



STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

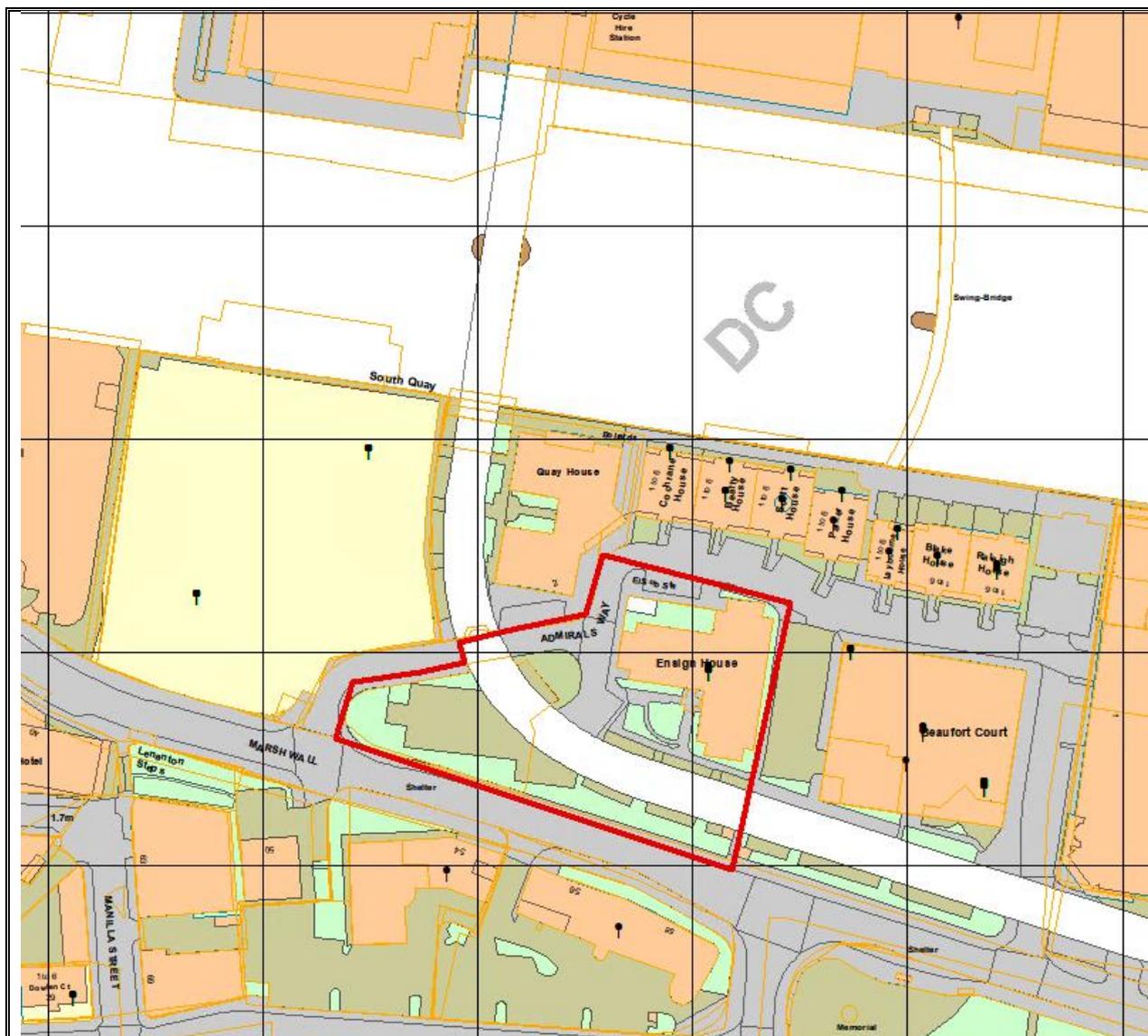
02/12/2020

Report of the Corporate Director of Place Classification: Unrestricted

Pre-application presentation

Reference	PF/19/00234
Site	Ensign House,
Ward	Canary Wharf
Proposal	Redevelopment of the site to provide a residential building up to 53-storey.
Applicant	Far East Consortium
Architect	Maccreeanor Lavington
Agent	DP9
Case Officer	Nelupa Malik
Key dates	Pre-application request submitted October 2019 Pre-app discussions began in October 2019 CADAP review in October 2020

SITE PLAN



Site Plan



Grade II Listed Building



Conservation Area



Neighbourhood Centre



Planning Applications Site Map PF/19/00234

This site map displays the Planning Application Site Boundary and the extent of the area within which neighbouring occupiers / owners were consulted as part of the Planning Application Process



TOWER HAMLETS
London
Borough of
Tower Hamlets

Date: 24 November
2020

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance promote early engagement between developers and Local Planning Authorities at the pre-application stage, prior to submitting a planning application. The Council welcomes pre-application discussions and has a well-established process to facilitate this. In March 2019 the Council's Development and Strategic Development Committees considered a draft protocol for pre-application presentations. The protocol is now incorporated in the Committee Terms of Reference. The Council's updated Statement of Community Involvement also highlights the importance of pre-application engagement and the role of elected members and local communities in this stage of the planning process.
- 1.2 This report updates the Strategic Development Committee on progress made and issues identified in respect of pre-application discussions for the proposed redevelopment of the Ensign House site.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Pre-application advice is being sought for the redevelopment of the site consisting of the demolition of an existing 6-storey office building and the erection of single 53-storey tower building (201.8 AOD).
- 2.2 The pre-application scheme initially proposed a building of up to 60-storeys and the majority of the pre-application meetings held so far have predominantly been focused on a scheme involving a 60-storey building. The very latest version of the proposal reduces the building to 53-storeys. Based on this building height, the development proposes to provide 505 residential units for private sale, affordable rent and intermediate tenures.
- 2.3 At ground floor level the scheme seeks to provide 2 retail units with the rest of the ground floor incorporating entrances and lobby areas for the residential units and refuse storage areas.
- 2.4 The remainder of the site will incorporate areas of public realm and children's play. Further children's play provision and communal amenity provision for the development is proposed to be provided internally within the building.

3. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The pre-application site comprises 0.46 hectares of land located on the northern side of Marsh Wall and south of Admirals Way. Admirals Way runs along the eastern, western and northern boundaries of the site. The site is occupied by Ensign House; a 6-storey office building which takes up much of the north-eastern side of the site with the remainder of the site largely comprising associated car parking (40 spaces). Ensign House is currently occupied by a number of commercial businesses.
- 3.2 The elevated section of the DLR viaduct passes over the south-west portion of the site essentially dissecting the site into two parts with the majority of the south-western part of the site to the south of the flyover. Access to the site gained from the north, east and west off Admirals Way.
- 3.3 The site is bound by Quay House to the north-west; a 3-storey office building and 3 to 6-storey commercial business buildings to the north and beyond Admirals Way. To the east of the site is Beaufort Court; a 5-storey office building.

- 3.4 The site of Quay House has planning permission (granted 01/06/2020) for the demolition and redevelopment of the site to provide a mixed-use development comprising a hotel (Class C1) and serviced apartments (Class C1) with ancillary gym, retail, parking, landscaping and public realm works. This development would deliver a single 40-storey building.
- 3.5 Further to the west and beyond Quay House is the site of the Wardian (formerly Arrowhead Quay) which has planning permission (granted 19/02/2015) for the erection of two buildings of 55 and 50-storeys to provide 767 residential units and ancillary uses, plus 850sqm of ground floor retail uses (Use Classes A1-A4), provision of ancillary amenity space, landscaping, public dockside walkway and pedestrian route, basement parking, servicing and a new vehicular access. This development is nearing completion.
- 3.6 The site has the following planning designations and site constraints.
- Marsh Wall West Site Allocation.
 - Canary Wharf Strategically Important Skyline.
 - Flood Zones 2 and 3.
 - Area of Deficiency of Access to Nature.
 - Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area.
 - Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Area.
 - Archaeological Priority Area Tier 3.
 - Canary Wharf Tall Building Zone.
 - South Quay Neighbourhood Centre

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 PA/20/01992 – Request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion under Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended), in respect of the demolition of the existing building on-site and the construction of one building, approximately 62-storeys in height, providing approximately 600 residential units, small-scale retail uses at ground floor, and an area of publicly accessible open space within the south western of the site.
- 4.2 PA/99/00049 – Display of two illuminated fascia signs and one flag on front, ground floor elevation. Withdrawn 03/03/1999.
- 4.3 PA/98/01213 – Change of use from Class B1 (Business) to Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services). Permitted 02/11/1998.

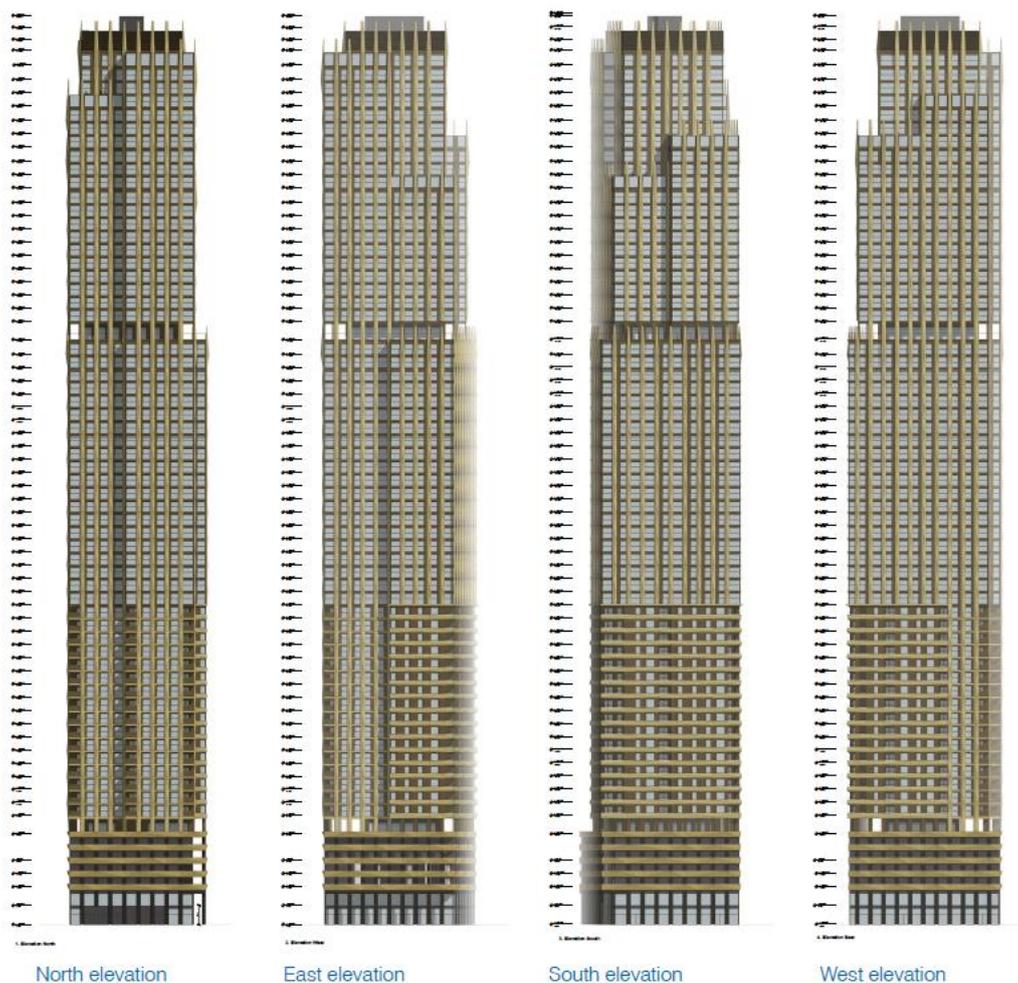
5. PUBLICITY AND ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 The applicant has not undertaken any public consultation events to date.
- 5.2 The applicant has engaged in 7 pre-application meetings with Officers and has had one pre-application meeting with the GLA.
- 5.3 An earlier iteration of the proposal was presented to the Council's Conservation and Design Advisory Panel (CADAP) on 12th October 2020 to test the principles of the proposal. The scheme presented before the panel incorporated a building at 60-storeys in height.
- 5.4 In general, members of the panel enjoyed the proposed height and architecture of the building and did not consider that 60-storeys would be inappropriate in this location, provided

that the design was exceptional and that concerns regarding the quality of the residential units and amenity space could be resolved.

