

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.10 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2020

ONLINE 'VIRTUAL' MEETING - [HTTPS://TOWERHAMLETS.PUBLIC-I.TV/CORE/PORTAL/HOME](https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)

Members Present:

Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE (Chair)
Councillor John Pierce (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Sufia Alam
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury
Councillor Dipa Das
Councillor Leema Qureshi

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan

Officers Present:

Adam Garcia	– (Principal Planning Officer, West Area Team Place)
Gareth Gwynne	– (Area Planning Manager (West), Planning Services, Place)
Siddhartha Jha	– (Principal Planning Lawyer, Governance, Legal Services)
Simon Westmorland	– (West Area Team Leader, Planning Services Place)
Zoe Folley	– (Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)

Apologies:

None

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

There were none

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

The Committee **RESOLVED**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th November 2020 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. The procedure for hearing objections and meeting guidance be noted.
2. In the event of changes being made to recommendations by the Committee, the task of formalising the wording of those changes be delegated to the Corporate Director, Place along the broad lines indicated at the meeting; and
3. 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 be delegated authority to do so, provided always that the Corporate Director does not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision

4. DEFERRED ITEMS

NONE

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR DECISION

5.1 319-337 Petrol Station, Cambridge Heath Road, London, E2 9LH (PA/20/01124)

Update report was tabled

Gareth Gwynne introduced the application for demolition of the existing petrol filling station and associated retail store and erection of a four to six-storey building for a 157-bedroom hotel and ground floor/basement office use together with ancillary landscaping, servicing and cycle parking. He also highlighted issues in the update report.

Adam Garcia presented the application providing an overview of the site, including the current use. Public consultation had been undertaken and the main objections were noted around the application resulting in an over provision of hotel use, potential residential use for the site and amenity issues.

The Committee noted the following:

- In land use terms, the policy provided no protection for the petrol station, and in principal the hotel led use complied with policy. In addition, it was not considered that the proposal would create an oversupply of hotels in the area or compromise the housing supply, based on the site location and the size of the hotel.

- The design would respond well to the local area, and sought to re – establish the historic building line on Cambridge Heath Road. Details of the design were noted including the transitions in building heights, the proposed materials, providing visual interest. It would constitute a high quality design.
- In heritage terms, the scheme would respond positively/enhance the setting of the Bethnal Green Gardens Conservation Area, as well as the heritage assets and the Public House.
- It was considered that the neighbouring properties would be unaffected in terms of amenity impacts.
- The hotel rooms would have a good outlook.
- The proposals had been designed to minimise overlooking to residential developments and would result in limited impacts to sense of enclosure.
- Cycle parking plans were in line with policy
- The development would be car free with one accessible bay.
- A servicing yard was proposed. A Stage 1 Safety Audit had been submitted for this new access route, and accepted by highway officers.
- Planning obligations had been secured.
- Officers were recommending that the planning permission was granted

The Chair invited the registered speakers to address the Committee.

Irfan Hussain, Hassan Hoque and Councillor Gabriela Salva-Macallan, a ward Councillor spoke in objection to the application.

Concerns were expressed about:

- Developer's consultation with local people particularly during the early lockdown period, given the nature of the proposal. (change of use)
- Oversupply of hotels in the area/lack of demand for additional hotels
- Evidence submitted by the objectors showed that the site could accommodate a residential development. This option should instead be taken forward given the need for housing/oversupply of hotels
- Concerns over the design. This needed to be given further consideration.
- Servicing issues.

Mike Ibbott spoke in support of the application, highlighting the following issues:

- That the applicant had worked with the Council over many years to develop the application.
- That the proposed land use met the key tests and satisfied the criteria in policy for the provision of a hotel use.
- The need for a new hotel in the area. Bethnal Green had a relatively modest number of hotels in the local area. The concerns about the oversupply related to the wider Whitechapel area.
- The difficulties in providing a residential use on site, due to the site constraints and proximity to late night premises. This would be in conflict with the Agent of change policy.

