

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

20TH January 2011 at 7:00 pm

UPDATE REPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

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Agenda item no	Reference no	Location	Proposal
7.1	PA/10/2091	438-490 Mile End Road, E1.	Erection of a new building ranging from 3 to 10 storeys to provide a new education facility comprising teaching accommodation and associated facilities, student housing, cycle and car-parking, refuse and recycling facilities.

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Proposal:	Erection of a new building ranging from 3 to 10 storeys to provide a new education facility comprising teaching accommodation and associated facilities, student housing, cycle and car-parking, refuse and recycling facilities.

1. ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

- 1.1 The Council has received additional letters of representation since the committee report was completed.
- 1.2 A letter of objection has been received from Councillor Amy Whitelock:

Which states:
 - 1.3 As a ward councillor for Mile End and Globe Town, I am writing to formally oppose the above application due for consideration at tonight's Strategic Development Committee, and urge members not to renege on decisions previously agreed by this committee.
 - 1.4 My objections to this proposal centre on two main issues: the height and density of the building. As members will know, the development abuts the Ocean Estate and in particular overlooks low-rise residential properties in Canal Close, Union Drive and Grand Walk. I know that residents in these properties and nearby blocks such as James House, Moray House and Emmott Close are extremely concerned about the impact this proposed development will have on their local area and their quality of life.
 - 1.5 Due to some confusion at the council, a petition from residents submitted in opposition to the development was not included in the original committee papers, but I understand this will be included in the update report and that resident representatives will be presenting their concerns in person at the meeting. I trust members will give their representations equal consideration to those that were included in the original report, particularly given the strength of feeling against this development.
 - 1.6 Members may be aware that this development attracted considerable opposition the first time it was proposed, due to a number of issues including height, density, proliferation of a 'campus town', and the impact on local health services, other facilities and the night-time economy. As the papers acknowledge (paras 5.1-5.11), the Strategic Development Committee consistently refused the original application on 4th August 2009, 23rd September 2009 and 15th December 2009, This refusal was on a number of grounds including the "physical impact of the scheme [...] in terms of the height, bulk and massing of the proposed building".
 - 1.7 I am therefore disappointed and surprised to find that officers are recommending the committee should grant this proposal, given it effectively returns the plans to an initial position, which was repeatedly refused by committee members, who in the end have jurisdiction over such matters. To try to overturn previous committee decisions seems to me to undermine the quasi-judicial process where jurisdiction should ultimately rest with members.
 - 1.8 To be specific, I understand the revised application was eventually granted by the committee precisely due to reductions to the height and density. This new application being considered tonight attempts to put the height and density back up, almost to the original position. I note with surprise that officers conclude such changes are

“immaterial” (para. 8.5). Comparing the differences between the application permitted on 17th May 2010 and tonight’s application, my residents and I certainly do not regard the following to be immaterial:

an increase in height of 2.8 metres;
an increase in external floorspace of 1,871 sq m;
an increase in student bed spaces by 58;
an extension by 5.4 metres to the west.

- 1.9 I trust members will acknowledge these increases in height and density are by no means negligible – particularly in terms of their impact on neighbouring residents and the surrounding area – and take that into proper consideration in their decision. It should be noted that residents accepted the plans permitted on 17th May 2010 because of the reductions in height and density compared to the original application. To renege on this previously agreed position by the Strategic Development Committee because developers are seeking to go back to their original position would be a disservice to these residents.
- 1.10 I urge the Strategic Development Committee to reject this proposal on the grounds set out in this representation. This will ensure the right balance is struck between the justification for a new educational facility and the rights of local residents and communities, as was reached in the previous decision on 15th May 2010, which should be upheld.

1.11 Officer Comment:

The increase in both height and length revert the development back towards the height the Committee previously found unacceptable. The issue is therefore whether the changes are so significant to warrant a refusal of planning permission due to overdevelopment caused by excessive height in relation to the local context, and the ‘terracing’ effect with Lindrop House resulting from the western extension.

- 1.12 Officers previously advised that the development permitted on 17th May 2010 would sit appropriately within the surrounding context, would not have any negative impact in long distance townscape views and would achieve a successful transition in scale along the site’s exceptionally long frontage to Mile End Road. This was because the site is within an area containing existing medium and large-scale civic buildings forming part of the Queen Mary College campus. In terms of overall scale and form, it was advised that the building then proposed would be acceptable within that context, creating a defining feature at the southern end of the campus.
- 1.13 With regards to the petition, an email was received on the 13 January 2011 from Derek England on behalf of the Ocean Estate Tenants and Leaseholders Association, stating that a petition containing 24 Signatures has been omitted from the report. An investigation was carried out and this petition could not be located. On the same, a second email received from Mr England stating that they will; endeavour to resend the petition. On the 18 January 2011, an email was sent to Mr England from Mr Bell (Strategic Applications Manager), asking for the resent petition to be marked “URGENT” and for his attention whereupon it would be included in this update report. To date no email has been received.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The officer’s recommendation remains unchanged.