

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2022

**COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT,
LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor Amin Rahman (Chair)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Kamrul Hussain
Councillor Abdul Wahid
Councillor Sabina Akhtar
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin
Councillor Shubo Hussain
Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Shafi Ahmed
Councillor Peter Golds

Apologies:

Councillor Kabir Hussain
Councillor Rachel Blake

Officers Present:

Ian Austin – (Principal Lawyer for Planning)
Jerry Bell – (Area Planning Manager (East), Planning and Building Control, Place)
Paul Buckenham – (Head of Development Management, Planning and Building Control, Place)
Conor Guilfoyle – (Senior Planning Officer, Planning and Building Control, Place)
Gareth Gwynne – (Area Planning Manager (West), Planning and Building Control, Place)
Rikki Weir – (Principal Planning Officer, Planning and Building Control, Place)
Joel West – (Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Kamrul Hussain and Shubo Hussain declared they had received direct representations from interested parties on Item 5.2, Royal Mint Court.

Councillor Kamrul Hussain asked the Committee to note that Item 5.2 Royal Mint Court was in his ward (Whitechapel).

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 were agreed and approved as a correct record.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROCEDURE FOR HEARING OBJECTIONS AND MEETING GUIDANCE

RESOLVED 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 deferred items.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR DECISION

5.1 South Dock Bridge, London (PA/21/00885)

Update report was noted.

Paul Buckenham introduced the report for construction of a new pedestrian footbridge to connect South Quay and Canary Wharf in Isle of Dogs, to align with Upper Bank Street on the north bank of the London South Dock, and the Berkeley Homes 'South Quay Plaza' scheme on the south bank, including landscaping on Upper Bank Street and other associated works

Conor Guilfoyle, Planning Officer, provided a presentation on the application. The Committee were reminded of the key features of the application, including photographs of the site and surrounds. The Officer's recommendation was to grant planning permission subject to conditions.

The Chair invited Andrew Wood to address the meeting in objection to the application. He explained that whilst he supported the bridge, he had concerns about:

- Unauthorised cycling on the bridge. Fears signage would not prevent this creating a danger to crossing pedestrians. A preferred option would be a segregated cycle lane.
- Late at night delivery scooters using the bridge illegally.
- Reduction in the amount of water space for sea scouts. Lack of clarity as to how they would access the dock to the other side of the bridge and access the water on weekends or during periods of maintenance.
- Lack of clarity as to who would have responsibility for bridge maintenance.

The Chair invited Louise Plant to address the meeting in support of the application. She highlighted the following:

- The bridge would improve connectivity, reduce congestion on the Docklands Light Railway and on the existing bridges, improve pedestrian access to jobs, retail and other services in Canary Wharf.
- The principle of establishing a new bridge was supported in the Local Plan.
- Over ninety per-cent of respondents were in favour of the development.
- Cycle access will be controlled through appropriate measures and signage and will be subject to further consultation.
- Sea scouts had been engaged at the design stages of the project; there had been dialogue with the scouts about opening the bridge at certain times for their activities.
- The Council would be responsible for maintenance. A third party operator was being sought to operate and maintain the bridge once delivered.

Further to questions from Committee Members, officers provided more information on:

- Approach to concerns regarding illegal moped use.
- Anticipated impact on mooring space at the site and proposed options to mitigate it.
- Responsibility for maintenance of the bridge and the role of recommended conditions to enforce this.
- Non- financial contributions and associated policies. The Council as planning authority had to treat all applications the same and could not insist on enhanced contributions from a Council application.
- The bridge operation and maintenance condition. It was anticipated the bridge would open two times on average per week,
- Anticipated disruption to residents and the environment during construction.

- How the proposal would facilitate opportunities for economic and social growth in the area.

Further to questions from Committee Members regarding cycling and moped use, the applicants' representatives reported that there would be CCTV surveillance on the bridge to discourage illegal use.

Councillors debated the application and made the following points:

- Construction of the Bridge was welcomed by residents of the Isle of Dogs.
- Concerns about cycle access had not been allayed. The Committee asked that:
 - the options for cycling, including for those with disabilities, be explored further and include input from local disability charities; and
 - an associated condition be attached to enforce this.

On a unanimous vote the Officers' recommendation as set out in the main report and as amended in the update report to **GRANT** planning permission was agreed, subject to an additional condition requiring details of the cycling strategy and associated review mechanism.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the planning application be **GRANTED** at South Dock Bridge (Land on the north and south side of South Dock, including dock area and Upper Bank Street) for the following development:

- Construction of a new pedestrian footbridge to connect South Quay and Canary Wharf in Isle of Dogs, to align with Upper Bank Street on the north bank of the London South Dock, and the Berkeley Homes 'South Quay Plaza' scheme on the south bank, including landscaping on Upper Bank Street and other associated works.

