design, massing, scale, materials and elevational treatment represents an inappropriate form of development and fails to preserve or enhance the character, appearance and setting of the Tower of London World Heritage Site, the Tower Conservation Area and the adjacent Scheduled Ancient Monument. As such, the proposal fails to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), policies 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9 and 7.10 of the London Plan (2011), policies SP10 and SP12 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010), saved policy DEV1 of the Unitary Development Plan (1998), policies DEV2, CON1, CON2 and CFR18 of the Interim Planning

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 (Section 97) LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN THE DRAFTING OF THIS REPORT

| Brief Description of background papers: | Tick if copy supplied for register | Telephone no. of holder: |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Application, plans, adopted UDP (as saved). IPG, LDF Core Strategy and London Plan | | 020 7364 5009 |

Guidance (2007) and policies DM24, DM26, DM27 and DM28 of the draft Managing Development DPD (Submission Version May 2012) which seek to protect the character, appearance and setting of heritage assets. The proposal also fails to accord with the aims and objectives of Tower of London World Heritage Site Management Plan (Historic Royal Palaces, 2007)

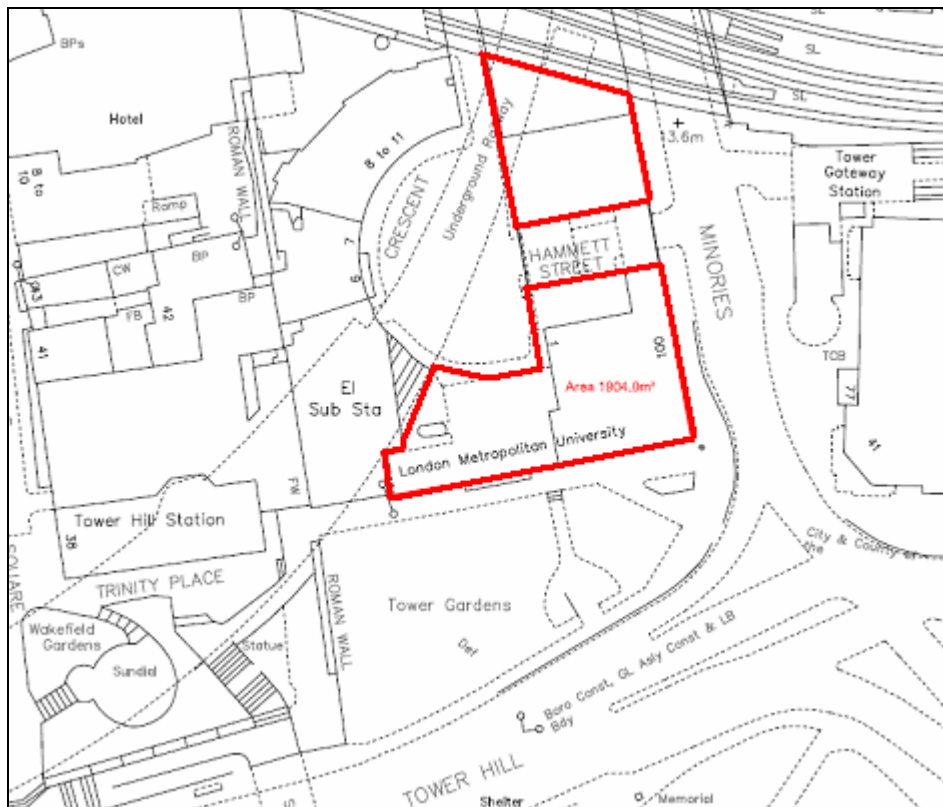
- The proposal will have a detrimental impact upon protected views as detailed within the London Plan London Views Management Framework Revised Supplementary Planning Guidance (July 2010) and would fail to maintain local or long distance views in accordance with policies 7.10, 7.11 and 7.12 of the London Plan (2011) and policy SP10 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010) and policies DM26 and DM28 of the draft Managing Development DPD (Submission Version May 2012) which seek to ensure large scale buildings are appropriately located and of a high design standard, whilst also seeking to protect and enhance regional and locally important views

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Committee resolve to **ratify officers' views** on the application for the reasons set out above in section 2.

4. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The application proposes the demolition of the existing 4-storey building on site and the erection of a building of up to ten storeys in height, containing 265 hotel rooms/serviced apartments, together with restaurant and retail floorspace at ground floor level.



