

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

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

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:

Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan

Apologies:

None

Officers Present:

Paul Buckenham	– (Development Manager, Planning Services, Place)
Adam Garcia	– (Principal Planning Officer, West Area Team Place)
Gareth Gwynne	– (Area Planning Manager (West), Place)
Rachel Mckoy	– (Head of Commercial & Contracts, Legal Services Governance)
Max Smith	– (Principal Planning Officer, Place)
Simon Westmorland	– (West Area Team Leader, Planning Services, Place)
Andrew Hargreaves	– (Borough Conservation Officer, Place)
Zoe Folley	– (Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Councillors Kevin Brady and Tarik Khan declared a non - Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item 5.1 Marian Place Gasholder Site, Bethnal Green, London, E2 9AP. This was on the basis that they were St Peter's Ward Councillors and had attended presentations with the developer and Council Officers.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd July 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

There were none

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR DECISION

5.1 Marian Place Gasholder Site, Bethnal Green, London, E2 9AP (PA/19/02717)

Update report was tabled

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Planning Services) introduced the application for the demolition of existing buildings decontamination/remediation of the site and retention (including dismantling, refurbishment and reinstatement) of the two existing gasholder frames to

facilitate redevelopment for a mixed-use development. He drew attention to the issues raised in the update report.

Adam Garcia (Planning Services) presented the application. He provided an overview of the site and the principles of the site allocation. He also advised of the design approach to refurbishing and retaining the two gas frames and locating the new buildings. Public consultation had been undertaken. 79 letters in objections were received including five from interest groups/organisations. The update report contained a further nine representations and four representations from interest groups. The principle of the objections, mainly centred around the guide frames.

The Committee were advised of the following issues.

- That the development would provide 555 good quality new homes.
- That the housing mix was considered to be broadly in line with policy, despite the variation in tenure mix regarding the private and intermediate family sized units, given the provision of 35% affordable housing.
- The proposals would provide new fully publicly accessible open space. The calculations submitted demonstrated that the level of consolidated open space would meet requirements. Details of the public space and landscaping would be secured by a s106.
- That the scheme had been carefully designed to respond appropriately to the retained guide frames, that had influenced the development. The development would retain their prominence and strengthen their visual significance. The applicant had given careful consideration to the various options in terms of refurbishing the guide frames including the option of in situ refurbishment on site. However, it was found that there were a number of practical difficulties with this. As such, it was proposed to refurbish the gas holders off site. Officers had liaised with Historic England in respect of these plans, and they were satisfied with the conditions proposed. The Committee noted details of these conditions, including the obligation that they be restored prior to the occupation of parts of the development.
- The proposal would provide active frontage, improving natural surveillance.
- That the development would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the Regent's Canal Conservation Area, at the lower end, as defined by the NPPF. It was considered that the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh any harm.
- That the sunlight and daylight assessment had been reviewed. This showed that with the exception of some discrepancies, the neighbouring properties should continue to receive good levels of sunlight and day light. Details of the assessment were noted.
- Details of the transport matters.

Officers were recommending that the application was granted permission.

The Chair invited the registered speaker to address the Committee.

Lucy Rogers and Paul Latham expressed concerns about the following matters:

- The impact on the gasholder guide frames and loss of their historic significance. They noted the strong public reaction to the loss of the frames. They should be retained and kept empty.
- Damage to the frames by their dismantling. Historic England had raised concerns regarding their potential damage or loss due to this. Concerns were also expressed about the Applicant's methodology statement.
- The lack of information regarding the possibility of refurbishing them on site.
- Adequacy of the contamination study to understand the costs of redeveloping the site.

Councillor Gabriela Salva-Macallan addressed the Committee as the local ward Councillor. She questioned how the provision of a densely populated private housing led development met the aims of the site allocation in terms of providing public benefits such as green space and improving permeability. She also expressed concerns about the fast track approach given the level of the affordable housing. More housing on the site could have been provided, and the viability of the scheme needed to be reviewed. She also expressed concerns about the lack of affordable housing and the intermediate housing. She also considered that there had been a lack of community engagement on the proposals.

Sean Ellis, Tom Simons and Timur Tatlioglu spoke in support of the application, highlighting the merits of the scheme. Regarding the consultation, the applicant had engaged with local residents and groups and this had informed the proposals. The developers had worked closely with officers to ensure the proposals complied with the site allocation. The scheme provides for 35% affordable housing by habitable room based upon a 70:30 split between affordable rent units and intermediate housing. The proposed level of four bed family sized affordable rented units exceeded the Local Plan requirements. The units would be tenure blind and would meet and exceed internal space standards, with amenity and communal space. The scheme will be delivered in two phases with the first phase including all of the affordable housing. Other benefits of the application included:

- New publicly accessible open space.
- Improved public access.
- Communal amenity space including a child play space area.
- The provision of flexible workspace. 11% of which would be provided at a rate at 10% below the market rate.
- That the proposals would be of the highest design quality and would respond positively to the setting of the area.
- Environmental enhancements and contributions