5.5 Comments from CADAP members included the following:

- Support the plinth, middle and top approach to design however highlighted that all the tall buildings shown in the developer's presentation were in fact commercial buildings and not residential. Residential buildings have different performance requirements.
- Panel members sought clarification on the sustainability aspirations for this building and suggested that overheating may be one of the biggest issues.
- Panel members admired the façade treatment however questioned its function and considered that it was important that the architectural expression did not appear simply 'stuck on'.
- Questions were raised as to whether there were any environmental benefits from the elevational treatment.
- Panel members were concerned that the scheme was referencing office buildings and that this resulted in a bulky footprint and a plan more suited to a commercial use than residential use.
- Concerns were raised about the quality of the flats with some floors having 12 units per floor and many of the flats were single aspect with no external amenity space.
- Concerns were raised that the scheme included 55% dual aspect units only.
- The absence of private amenity space for the private units were a concern and the approach to incorporate additional space internally and have large window openings instead was questioned.
- The proposal to have two lobbies; one for the private flats and one for the affordable was considered to create a 'poor door' effect.
- The panel members questioned the cycle parking provision which is proposed to be situated on two levels and the notion that these areas can be counted as amenity. Considered that this could work against the public face of the building.
- The panel supported the ambitions of the open space strategy, however noted that Marsh Wall has very poor air quality and raised concerns about the location of play space in relation to air quality.
- The panel expressed concerns about an imbalance between play and public space and the location of play space, much of which appears to be indoors.
- The panel noted that the play space for different age groups was entirely separated. Play space should be designed for the mix of different age groups.
- Concerns raised about how various development sites along Marsh Wall could be linked up.
- Support given to the covered walkway beneath the DLR and the opportunity of providing a colonnaded space was an exciting concept, however consideration needed to be given as to how this might work in practice.
- Overall, the panel felt the scheme offered an interesting architectural aesthetic, but before the height could be supported further work was required to resolve the issues arising from the plan as a result of the bulky footprint, amenity and open space issues. There is also a need for more work on sustainability.



Proposed Scheme Presented before CADAP at 60-storeys.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

6.1 The Development Plan comprises:

- The London Plan 2016 (LP)
- Managing Growth and Sharing the Benefits - Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031 (2020)

6.2 The Emerging Development Plan comprises:

- The Draft London Plan (DLP)

The Mayor of London's Draft New London Plan with Consolidated Suggested Changes was published in July 2019. The Examination in Public (EiP) took place in January 2019. Generally, the weight carried by the emerging policies within the Draft New London Plan is considered significant as the document has been subject to EiP, incorporates all of the Mayor's suggested changes following the EiP and an 'Intent to Publish' was published by the Mayor of London in December 2019. However, some policies in the Draft New London Plan are subject to Secretary of State directions made on 13th March 2020, these policies are considered to have only limited or moderate weight. The statutory presumption still applies to the London Plan 2016 up until the moment that the new plan is adopted.

- Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Plan

6.3 Other policy and guidance documents relevant to the proposal are:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (updated 2019)
- BRE - Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight (2011)
- Mayor of London's Housing SPG (updated 2017)
- Mayor of London's Affordable Housing and Viability SPG (2017)
- Mayor of London's Shaping Neighborhoods: Play and Informal Recreation SPG (2012)
- Mayor of London's Energy Assessment Guidance (2018)
- Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Planning Area Framework (2019)
- LBTH Planning Obligations SPD (2016)
- LBTH Development Viability SPD (2017)

7. PLANNING ISSUES

7.1 The following key planning issues have been identified at the pre-application stage.

Land Use

- 7.2 Policy D.EMP3 of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031(2020) ("*The Local Plan*") seeks to protect viable employment floorspace however allows exceptions for the net loss of employment floorspace provided that it can be robustly demonstrated that the site is genuinely unsuitable for continued employment use due to its condition; reasonable options for restoring the site to employment use are unviable; and that the benefits of alternative use would outweigh the benefits of employment use.
- 7.3 The Local Plan Site allocation 4.6 identifies that housing and employment uses incorporating a range of floorspace sizes, including small-to-medium enterprises are appropriate land uses for Marsh Wall West.
- 7.4 Policy 2.13 of the London Plan (2016) requires development proposals to optimise residential and non-residential output and densities, provide necessary social and other infrastructure to sustain growth, and, where appropriate, contain a mix of uses. Draft London Plan policy SD1 similarly supports development which creates employment opportunities and housing choice for Londoners.
- 7.5 Policies 3.3, 3.5 and 3.8 of The London Plan emphasises that there is a pressing need for more homes in London and that a genuine choice of new homes should be supported which are of the highest quality and of varying sizes and tenures.
- 7.6 Policy S.H1 of the Local Plan commits to securing the delivery of at least 58,965 new homes across the Borough (equating to at least 3,931 new homes per year) between 2016 and 2031.
- 7.7 The pre-application site does not fall within a Preferred Office Location and therefore the loss of employment floorspace to provide a residential-led development can be considered, particularly in light of the site's designation as an Opportunity Area. The applicant would be required to demonstrate as part of the planning application submission that there are clear

planning benefits from the proposal that would satisfy the above policies in the context of the wider Canary Wharf and Isle of Dogs area.

- 7.8 The provision of new housing would positively contribute to the Borough’s housing stock, noting that there is an acute local and national demand for increased housing. The principle of housing on this site would be acceptable in land use terms subject to the applicant demonstrating compliance with relevant Local Plan policies in respect of matters relating to including but not limited to; design and heritage, affordable housing and housing mix, amenity, transport and environment.

Housing

- 7.9 Policy S.H1(2) of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan states that development will be expected to contribute towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities that respond to local and strategic need.
- 7.10 Policy D.H2 of the Local Plan requires development to maximise the provision of affordable housing in accordance with a 70% affordable rent and 30% intermediate tenure split based on the number of habitable room. Policy D.H2 also sets locally specific targets for unit mix and sizes.
- 7.11 Policy H5 of the Draft London Plan and The Mayor of London’s Affordable Housing and Viability SPG (August 2017) sets out a ‘threshold approach’ to viability, whereby the approach to viability information depends on the level of affordable housing being provided. Applications for schemes that meet or exceed 35% or 50% (on public land) affordable housing provision subject to a number of criteria are deemed to be eligible for the ‘Fast Track’ route.
- 7.12 The scheme in its current iteration proposes 505 units of which 403 units would be for private sale, 73 units as affordable rent and 29 units as intermediate. Details of the intermediate product have not been provided so far in pre-application discussions.
- 7.13 The current proposed unit mix against policy D.H2 is set out below in the table below:

		Market Housing			Affordable Rent			Intermediate		
Unit Size	Total Units	Units	As a %	Policy Target %	Units	As a %	Policy Target %	Units	As a %	Policy Target %
Studios	75	75	19%	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
1-bed	171	159	39%	30%	8	11%	25%	4	14%	15%
2-bed	201	163	40%	50%	27	37%	30%	11	38%	40%
3-bed	47	6	1%	20%	27	37%	30%	14	48%	45%
4-bed	11	/	/	/	11	15%	15%	/	/	/
Total	505	403	100%	100%	73	100%	100%	29	100%	100%

- 7.14 Based on the above, the scheme does not propose a policy compliant unit mix across all tenures. 19% of the total units will comprise studio flats for which there is no policy requirement.

