

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2019

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor John Pierce (Chair)
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Kevin Brady
Councillor Val Whitehead
Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar
Councillor Tarik Khan

Other Councillors Present:

None

Apologies:

None

Officers Present:

Solomon Agutu	– (Interim Team Leader Planning, Legal Services, Governance)
Paul Buckenham	– (Development Manager, Planning Services, Place)
Gareth Gwynne	– (Area Planning Manager (West), Planning Services, Place)
Patrick Harmsworth	– (Senior Planning Officer, Planning Services, Place)
Simon Westmorland	– (West Area Team Leader, Planning Services, Place)
Zoe Folley	– (Committee Officer, Governance)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

The Committee **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Committee held on 8th July 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROCEDURE FOR HEARING OBJECTIONS AND MEETING GUIDANCE

The Committee RESOLVED that:

- 1) In the event of changes being made to recommendations by the Committee, the task of formalising the wording of those changes is delegated to the Corporate Director, Place along the broad lines indicated at the meeting; and
- 2) In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Corporate Director, Place is delegated authority to do so, provided always that the Corporate Director does not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision
- 3) To note the procedure for hearing objections at meetings of the Development Committee and the meeting guidance.

4. DEFERRED ITEMS

There were none.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR DECISION

5.1 Queen Mary University London, Site at Hatton House, Westfield Way, London, E1 (PA/19/01422)

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Planning Services) introduced the application for the demolition of the existing Hatton House (Student Accommodation Use Class C2) and No.357 Mile End Road (Use Class D1 Non-Residential Institution) and the construction of a new building for teaching and educational purposes.

Patrick Harmsworth (Senior Planning Officer) presented the application, providing an overview of the site location, the existing buildings and the local heritage issues. Public consultation had been carried out resulting in 7 representations in objection, as set out in the Committee report and the update report. The concerns related to a number of issues around lack of active frontage along Mile End Road, the loss of No.357 Mile End Road as a historically significant building, bulk and height of the proposed development amongst other issues.

The Committee were advised of the public benefits of the proposals in terms of the:

- high quality education and research facilities;

- new public access to the west bank of Regent's Canal from Mile End Road along with a widened canal-side path;
- public realm and landscaping enhancements across the site including two new public squares;
- the provision of a new community space facility.

In terms of land use, the policy supported the growth of good quality education facilities to meet demand and offer educational choice. It was also noted that the existing Hatton House student accommodation was no longer fit for purpose. In the longer term, it was intended that the student accommodation, lost through this application, would be re – provided, as part of the University's wider student accommodation strategy. Officers were therefore satisfied that the loss of the student accommodation in this instance was acceptable

Regarding the heritage issues, officers noted the proposals had been designed to preserve and enhance the setting of the Lock Keeper's Cottage.

Regarding the loss of No.357 Mile End Road, Officers drew attention to the modern day alterations and extension to the building, the lack of historic internal features and the limitations on its use given its proximity to a railway line.

In view of the above, Officers considered that proposal and the loss of No 357. Mile End Road would result in less than substantial harm to the Regents Canal Conservation Area and the setting of the Clinton Road Conservation Area.

With regards to the public benefits test, it was considered that the key public benefits of the scheme (as highlighted above, along with the plans to jointly producing a masterplan framework for the QMUL campus) would outweigh any harm to heritage assets.

Regarding the amenity issues, the proposal would not give rise to any undue privacy and overlooking issues. In terms of the sunlight and daylight issues, the development would broadly be policy compliant.

In highways, servicing and transportation terms, the scheme was considered acceptable subject to the use of appropriate conditions.

The Committee also noted the planning obligations. Officers were recommending that the application was granted planning permission.

The Chair invited registered speakers to address the Committee:

Carolyn Clark and Amanda Day spoke in objection to the application. They expressed concerns about the following issues:

- The loss of the locally listed building No 357 Mile End Road given its historic significance. Many of the originally features remained in place, such

as the rare Georgian features. The assessment was incorrect regarding the adaptations to the building.

- No 357 Mile End Road formed part of a unique cluster of buildings along the canal. The proposal would overshadow these buildings.
- The proposal conflicted with the Council's Conservation Strategy
- Historic England were of the view that the development would harm the Conservation Area.
- Concerns over the quality of the public benefits such as the new café and the community space in view of the affordability issues.