- That the proposal would be in keeping with the character of the Bethnal Green area, that had a 'civic character'.
- The other benefits of the scheme included the creation of employment, biodiversity enhancements and a secure by design accreditation.
- The applicant had done their best to consult with residents during the lockdown period and details of their consultation with residents and businesses were noted.

Committee questions:

The Committee asked a number of questions of Officers and the registered speakers summarised below.

- The Committee asked questions about alternative uses for the site, particularly a residential development.
- It was noted that the applicant had looked at the possibility of providing a residential development at the pre -application stage with Officers. However, given the concerns around the standard of accommodation (due the site constraints), as well as the need to optimise the development potential of the site, the applicant had opted to deliver a hotel led scheme.
- Officers also expressed doubt about the suitability of the site for a large scale residential development with respect to delivering the appropriate quality of amenity for future residents due to a number of factors. These included: the site's proximity to late night premises, the site being bound to the west by the railway and a busy road on its eastern edge, the need to provide outdoor amenity and play space and this liable to be provided at roof level which is not a satisfactory arrangement.
- Officers have had due regard for the objections, and the proposed alternative residential scheme and the study submitted. However due to the issues outlined above, Officers considered that the plans were not appropriate.
- It was also possible that a residential development may put businesses at risk of more noise complaints from occupants of the residential development than occupants of a hotel given the transient population of a hotel. This could impact on the businesses and cause a conflict with Agent of Change policy.
- The objectors considered that a residential development would have a higher noise threshold.
- Councillor Gabriela Salva-Macallan considered that these impacts could be addressed by conditions. For a number of reasons (oversupply of hotels in the area, the design) the site was unsuitable for the proposed use.
- Regarding the supply of hotels in the area, the policy does not set any specific limits on the number of hotels in an area, instead this should be measured on its impacts.
- The Committee must assess the application before them on its merits with reference to the Development Plan, as opposed to comparing it with the idea of other possible schemes that are not before them for determination. On this basis, the application was deemed by Officers

as acceptable, and complied with policy given the factors outlined above.

- The site is not allocated for housing nor does it have a current planning permission for a residential development. As such, officers did not consider that it would compromise the Council's ability to meet the housing targets.
- The Committee also briefly discussed the key differences between this site, (regarding the delivery of a residential scheme) and the nearby residential scheme at the Bethnal Green Mission Church given the quality of the residential housing and the community benefits on that site.
- It was also noted that consultation had been carried out with residents in the usual way in accordance with requirements.
- Regarding the green walls, the Council's Biodiversity Officer had reviewed the proposals and the biodiversity enhancements. They were satisfied with the conditions requiring their prior approval of the plans.
- The strategy for minimising carbon dioxide emissions was in compliance with policy requirements.
- Contributions had been secured for apprenticeships as set out in the heads of terms for the section 106
- The applicant's representative estimated that the development should deliver at least 60 new jobs.
- Officers also provided confirmation of the status of the new use classes as detailed in the report. The Hotel uses continued to fall under Use Class C1 and the ground floor/basement office use would fall under the Use Class E in the new order.

On a unanimous vote the Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. That planning permission is **GRANTED** at 319-337 Petrol Station, Cambridge Heath Road, London, E2 9LH for the following development
 - Demolition of existing petrol filling station and associated retail store and erection of a four to six-storey building (7,036m² GEA) for a 157-bedroom hotel (6,458m²) and ground floor/basement office use (578m² GEA), together with ancillary landscaping, servicing and cycle parking.

Subject to:

2. The prior completion of a legal agreement to secure the planning obligations set out in the Committee report
3. That the Corporate Director of Place is delegated the power to impose conditions and informatives to address the matters set out in the Committee report and the update report.

5.2 24 Lockesfield Place, London, E14 3AH (PA/20/02107)

Item withdrawn from the agenda

6. OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

None

The meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Development Committee