Regarding the former gasholder guide frames, the applicant had listened to historic groups. The developer had worked with Officers and Historic England to develop a detailed retention and reuse strategy, which would be secured via conditions and the s106 agreement

Committee questions:

In response to the above, the Committee asked a number of questions of Officers and the registered speaker as summarised below:

- The Committee sought assurances about the retention of the gasholder guide frames and the options considered.
- In response, officers explained further the measures to ensure this including the obligations requiring the completion of the works prior to the occupation of the private dwellings and the commercial space. As such, this meant that the affordable housing could be delivered on site first, before the completion of the works.
- The Applicant's speakers also explained further the options considered in relation to refurbishing the gas holder frames (in terms of carrying this out on or off site). At this stage, it was considered that dismantling them off site was the most realistic option, however further work will need to be carried out and all options will be further explored during the development of the detailed conditions. In looking at this issue, the developer had reviewed the King's Cross Gas holders project.
- Unsuccessful attempts had been made to list the non -designated heritage assess.
- It was proposed that the frames be given the same level of protection as the listed frames at King's Cross. Historic England were satisfied with the proposed level of protection. Prior to their decommissioning, the frames contained drums. The design approach (of building the development with them), accorded with this.
- Regarding the viability assessment, Officers and the applicant's speakers confirmed that the assessment had been independently reviewed by the GLA's viability team. The GLA were satisfied with the evidence presented regarding the costs of redeveloping the brownfield site that would be incurred. Given the abnormal costs identified in the report, it was considered that the development met the requirements regarding a fast track scheme for affordable housing. It was also reported that a viability assessment regarding the development of the site had been submitted as part of the site allocation enquiry. The Planning Inspector had not raised any concerns.
- In response to questions, Mr Latham considered that the report was inaccurate in terms of the costs of dealing with the contamination of the site, given the findings of the National Grid report, produced when the site was decommissioned. This issued had not been addressed.
- The Committee also discussed the housing mix. This was in view of the: slight under provision of private and intermediate family size housing.

- Officers reported, that in view of this, the plans had been amended to increase the number of 3 and 4 bed affordable rented units. As a result, there would be an overprovision of these units.
- Officers were mindful of the issues around the shortfall of dual aspect units, due to the design constraints. It was felt that retaining the gasholder frames should take precedence in designing the scheme. However, it was assessed that, on balance, the quality of the accommodation would be acceptable.
- The Committee also asked questions about public access to the site for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Officers confirmed that the scheme, included measures to improve access to Marian Place and Emma Street. The s106 also included measures to safeguard Canalside access from the north – east corner of the site to Cobridge Crescent and to secure a cycle and pedestrian access throughout the site.
- It was confirmed that the vast majority of the landscaped area would be publicly accessible. Details of this would be secured by the s106 agreement.
- That access to a courtyard in Building A would be reserved for private residents and users of the commercial units.
- The Council's Biodiversity Officer had considered the proposal. They were of the view that the proposals would have a limited impact on wildlife and that subject to the conditions should enhance the biodiversity value of the site.
- Members also asked questions about compliance with the London Plan target of a minimum 45% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions on-site. It was noted that details of the measures were set out in the report. It was noted that the applicant had made every effort to achieve a 41% reduction given the site restrictions. In addition, in view of the slight shortfall in reaching the 45% target, a financial contribution had also been secured.
- The applicant's team explained in further detail the nature of these measures.
- The Committee also discussed the consultation with residents.
- Councillor Gabriela Salva-Macallan expressed concerns about the lack of community consultation especially at the pre – application stage, following the presentation to the Committee in November 2019.
- Officers explained that the Council had carried out extensive consultation on the application beyond the requirements in the Statement of Community Involvement. It was considered that the issues raised by the objections had been fully addressed in the Committee report and the update report. Many of the objections concerned the loss of the guide frames that was not part of the proposals.

On a vote of 7 in favour and 1 against the Committee RESOLVED:

1. That, subject to GLA stage 2 approval, planning permission is **GRANTED** at Marian Place Gasholder Site, Bethnal Green, London, E2 9AP for:
 - Demolition of existing buildings, decontamination/remediation of the site and retention (including dismantling, refurbishment and reinstatement) of the two existing gasholder frames to facilitate redevelopment for a mixed-use development comprising 5 buildings ranging between 6-13 storeys (up to 63m AOD) to contain 555 residential dwellings and 4,182sqm (GIA) non-residential floorspace in flexible A1-A4, B1 and D Use Classes (maximum provision of up to 180sqm A1/A2, up to 1,300sqm A3/A4, up to 2,485sqm of B1(a) and up to 635sqm of D1/D2 use class floorspace), together with access, car and cycle parking, associated landscaping and public realm, public open space and works to the existing canal wall, Pressure Reduction Station and existing gasholders(PA/19/02717)
2. Subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement to secure the planning obligations set out in the Committee report and the update 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 Site Bound by Raven Row Stepney Way, Sidney Street, London, E1 2EN (PA/20/00571)

Update report was tabled

Paul Buckenham introduced the application for Minor Material Amendments to Planning permission Ref: PA/18/00917, Dated 12/09/2019. He highlighted the issues in the update report. It was noted that the guidance for such variations indicated that the Committee should focus on the amendments and any policy changes.