Ian McManus spoke in support of the application. The development formed part of the University's first phase of its wider development strategy. The Council and the Greater London Authority broadly supported the proposal. It would deliver a range of benefits. The quality of No 357 Mile End Road had deteriorated and its usability was restricted as it had a train line running under the building. Steps had been taken to ensure that the proposal would enhance the setting of the cottage Lock Keeper's Cottage. The applicant had sought to address the concerns by amending the application and it would provide a good quality development.

Committee's Questions to Officers

The Committee asked question about the possibility of retaining No 357 Mile End Road given it was locally listed and the efforts that had been made to preserve the building? It was questioned whether alternative options had been explored - such as extending the building onto the area identified for new public realm to save the demolition of the building. Members also sought clarity about the condition of this building and the comments from the heritage bodies, such as Historic England as well as the Canal and Rivers Trust and the Greater London Authority.

In response, it was noted that various options were tested in terms of locating the proposal elsewhere on the site. However these options were considered to be disadvantageous, (compared to the proposed scheme) due to the difficulty in providing a meaningful building for the university on other parts of the site. It was also felt that the alternative options could adversely affect the setting of other heritage assets. It was emphasised that the Council took seriously the need to preserve heritage assets and must carefully assess any proposals that affected buildings in the Conservation Area. The applicant had provided comprehensive evidence regarding the need to deliver the quantum of development proposed (in line with the University's wider growth strategy) and the suitability of the proposed location to deliver this. Officers also reported on the historic significance of No 357 Mile End Road.

In terms of the alterations to the building, there was evidence of changes to the brick work, and the removal of the historic internal features amongst other changes. Given this, Officers considered that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area. It was also clarified that Historic England considered that loss of No 357 Mile End Road would cause a

high degree of harm to the character of the Conservation Area. The NPPF public benefits test therefore should be applied.

The Committee also sought clarity about the public benefits and whether they outweighed the heritage impacts and justified the height and massing, that appeared to overshadow the Lock Keeper's Cottage. In particular, Members questioned: the need for another café space, the affordability of the community space, its opening hours to the public and the lack of a public access route from the north to the canal towpath. In response, Officers further explained that the proposal would deliver a range of benefits. This should transform the area. Officers also drew attention to a Council initiative to improve the connectivity of the area.

Regarding the availability of the community space, it was noted that a Community Use Implementation and Management Strategy would be secured by condition that would take into account affordability issues. The community space would be available to hire by local groups and it was planned that such groups were prioritised in the evening. The comments from the GLA regarding this matter had mostly been addressed.

Committee's Questions to the Applicant's representative:

In response to further questions about the need to demolish No 357 Mile End Road, it was explained that the building was a low quality space. With the permission of the Chair, a member of the Applicant's team explained in further detail: the implications of retaining the locally listed building and encroaching instead on the proposed public space. This should bring the development in closer proximity to the Lock Keeper's Cottage, that in their view was of a greater value than No 357 Mile End. The applicant had worked hard to design a scheme that preserved the setting of the Lock Keeper's Cottage and the setting of the canal and given the site constraints, this required the demolition of No 357 Mile End Road.

In response to further questions, they provided assurances about the location of the main entrance for the proposal and their long term plans to provide additional student accommodation.

Committee Questions to the Objectors.

In response to questions, the objectors emphasised that the listed building added value to cluster of locally listed buildings. It was a visually important building.

On a vote of 0 in favour of the Officers recommendation, 7 against and 1 abstention, the Committee were minded not to accept the application for Planning Permission at Queen Mary University London, Site at Hatton House, Westfield Way, London, E1 for the:

- Demolition of the existing Hatton House (Student Accommodation Use Class C2) and No.357 Mile End Road (Use Class D1 Non-Residential

Institution) and the construction of a new building for teaching and educational purposes (Use Class D1) along with associated access, public realm works, landscaping and cycle parking (PA/19/01422)

Accordingly, Councillor Val Whitehead proposed and Councillor Kevin Brady seconded a motion that the application for planning permission be REFUSED (for the reasons set out below) and a vote of 7 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention the Committee RESOLVED:

That the application for planning permission be REFUSED.

The Committee were minded to refuse the application due to concerns over the following issues:

- Loss of No.357 Mile End Road in terms of the impact on the Regents Canal Conservation Area.
- The scale, height and bulk of the development, particularly in relation to the Lock Keeper's Cottage, and the impact this would have on local heritage assets.
- The public benefits of the development do not outweigh the harm to local heritage interests.

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.

Chair, Councillor John Pierce
Strategic Development Committee