Above: site location within the City of London

- 4.2 The site lies approximately 75m north of the outer wall of the Tower of London and is part of a group of buildings which form a backdrop to the Tower. The site is located upon a prominent corner and is bounded by a pedestrian route, Trinity Place, to the south with Tower Gardens beyond, and the Minories to the east. The site is located within the Crescent

Conservation Area and is located adjacent to the Tower Conservation Area. The site forms part of the setting of the Tower of London World Heritage Site, which is located approximately 65 metres to the south. The adjacent Roman Wall is also Grade 1 listed and portions are also a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

- 4.3 The building is proposed to be serviced from the Crescent immediately to the north of the application site. The proposed L-shaped building envelops The Crescent to the south and east and retains the existing Hamnett Street vehicular entrance off the Minories. A pedestrian connection through the site between the Crescent and Tower Gardens is also proposed.
- 4.4 The existing building comprises an L-shaped utilitarian concrete building which was completed in 1970. It was last occupied by London Metropolitan University in 2011 and has since been acquired by Grange Hotels. It is not considered that the existing building is of architectural or townscape significance.

5. ANALYSIS

- 5.1 The proposed building comprises an L-shaped building which is separated into three separate elements, namely a two-storey lower ground floor level which features the retail and restaurant floorspace, a projecting cantilevered middle element at levels 2-6 with three upper floor levels being inset in 'tier-cake' fashion. The prominent materials are stated as being limestone cladding with timber-clad recessed panels above the hotel's main entrances, whilst the upper floor levels feature metal rainscreen cladding and glazed balustrades.
- 5.2 The proposed building is a prominent feature within the setting of the Tower Conservation Area and the Tower of London World Heritage Site (WHS). Accordingly, the proposal must be tested for its impact on the sites' Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), ensuring and illustrating that it respects, conserves and preserves the OUV.
- 5.3 With particular regard to the introduction of a continuous, unrelieved frontage with marked horizontal emphasis on the south elevation of the building facing the WHS, this is considered to be discordant with the fine grain and character of the area and is therefore not considered to be an appropriate approach to a site of such significance. Furthermore, the cantilever of the upper floors of the facade creates an unacceptable overbearing impact at pedestrian level/from street view and exuberates the horizontality of the facade when seen from the south.
- 5.4 With particular regard to the recessed upper floor levels, it is considered that these have little relevance to the form of the buildings which form the immediate backdrop to the Tower of London. These would be particularly incongruous when viewed from the south, from which point the building is highly prominent and intervisible with the Tower of London World Heritage Site. The inappropriate use of materials (discussed below) would further emphasise the incongruous tiered approach to the uppermost floors.
- 5.5 With regard to the proposed materials, officers consider that it is imperative that materials are agreed during the application process given the sensitivity of the site's location. The historic character of the surrounding area and in particular those buildings within Trinity Square which help form the backdrop of the World Heritage Site, are marked by solidity and permanence. The choice of materials, in particular the prevalence of timber upon the facades and metal cladding and glazing at roof levels, do not feature significantly historically in this area and are therefore considered to be an inappropriate choice which has no precedent, introducing as it will, a material palette entirely alien to the historic environment and harming setting of significant heritage assets in the area.
- 5.6 Furthermore, the use of yellow stock brick on the rear elevation within the Crescent Conservation Area would appear at odds with the Georgian red brick character of the listed

terraced properties within the Crescent, where one of the key characteristics is the high architectural quality of the buildings.

It is also considered that the proposed substation glazed screening (figure 5 overleaf) within The Crescent, would appear as an unrelieved single architectural element, harmful to the scale and setting of the adjacent listed townhouses, which would further erode the character of the Crescent Conservation Area.

- 5.7 Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), in their letter to the City of London dated 23rd April 2012, state that they welcome in principle the proposed use as a hotel, with active frontages at street level, and the associated re-opening of the pedestrian route north along Vine Street. HRP also note that the building height is below the plane of the protected vista and therefore causes no problems in other long views, whilst also introducing an element of order into the definition of the built enclosure.
- 5.8 With regard to the design and elevational treatments of the proposal, HRP state:

“We are told that ‘the elevation has been consciously designed to be neutral, but with high quality and contextually appropriate materials (Townscape and Heritage Report, 4.24) and that ‘the building will be both confident in terms of its own design and place in the City, and also subordinate to the Tower, respecting its historic significance’ (ibid, 4.25). We agree regarding the materials proposed, and the principles espoused in these statements. Yet, ultimately, we consider that the design does not convince: it lacks sophistication and fails to achieve the enduring, timeless quality that all seem to agree the site needs, whilst avoiding being dull. We acknowledge that this is very difficult to achieve; but it is essential, given the very substantial size of this building, which will be extremely evident in diagonal views from the south-east. The present proposal, despite the choice of high quality materials and careful detailing, appears overly horizontal in composition and disappointingly monolithic.”