- 7.15 In the private for sale tenure there would be an over provision of 1-bed units and a substantial under provision of 2-bed and 3-bed units.
- 7.16 In the affordable rent tenure, there would be an under provision of 1-bed units and an over provision of 2-bed and 3-bed units. The affordable rent tenure would provide a policy compliant mix of 4-bed units.
- 7.17 In the intermediate tenure, there would be a minor under provision of 1-bed units and 2-bed units and a minor over provision of 3-bed units.
- 7.18 The affordable housing offer is proposed at 30% based on habitable rooms. This has been the only affordable housing offer proposed in pre-application discussions and is specific to the latest design proposals. The current scheme seeks to provide 1326 habitable rooms of which 398 would represent affordable equating to the 30% proposed. The affordable provision is proposed to be split 72:28 in favour of affordable rent to intermediate. The proposal would not be eligible for the 'Fast Track' route and as such the planning application must be accompanied by a Financial Viability Appraisal to determine if this is the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing that can be provided.
- 7.19 In terms of housing standards and quality, it is proposed that there would be 8 units per core up to level 16, 12 units per core on levels 17-45, 11 units per core on levels 47-49, 8 units per core on levels 50-51 and 6 units per core on level 52. The number of units per core on levels 17-49 are of a concern and could result in a high proportion of single aspect units.
- 7.20 The private sale and intermediate units will be accessed via a central core which has four lifts serving all levels of the building. The affordable rented units is proposed to be accessed via a second core which has two lifts rising to level 14. Officers have previously expressed concerns that the scheme should seek to ensure that it does not create social segregation. However, it is acknowledged that the scheme has evolved from initial inception and now locates both entrances on the same elevation whereas previously the entrance to the affordable rented tenure was located on the southern elevation. However, Officers would continue to seek a single point of entry for all tenures.
- 7.21 No initial daylight/sunlight assessments have been undertaken during the course of the pre-application discussions to date.
- 7.22 In terms of private amenity space, all the affordable units (up to level 16) would have access to direct amenity space in the form of inset balconies. No private amenity space is proposed for the private units as it is intended to make these as larger units incorporating additional floorspace equivalent to the required level of private amenity space.
- 7.23 In terms of communal amenity space within the building, previous iterations of the proposal suggested that there would be a communal amenity area in the form of a roof terrace on level 40. Officers have previously expressed concerns that this terrace would not be accessible by the affordable rented tenure. Officers have yet to see the floorplan for level 40 in more recent versions of the proposal to be satisfied that this concern has been addressed, particularly given that lift access for the affordable rented tenure only reaches level 14.

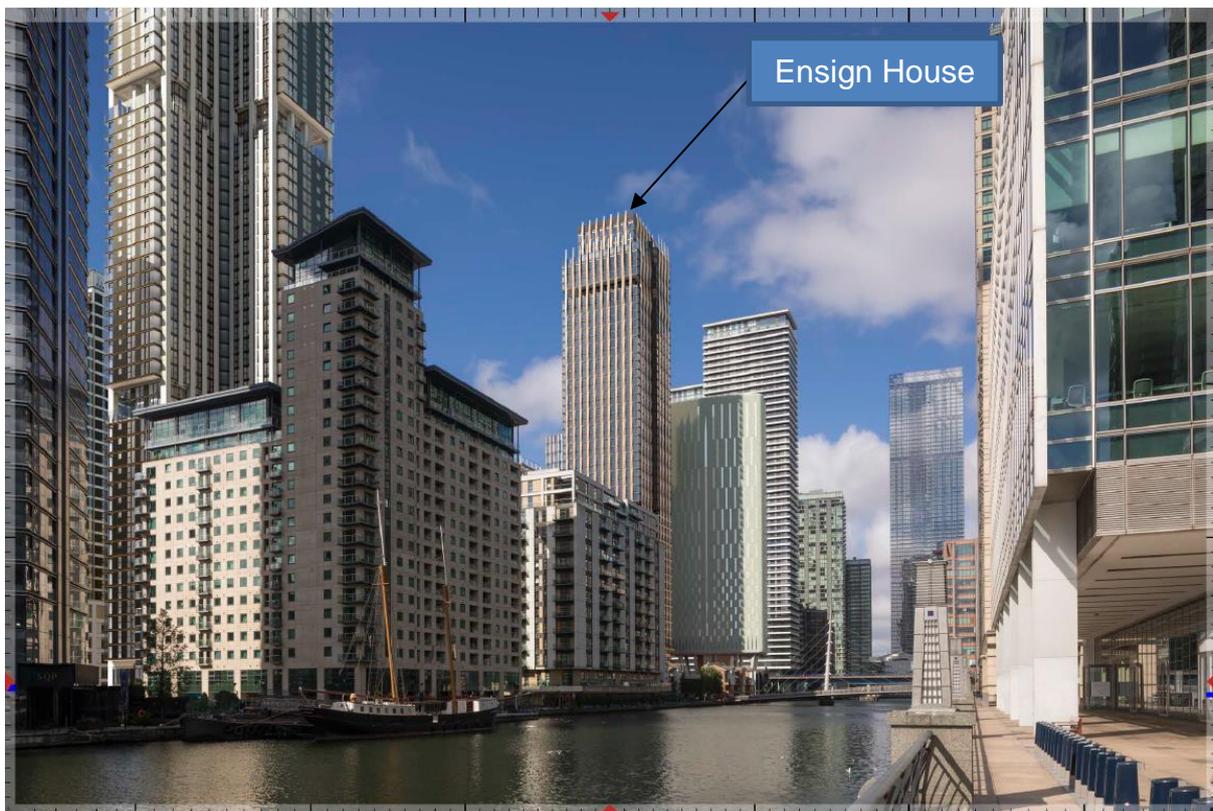
Design, Scale and Massing

- 7.24 Policy S.DH1 of the Local Plan requires developments to meet the highest standards of design, layout and construction which respects and positively responds to its context, townscape, landscape and public realm at different spatial scales. To this end, amongst other things, development must be of an appropriate scale, height, mass, bulk and form in its site and context.

