

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Mayor's Office

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Our ref: PDU/1018a/GC/04
Your ref: PA/11/02220
Date: 20 June 2012

Owen Whalley

Development and Renewal
Planning and Building Control
Mulberry Place
PO Box 55739
5 Clove Crescent
LONDON E14 2BG

For the attention of Paul Buckenham (case officer)

Dear Mr. Whalley

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ("1990 Act"); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008

**London Fruit and Wool Exchange, Brushfield Street, 99-101 Commercial Street, 54 Brushfield Street and White's Row car park, Spitalfields
Local Planning Authority reference: PA/11/02220**

Direction under Section 2A of the 1990 Act

I refer to your letter of 8 June 2012 informing me that Tower Hamlets Council is minded to refuse planning permission for the above planning application. I refer you also to the notice that was issued on 13 June 2012 under the provisions of article 5(1)(b)(i) of the above Order.

Having now considered a report on this case, reference PDU/1018a/02 (copy enclosed), I hereby direct (under the powers conferred by Section 2A of the 1990 Act) that I will act as the local planning authority for the purposes of determining the above planning application and the connected conservation area consent.

My reasons are as follows:

a) The development would have a significant impact on the implementation of the London Plan:

- The application would contribute to the delivery of Central Activities Zone (CAZ) priorities with regard to the need to ensure adequate office capacity to meet future demand. It would generate employment and contribute to increasing the offer presented by the CAZ, serving to increase London's world city status, a key economic policy objective of the London Plan. In addition, the provision of significant office floorspace on this site, within a constrained section of the CAZ, would ensure a major development site would fulfil its potential, as part of a finite number of opportunities within the City Fringe opportunity area.

- The application would give rise to a £2,026,716 contribution towards Crossrail, which the applicant has committed to pay. Therefore, the application has the potential to contribute towards the delivery of Crossrail, thus helping to deliver the principal transport policy priority within the London Plan.

b) The development would have a significant effect on more than one borough:

- The provision of high quality large-scale office floorspace in this constrained City Fringe location would complement the offer within the CAZ, and support an internationally competitive business cluster. The proposed development at this site, and the jobs and office floorspace it would deliver, has a clear relationship with the other City Fringe opportunity area and CAZ boroughs in ensuring that the Zone as a whole continues to maximise the strategic employment function of London to support its world city role.
- This application, by virtue of its financial contribution towards Crossrail, would assist in the delivery of a cross-borough strategic transport project vital to the longer-term development of the capital.

c) There are sound planning reasons for my intervention:

- The proposal would, in line with London Plan Policy 2.10 and associated policies, support the strategic objectives for the CAZ through the delivery of high quality large-scale office floorspace in an important yet constrained location, and contribute towards meeting London Plan projections for office space demand and employment growth within the Zone.
- The proposal would, in line with London Plan Policy 2.13, support the strategic policy direction for the City Fringe opportunity area, broadly deliver the indicative quantum of development and jobs expressed for the site within the consultation draft City Fringe opportunity area planning framework, and contribute towards meeting the indicative estimates for employment capacity within the City Fringe opportunity area.
- The principle of providing a high-quality, office-led mixed use development on this CAZ site, within an opportunity area, is strongly supported in strategic planning terms. Due to the constraints to large-scale office development in City Fringe locations, suitable development opportunities, on appropriate sites, must be promoted. The provision of a significant amount of high quality office accommodation in this location would help to meet the future demands of the business and financial sector, and will enable London to maintain and expand its world city role, in accordance with national, regional and local policies.
- Failure to promote appropriate development could potentially impact upon the economic health of the Central Activities Zone as whole.

In taking this decision, I have also taken account of the Council's current and past performance against relevant development plan targets, which in this instance include those relating to offices and employment. The Tower Hamlets Core Strategy (2010) does not identify specific policy targets for office and employment in the Borough's portion of the CAZ or City Fringe opportunity area, or across the Borough as a whole. Therefore, the only relevant policy targets are set out in the London Plan. London Plan Table 4.1 identifies demand for up to 3,070,000 sq.m. of office floorspace in the CAZ and the north of the Isle of Dogs by 2031. London Plan Table 1.1 projects a 46.4% growth in employment within Tower Hamlets by 2031, and provides an adjusted triangulated forecast benchmark for 2011 of

227,000 jobs. London Plan Table 1A.1 indicates the City Fringe Opportunity Area has capacity to provide 70,000 new jobs by 2031.

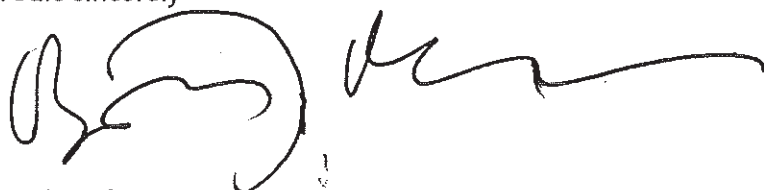
A detailed assessment of the Council's performance against these targets is set out within paragraphs 44 to 50, of my officer's report, which accompanies this letter. Based on this assessment it is clear that Tower Hamlets Council has a good historic record in assessing and permitting planning applications for office floorspace in the Borough and the CAZ area, and that the Borough has seen a good level of recent employment growth to offset a proportion of losses during 2008-09. However, recent trends indicate a decline in the delivery of new office floorspace both Borough-wide and in the Borough's portion of the CAZ, and the Council's self assessment within its Annual Monitoring Report (2010-11) finds that performance with respect to providing additional employment floorspace (including B1[a] office) is currently off target. It is also noted that employment levels within the Borough would currently fall short of the indicative employment projections forecast within the London Plan.

In my opinion it is likely that recent challenges to delivering office floorspace and employment growth are linked to broader economic trends, and within this context it is particularly important that strategic office development, in suitable but finite CAZ and City Fringe locations, is promoted to support London's globally competitive business cluster and promote growth.

The application represents EIA development for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011. I have taken the environmental information made available to date into consideration in formulating my decision.

I would be grateful if you provide me, as soon as reasonably practicable, any information relevant to the above application, and to the connected application, which has not already been provided. In due course I will notify you of the date of the representation hearing (if one is requested) and I will consult you on any draft planning obligation and/or conditions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Boris Johnson', written over a white background.

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London

cc John Biggs, London Assembly Constituency Member
Nicky Gavron, Chair of London Assembly Planning and Housing Committee
Ian McNally & John Pierce, DCLG
Alex Williams, TfL
Gerald Eve LLP, 72 Welbeck Street, London W1G 0AY