

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 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 Dipa Das
Councillor Kevin Brady
Councillor Sabina Akhtar
Councillor Tarik Khan
Councillor Val Whitehead

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Andrew Wood (6.1)

Apologies:

Councillor Rabina Khan

Officers Present:

Paul Buckenham	– (Development Manager, Planning Services, Place)
Kevin Crilly	– (Planning Officer, Place)
Sally Fraser	– Team Leader (East)
Nelupa Malik	– (Planning Officer, Place)
Rachel Mckoy	– (Head of Commercial & Contracts, Legal Services Governance)
Zoe Folley	– (Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Councillor Val Whitehead declared a Non - Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item 5.1 Bow Common Gasworks PA/19/02379. This was on the basis: that the Councillor had seen a letter signed by Councillors about the height of the development. Whilst the initial letter contained a number of Councillors names, the final signed version did not contain Councillor Whitehead's name.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

The minutes of the meeting were agreed and approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Development Committee held on 19 November 2020 be agreed as a correct record

3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROCEDURE FOR HEARING OBJECTIONS AND MEETING GUIDANCE

To RESOLVE that:

- 1) in the event of changes being made to recommendations by the Committee, the task of formalising the wording of those changes is delegated to the Corporate Director Place along the broad lines indicated at the meeting; and
- 2) 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 is delegated authority to do so, provided always that the Corporate Director does not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.
- 3) To NOTE the procedure for hearing objections at meetings of the Strategic Development Committee.

4. DEFERRED ITEMS

There were no items.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR DECISION

5.1 Bow Common Gasworks PA/19/02379

Update report was tabled.

Paul Buckenham presented the application comprising an outline and a full application for a comprehensive phased mixed-use development. The full component of the application related to phase 1 of the development. The outlined application related to the wider site and this would be subject to the reserved matters application.

The update report contained two further representations and provided clarification on community infrastructure issues.

Kevin Crilly presented the application providing an overview of the site, located within the vicinity of Conservation Areas and the Tower Hamlets

Cemetery Park Nature Reserve. He also provided details of the surrounding character of the site. He advised of the following issues:

- In terms of the land use, the scheme sought to provide a range of uses and public realm and permeability improvements as detailed in the report. This included the provision of 39% affordable housing in Phase 1 of the scheme, and 35% affordable housing across the whole scheme.
- The proposal aligned with the site allocation policy. The application had been accompanied by parameter plans and control documents.
- Two rounds of public consultation had been carried out. Many of the representations received on the amended scheme related to the impact on the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park
- It was considered that the height and massing of the scheme, whilst resulting in an increase in scale, would respond positively to the surrounding area. The development would also be of a high quality design. Details of the final design would be considered and agreed at the reserved matters stage.
- The scheme, as amended had been designed to minimise the impact on the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park in terms of overshadowing. Details of the reduced impact was provided. Due to the measures, the park would continue to receive adequate levels of light. Officers and the applicant had worked to ensure that any impacts were mitigated during the course of the application process. The Council's Biodiversity Officer had reviewed the application and had concluded that whilst there would be some overshadowing, the measures and improvements should offset this and there would be net biodiversity improvements.
- Whilst the application would impact on the daylight and sunlight of neighbouring properties, overall the results complied with policy.
- It was considered that the scheme would result in less than substantial harm to the heritage assets and met the planning balance tests in policy. The public benefits of the scheme including the retention of 120 Bow Common Lane, would outweigh the harm.
- The applicant had looked carefully at the possibility of retaining the Bow Cottage. However, due a number of reasons (it's poor condition and limited potential use, the impact of its retention on the delivery of the wider scheme,), this was not found to be viable.
- Details of to the highways issues were noted (including the parking and cycling and the waste management arrangements). The plans complied with policy.
- A range of obligations had been secured
- Officers were satisfied that the proposed development would deliver a high quality, well integrated, inclusive sustainable place.
- It is on this basis that the grant of planning permission is recommended.

The Chair invited the registered speakers to address the committee.

Kenneth Greenway, Friend of Tower Hamlets Cemetery addressed the Committee, referring to the petition and number of objectors. He stated that he was speaking on behalf of the objectors about the impact on the park.