Officers endorse the above comments of Historic Royal Palaces.

- 5.9 In conclusion, setting can be defined as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. The proposed building would form a key component of the setting of the Tower of London World Heritage Site and the Tower Conservation Area. It is considered that the proposal has missed a significant architectural opportunity and has a harmful impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the Tower of London World Heritage Site and the character of the Tower Conservation Area. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would fail to respond positively to the character and setting of the character and setting of the World Heritage Site, as required by development plan policy and in particular, the London Plan ‘London World Heritage Sites – Guidance on Setting’ SPG (2012).

6. APPENDICES - IMAGES



Figure 1: Verified view of proposed building from south



Figure 2: Verified view of proposed building from Tower Hill (south west)



Figure 3: Verified view of proposal looking north along Minories



Figure 4: Verified view of proposal looking south along Minories



Figure 5: Verified view of rear elevation of proposed building and screen from within The Crescent

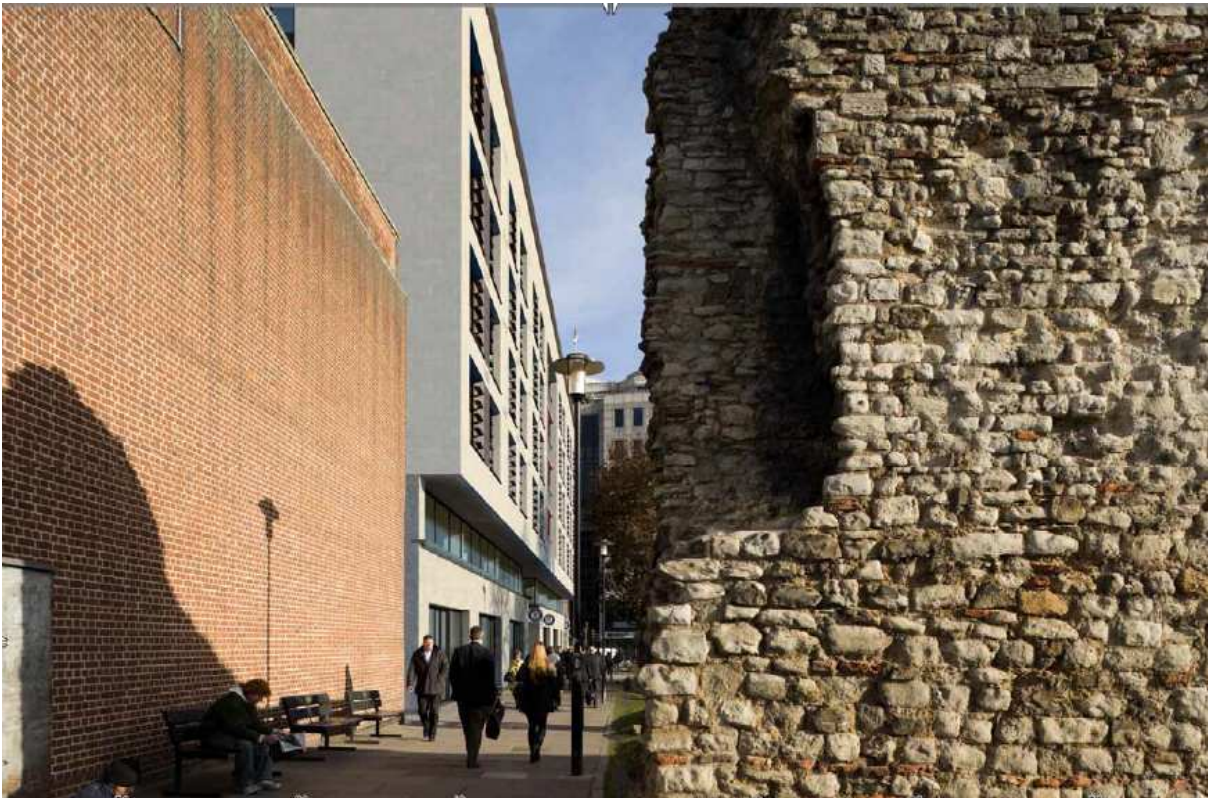


Figure 6: Verified view of proposal looking east in context of listed Roman Wall