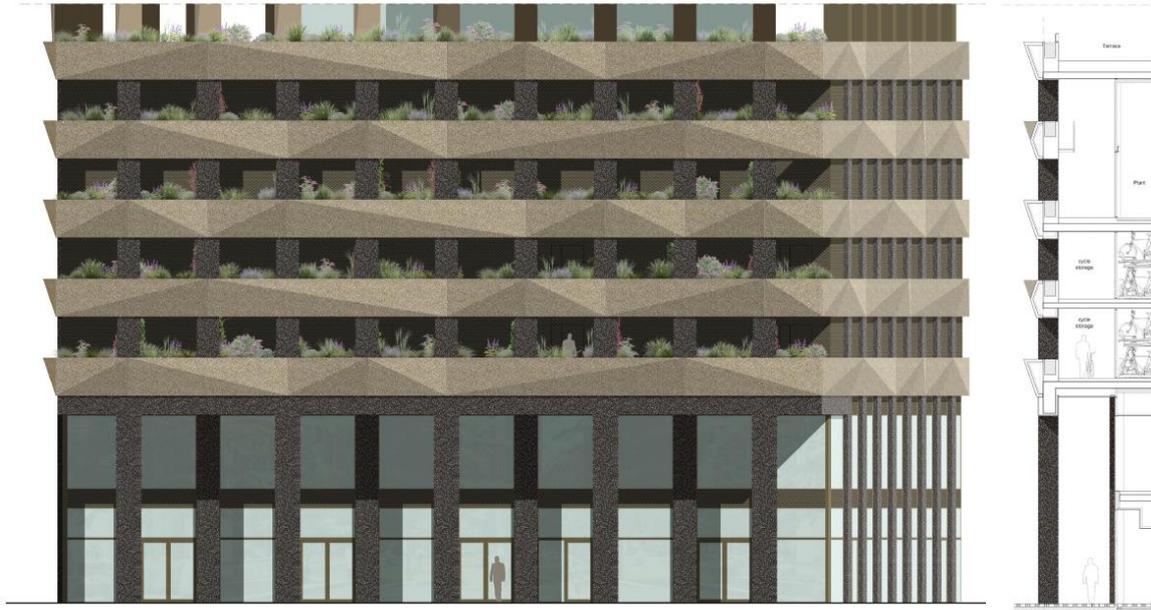
7.25 Policy D.DH6 of the Local Plan sets the criteria for the assessment of tall buildings and specifically directs tall buildings towards designated Tall Building Zones. The site falls within the Canary Wharf Tall Building Zone whereby the following criteria would be applicable:

- a) Development within this location will be expected to positively contribute to the skyline of strategic importance and maintain the iconic image and character of Canary Wharf as a world financial and business centre.
- b) Individual buildings should be integrated into urban super blocks set in the public realm.
- c) Building heights within the Canary Wharf cluster should step down from the central location at One Canada Square.

7.26 The scheme proposes a plinth and tower approach for the building. Concerns have been raised by Officers with regard to the height and massing of the proposal throughout the pre-application process. Officers have previously suggested that a scheme incorporating a height of 50-storeys would be more appropriate in this location and aligned with policy D.DH6 of the Local Plan, particularly in relation to the site's location on the edge of the Canary Wharf Tall Building Zone. However, Officers acknowledge that a 53-storey building that has a far greater level of articulation, detailing and design quality than that which is currently proposed could have the potential to appropriately respond to the tall building policy.

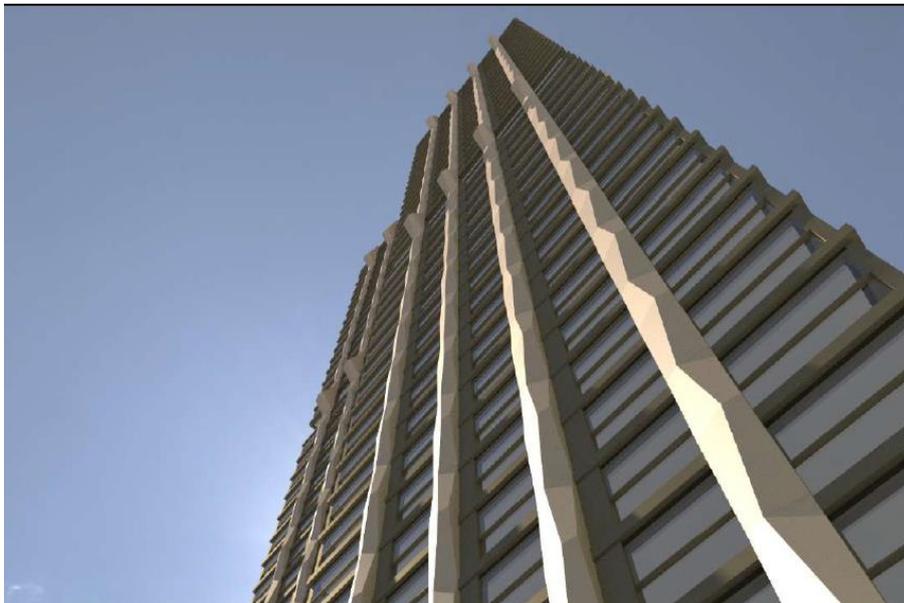


Proposed Tower at 53-storeys.



Proposed Plinth .