Max Smith (Planning Services) presented the report explaining the site location and the layout of the scheme. Consultation had been carried out and the issues raised were noted as set out in the Committee report.

Details of the various changes were noted relating to:

- The revised housing mix including the increased level of affordable housing to 35% from 32%.
- Increased height to blocks A and C.
- The assessment of heritage in relation to the conservation areas and Grade II listed buildings. The design of the scheme had been arranged in such a way to minimise any impact. The scheme would have a

comparable impact to the consented scheme and it was considered that the public benefits will outweigh the harm.

- Increased amenity space and child playspace in view of the increased number of residential units.
- The measures to recognise the archaeology of the site
- The sunlight and daylight report - particularly the additional impacts on neighbouring properties compared to the consented scheme.
- Transport matters.
- Planning obligations.

Overall, given the nature of the changes, it was considered that the impacts of the scheme on balance remained broadly acceptable and would be outweighed by the benefits of the application

Officers were recommending that the application was granted planning permission.

The Chair invited the registered speakers to address the Committee. Amanda Day and Paula Bodington spoke in objection to the application, expressing concerns about the following issues:

- The negative impact on amenity, particularly in terms of light.
- The increase in the number of units and height. It would be 3 metres taller than the previous application.
- The lack of additional affordable units. Only a small number of affordable units were to be provided.
- Increased parking from the development.
- Overdevelopment of the Whitechapel area given the cumulative impacts from other new developments. The Impact on local infrastructure due to this.
- That the public benefits would be minimal.

Thomas Lane addressed the Committee on behalf of the applicant advising of the benefits of the scheme in terms of:

- That the proposal sought to provide good quality additional affordable homes at London Living and Tower Hamlets affordable rents. 45% of which would be family sized housing.
- There would be an increase in affordable workspace in excess of the policy requirements.
- The enhancements to the public realm incorporating the historic features of the site.
- New publicly accessible open space.
- There would be biodiversity enhancements and measures to improve air quality.

Committee's Questions.

In response to the above, the Committee asked a number of questions of Officers and the registered speaker as summarised below

- The Committee asked questions about the revised design. It was noted that despite the loss of the height differential between buildings, it was still considered to be of a good quality design.
- Regarding the need for the changes, the applicant's speaker advised of the reasons for this. The changes were deemed necessary to update the housing and commercial mix to support the viability of the scheme. They would maximise the public benefits of the development.
- It was noted that details of the updated sunlight and daylight assessment were set out in the report. The issue of 'right to light' was a private issue not a planning issue.
- The scheme would be car free and permit free subject to the operation of the Council's permit transfer scheme for occupants of social housing. Furthermore, it was considered that the location was unlikely to attract occupants with vehicles, given the good public transport links. Transport Services had raised no objections to the development.
- The impact on infrastructure had been addressed through the contributions.
- That the scheme provided for 35% of affordable housing by habitable room. (increased from 32%). The approach to measuring the affordable housing by habitable room complied with policy and accorded with the usual practice (rather than by units). The other key public benefits of the scheme included the creation of publicly accessible open space.
- Whilst broadly acceptable, the housing mix did not fully comply with policy, similar to the approved scheme.
- That the proposals met the fast track requirements regarding the delivery of affordable housing.
- The capacity of the area to accommodate the scale of development. It was noted that given the marginal increase in density, that the impact should be negligible. It was also noted that the site formed part of a new Site Allocation and was within the City Fringe Sub Area in the Local Plan. The Plan supports additional homes and workspace in this area.

On a vote of 6 in favour and 1 against the Committee RESOLVED:

1. That subject to GLA stage 2 approval, planning permission is **GRANTED** at Site Bound by Raven Row Stepney Way, Sidney Street, London, E1 2EN for
 - Demolition of existing buildings and erection of three blocks comprising residential units (Use Class C3), commercial floorspace, off-street car parking spaces, communal courtyards, associated landscaping and associated ancillary works.

Minor Material Amendments to Planning permission Ref: PA/18/00917, Dated 12/09/2019 include:

- Overall increase of residential units [from 648 to 698];
- Increase in affordable unit provision [from 159 to 183 (32%)

- to 35% of total)];
- Increased height to blocks A and C (up to two additional storeys). Block A would be up to 22 storeys and Block C up to 26 storeys. Amended residential unit mix
 - Reduction in on-site parking spaces
 - Increased office floorspace (use class B1)
 - Additional amenity space and associated works
2. Subject to the prior completion of a deed of variation 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 negotiate the legal agreement. If within three months of the resolution the legal agreement has not been completed, the Corporate Director for Place is delegated power to refuse planning permission.
 4. That the Corporate Director of Place is delegated the power to impose conditions and informatives to address set out in the Committee report

The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.

Chair, Councillor John Pierce
Strategic Development Committee