He expressed concerns about the:

- Impact of the height, mass and scale of the development on the ecology of the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park
- Overshadowing to the nature reserve, at particularly times of the day.
- Increased light and noise pollution from the development.
- Pressure from the increased population on the park
- Whilst the efforts to amend the scheme were welcomed, it was considered that the height of the development should be reduced to mitigate the detrimental impact on the wildlife and the park.
- Conditions should also be secured to protect the park.

Simon Lewis spoke in support of the application. He highlighted the aims of the proposals to transform the site, through providing a range of benefits. There had been a widespread consultation. The applicant had taken on board the feedback and the concerns including the issues around the Tower Hamlets Cemetery park and the application included measures to address this. It was proposed that the construction works would begin next summer with the first homes available in late 2024.

Committee's Questions.

The Committee asked questions of Officers and registered speakers around the following issues:

- The number of family sized private units in the first phase of the development. Assurances were sought about the delivery of this in the later phases of the scheme to provide a mixed and balance community. Members sought further guarantees on this.
- Officers explained the reasons for this approach - which sought to maximise the number of affordable family units in the first phase of the development. It was also noted that the level of affordable housing had in part been driven in viability terms by the mix of private units. Any shortfall could be made up through the later phases of the scheme through the delivery of additional private family units. Details of how this would be secured would be set out in the s106 agreement
- Other safeguards to ensure this were highlighted including the requirement for the applicant to submit a Housing Statement at each stage of the scheme.
- It was also noted that each reserved matters phase would be considered in accordance with policy. This approach followed a similar approach adopted for the Leven Road development. It was also confirmed that Phase 1 included a policy compliant level of affordable family sized units.

- In relation to this issue, the applicant's representative also commented on their decision to focus the affordable housing in phase 1 and the provision of child play space. They also underlined the applicant's commitment to delivering a range of housing types across the development in accordance with the controls.
- They also highlighted the need to allow a degree of flexibility to respond to market changes.
- In view of the issues, the Committee requested that the application was brought back to the Committee at the reserved matters stage. It was also discussed that the Committee should receive the minimum and maximum housing parameters for the scheme.
- Regarding the concerns about overshadowing to the park (as detailed in the update report), the applicant had submitted a study of the impact. The level of BRE compliance conformed with the policy. The results had been reviewed by the Council's sunlight and daylight officer.
- In response to questions, Mr Greenway explained further the concerns about the impact on the ecology of the park. The park contained many species including scarce species requiring morning sunlight. He stressed the need for mitigation to preserve shading, to help with the influx of occupants to the park and for support in finding alternative meadow land, if necessary to offset the loss of the existing land
- Responding to further questions, he also outlined the impact of the increased light pollution on the natural habitat. The park sought measures that did not affect the wildlife.
- Officers confirmed that they had worked with the applicant and the TH Cemetery Park to minimise these impacts and the impacts could be managed by conditions. The applicant had also expressed a willingness to continue to work with the park to find appropriate solutions. Financial contributions had also been secured which had been costed in consultation with the TH cemetery park. It was felt they should cover the main issues raised.
- Turning to other issues, It was noted that no element of the development would be gated or would have restricted access (except for the limited access to podium space). It would provide access throughout the site.
- Regarding the height, it was explained that the tallest building should provide a landmark building and a focal point for the development. Overall it was considered that the development would be in keeping with the surrounding area.
- The Committee also discussed the wheelchair accessible units. It was noted that the proposed approach of providing 10% wheelchair access units, across the housing tenures complied with policy. Of which, 7 would be allocated to the affordable housing, 17 within the market rent.
- Officers also provided further details regarding the heritage assessment. Officers also explained further the nature of the objections received about the scheme.

Councillor John Pierce proposed and Councillor Abdul Mukit seconded a proposal that the consideration of the application be deferred for the reasons set out below

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

1. That the consideration of the planning permission is **DEFERRED** at Bow Common Gasworks for further information regarding:
 - The mechanisms in the s106 agreement to secure greater policy compliance regarding the housing mix in the later phases of the scheme.
 - The measure to mitigate the impact on the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park particularly in relation to light pollution.

In accordance with Development Procedural Rules, the application was **DEFERRED** to enable Officers to prepare a supplementary report for the next meeting of the Committee addressing these issues.

6. OTHER PLANNING ISSUES

6.1 Pre-application presentation: Ensign House, (PF/19/00234)

The Committee noted the contents of the report and pre-application presentation.

The meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.

Chair, Councillor John Pierce
Strategic Development Committee