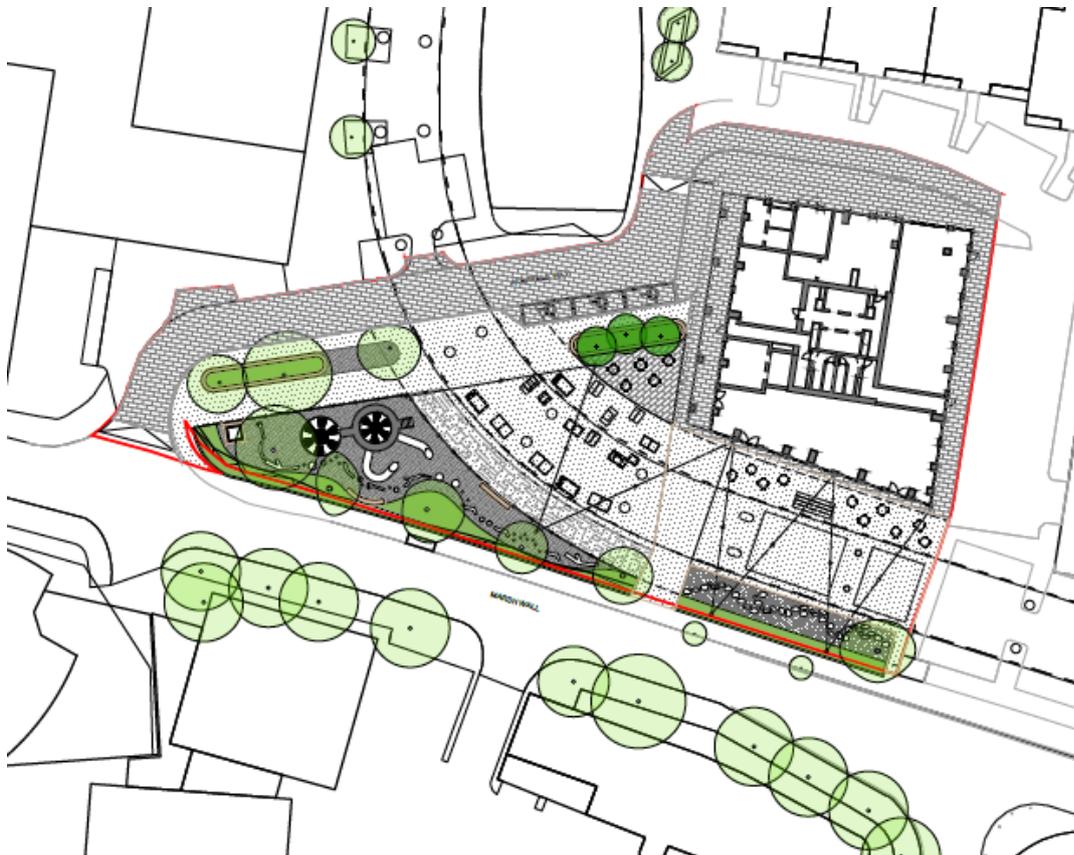
7.27 In terms of the proposed architectural treatment, the development proposes to express the building using copper/bronze coloured angular projecting fins arranged vertically. The materiality for the plinth is proposed to be polished concrete arranged horizontally and, in a colour/tone to reflect the material colour of the tower. In principle, Officers consider that this approach is interesting however further detailing is required with regards to its articulation to ensure that the quality of the development comes through successfully at an appropriate height.



Proposed Projecting Fins.

Open Space, Communal Amenity Space and Children's Play Space

- 7.28 The scheme proposes to provide communal amenity space within the building envelope at ground floor mezzanine level, first floor and first floor mezzanine level. At street level, the proposals so far have included a mixture of children's play and public realm.
- 7.29 Marsh Wall is an area which has a deficiency in public open space. The south-western portion of the site falls within an area identified in the now superseded South Quay Masterplan vision as being a suitable location for principal public open space. Whilst the masterplan has now been superseded by the new Local Plan, concerns with regard to public open space deficiency remain. The scheme would need to incorporate meaningful public open space to soften the development and demonstrate how the strategy can connect to wider areas of public open space and/public realm outside the application site boundary.
- 7.30 Previous iterations of the proposal have suggested that the preferred option would be to provide areas of children's play for aged groups 5-11 years on the south-western part of the site and fronting Marsh Wall whilst areas of public/realm and/or public open space would be sited north of the DLR viaduct. This could have implications in respect of air quality and generally provide a poor environment given its proximity to the elevated DLR viaduct, Marsh Wall and associated traffic movements. Officers have suggested to the applicant that the most appropriate location for the children's play area for age group 5-11 years would be north of the DLR viaduct. On this basis the applicant has submitted indicative revised proposals which suggests a more subtle approach to the public realm/public open space strategy incorporating areas of soft landscaping and seating to provide relief fronting Marsh Wall. This may have implications on the amount of play provision that can be provided.



Neighbouring Amenity

- 7.31 Policy D.DH8 of the Local Plan requires new developments to protect and where possible enhance or increase the extent of the amenity of new and existing buildings and their occupants, as well as the amenity of the surrounding public realm. To this end development should maintain good levels of privacy and outlook, avoid unreasonable levels of overlooking, not result in any material deterioration of sunlight and daylight conditions of surrounding development.
- 7.32 No preliminary daylight and sunlight assessment has been carried out to date to inform Officers of the likely impact of the proposals on potential occupiers of the development and neighbouring buildings.

Transport and Servicing

- 7.33 Local plan policies S.TR1, D.TR2 and D.TR3 require proposals to have consideration to the local environment and accessibility of the site, on-street parking availability, access and amenity impacts and road network capacity constraints while supporting the Council's commitment to reduce the need to travel and encourage modal shift away from the private car towards healthy and sustainable transport initiatives and choices, notably walking and cycling. These policies also seek to secure safe and appropriate servicing arrangements.
- 7.34 The site has a PTAL (Public Transport Accessibility Level) of 3-4 which is moderate to good on a scale of 0-6b where 6b is the best.
- 7.35 There has been limited information submitted to date during pre-application meetings in respect of matters relating to transport and servicing. It is understood however that 7 blue badge spaces will be proposed at basement level however no floor plans for the basement have been presented before Officers to date. The provision of 7 blue badge spaces would be below Draft London Plan policy requirement for a minimum of 3% of dwellings on residential developments of ten or more to be provided with at least one designated blue badge bay per dwelling from the outset.
- 7.36 Cycle parking provision is proposed on levels 1 and 2 and it would be expected that the provision accords with current and draft London Plan standards.

Environment

- 7.37 National planning policy and guidance sets the direction of travel for the planning system to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.
- 7.38 Policy D.ES7 of the Local Plan specifically requires that for residential developments, zero carbon should be achieved through a minimum of 45% reduction in regulated carbon dioxide emissions on-site and the remaining regulated carbon dioxide emissions to 100% are to be off-set through a cash in lieu contribution.
- 7.39 Detailed discussions with regard to the proposed energy and sustainability strategy have not been undertaken during pre-application meetings thus far however, it would be expected that the scheme that comes forward demonstrates compliance with the above through an appropriate Energy Strategy.
- 7.40 Local plan policies also seek to secure a range of sustainable development outcomes including net biodiversity gains; the implementation of efficient energy systems which seek to minimise carbon emissions and to secure effective strategies for addressing matters relating to contaminated land and sustainable urban drainage.

- 7.41 The proposed development would constitute an EIA development as such the accompanying Environmental Statement submitted with any subsequent planning application would need to include the relevant impact assessments.

Infrastructure Impact

- 7.42 The proposed development will be liable to the Council's and the Mayor of London Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL) and planning obligations to be secured under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 The Committee notes the contents of the report and pre-application presentation.
- 8.2 The Committee is invited to comment on the issues identified and to raise any other planning and design issues or material considerations that the developer should take into account at the pre-application stage, prior to submitting a planning application.

9. APPENDICES – IMAGES



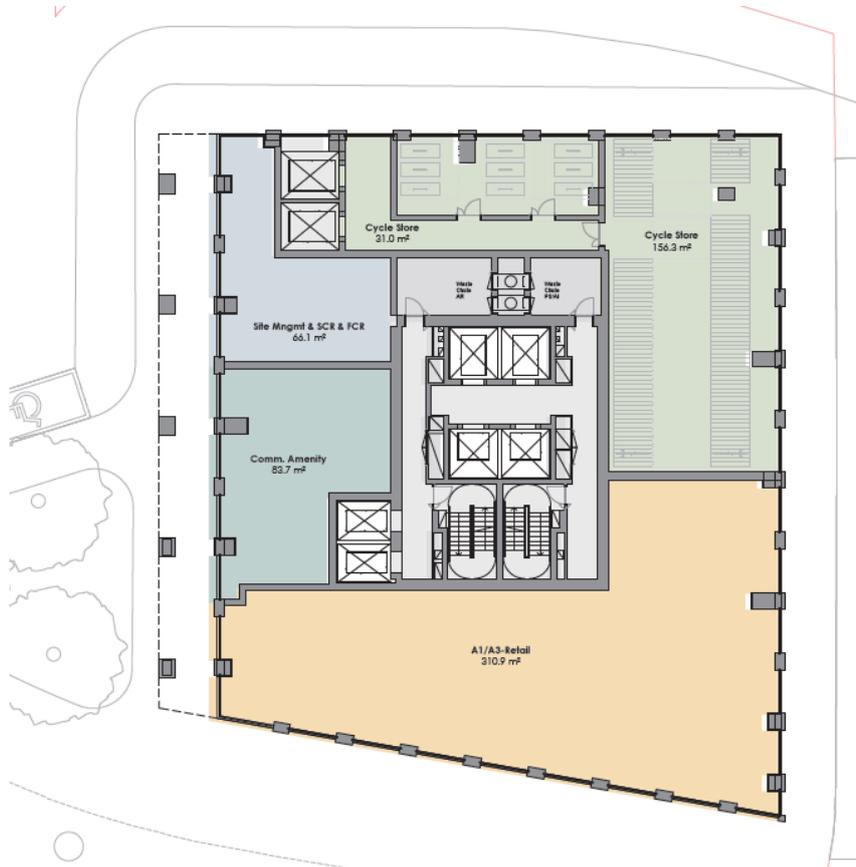
CGI View from South Dock.



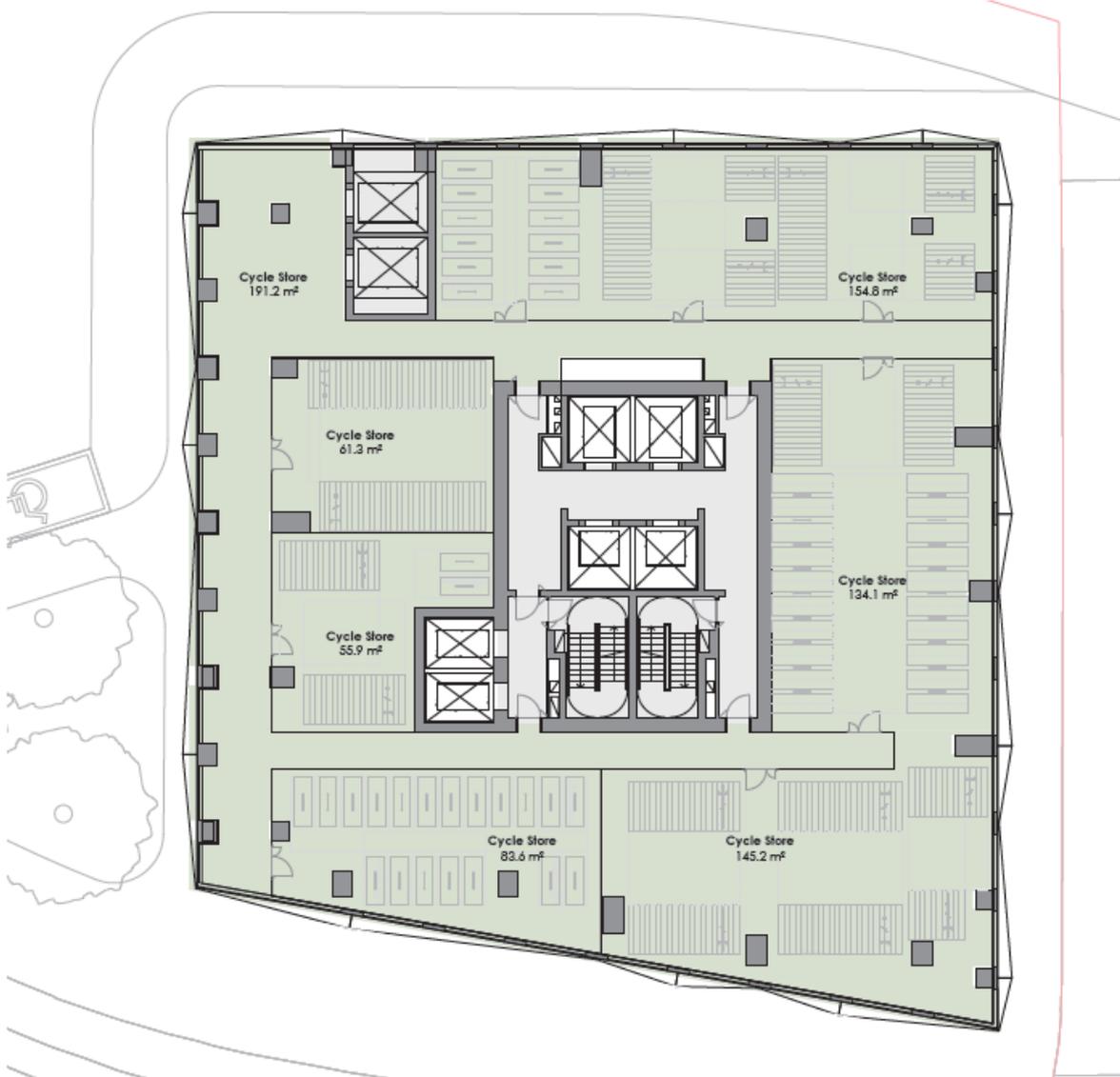
CGI of Proposed Plinth.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

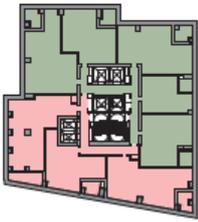


Proposed Ground Floor Mezzanine.

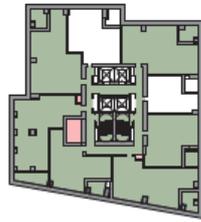


Proposed Levels 1 and Level 1 Mezzanine – Cycle Parking

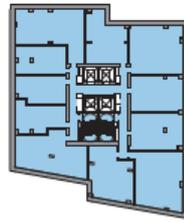
Proposed Tenure Split



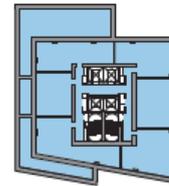
Levels 12-14



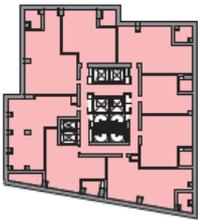
Level 16



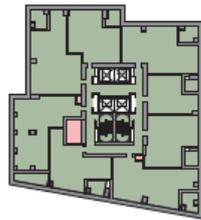
Levels 47-49



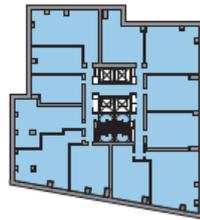
Level 52



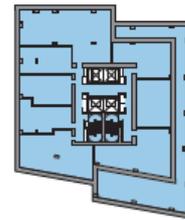
Levels 04-11



Level 15

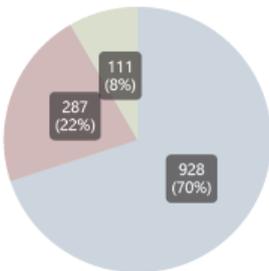


Levels 17-45



Levels 50-51

Tenure Strategy Overview



Number / percent of habitable rooms by tenure

- Private Sale (PS)
- Affordable Rent (AR)
- Affordable Intermediate (AI)

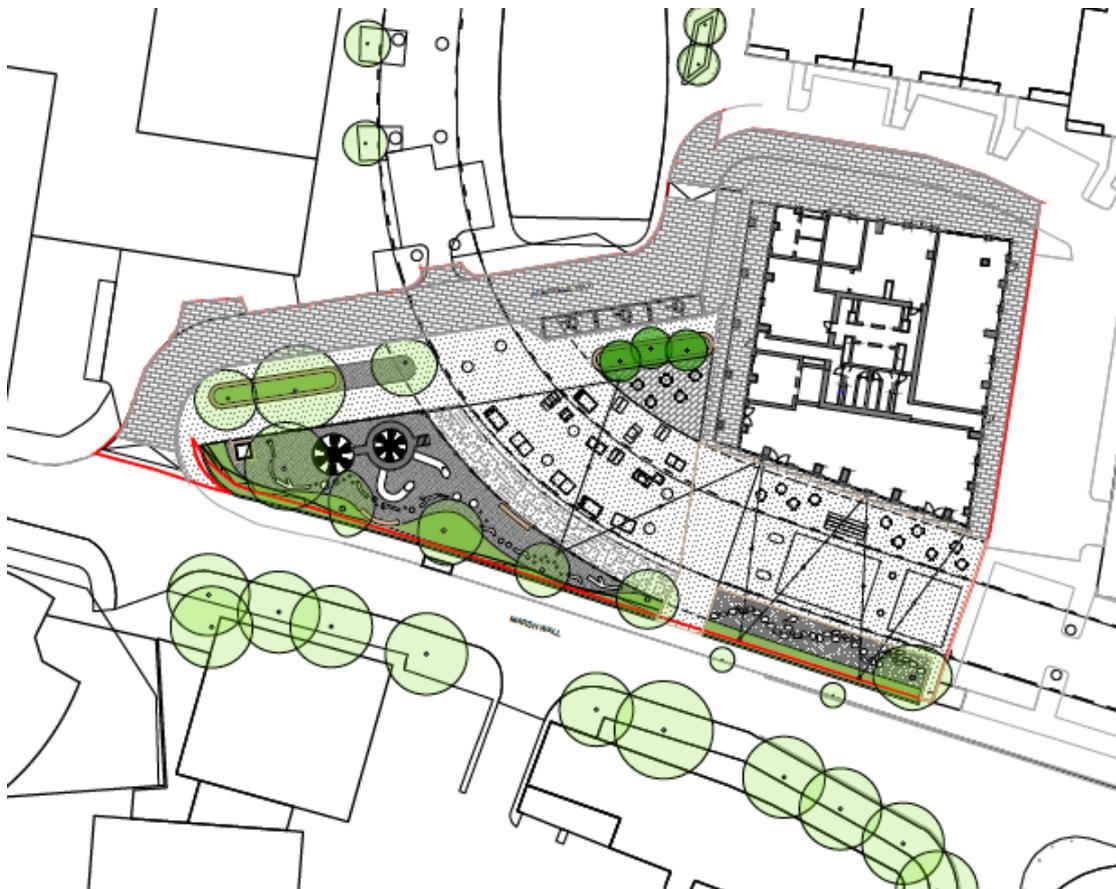
Building height

The sections opposite show a comparison between the previously proposed 60 storey building (left) and the new proposal at 53 storeys.

The new proposal reduces the overall height of the building by circa 21m from 222.5m AOD to 201.8m AOD



Comparison between 60-storey and 53-storey.



Public Open Space Strategy.

View from South Dock (view 11) - 53 Storeys



View from South Dock (view 11) - 60 Storeys



View from Cassilis Road (view 2) - 53 Storeys



View from Cassilis Road (view 2) - 60 Storeys