Subject to:

1. The conditions and informatives set out in the officers' report and update report; and
2. an additional condition requiring details of the cycling strategy and associated review mechanism.

At this point in the meeting, the Chair **moved** that the meeting be adjourned for five minutes. This was **AGREED** without further discussion. The meeting adjourned at 7.20pm and resumed at 7.25pm.

5.2 Royal Mint Court, London, EC3N 4QN (PA/21/01327 & PA/21/01349)

Update report was noted.

Paul Buckenham introduced the report for the redevelopment of the site to provide an embassy (Sui Generis use class), involving the refurbishment and restoration of the Johnson Smirke Building (Grade II* listed), partial demolition, remodelling and refurbishment of Seaman's Registry (Grade II

listed), with alterations to the west elevation of the building, the retention, part demolition, alterations and extensions to Murray House and Dexter House, the erection of a standalone entrance pavilion building, alterations to the existing boundary wall and demolition of substation, associated public realm and landscaping, highway works, car and cycle parking and all ancillary and associated works.

Rikki Weir, Planning Officer, provided a presentation on the application. The Committee were reminded of the key features of the application, including photographs of the site and surrounds. The Officer's recommendation was to grant planning permission

The Chair invited Sue Hughes, Dave Lake, Naz Islam and Simon Cheng to address the meeting in objection to the application. They highlighted concerns over the following:

- Inadequate amount of space outside site's perimeter for protestors giving rise to concerns over road management including if protestors spill onto the carriageway itself the police will need to close a major road junction
- Location and space surrounding the site; inadequate space to ensure protestors can attend without risking their safety and security and the safety and security local residents.
- Concerns regarding cyber security upon local people and local communities.
- Road congestion and security issues
- Concerns that site security and management of protestors will only be considered and negotiated after planning permission is granted by planning condition, this is too late in the process.
- Concerns regarding the independence of the bomb blast assessment provider and how the blast assessment was procured.
- The restricted 'official sensitive' nature of the bomb blast assessment, means residents and Councillors were not aware of its full content.
- Concerns regarding the freedoms of tenants and leaseholders in properties surrounding the site, some of which have been bought by the Chinese state.
- Concerns regarding privacy to residents from overlooking due to the physical proximity to the rear of the site
- Some local residents' groups and social tenants felt they were excluded from the planning consultation.
- A lack of robust public consultation and planning assessment in relation to security matters was undertaken with this application
- Concerns regarding additional for tenants and leaseholders due to the need for additional security embassy
- Concern local Tower Hamlets Homes residents will incur additional service costs from the arrival of the embassy on Royal Mint Estate
- With such a large embassy in this location the planning application has the potential to curb people's freedoms

The objectors called on committee to reject the application to allow it to called-in by the Secretary of State.

The Chair invited Gary Ashton, Sunny Desai, Graham Laughlan, and Andrew Clark to address the meeting as the applicant's representatives. They highlighted the following:

- The proposal is fully aligned with the Council planning policies; Council officers had recognised this and recommended approval.
- The proposed embassy use was in line with the provisions of the development plan; the nation(s) that occupy the embassy was not a planning matter.
- Statutory consultees had indicated they were satisfied with the proposal and the conditions to address issues that had been identified through consultation.
- The impact of covid restrictions on resident consultation activities.
- The site had been vacant for nearly a decade, proposal would revitalise the site, would protect and preserve historic buildings.
- Proposals for cultural and heritage installations and exhibition space which had been curated with stakeholders to communicate the unique history of the site.
- Proposals were developed in consultation with Met police. Applicant understood the Council had commissioned further independent advice from security experts. The Metropolitan Police had not objected to the application.
- Council's heritage officer had confirmed the proposal for an embassy in this location was acceptable.
- All aspects of the of the proposal had been thoroughly and independently assessed by the relevant bodies to ensure the proposals met the highest standards
- The key architectural principles for the scheme and how the applicant felt they would improve the area, the pedestrian experience, the overall composition of the campus, and enhance the setting and the heritage assets. The officers' report demonstrated Council officers and the GLA agree; Historic England support the proposals in heritage terms,
- Further details of the proposal's sustainable development and carbon reduction initiatives.
- Further details of the package of benefits to be secured including apprenticeships and employment opportunities, funding towards employment skills training for local people, CCTV, public realm and greening.

The Chair invited Councillor Shafi Ahmed and Councillor Peter Golds to address the meeting in objection to the application. They highlighted the following:

- Alleged errors in the officer's report regarding archaeological elements of the proposal site.
- Inadequate measures to ensure safety of embassy and protestors.
- Historic Royal Palaces had expressed concerns with the proposal.

- GLA had expressed concerns regarding compliance with the London Plan.
- The proposed proximity to Tower Bridge and Tower of London presented a reputational risk to the Borough, as the site likely to be subject to frequent demonstrations and protests. An alternative site away from tourist attractions would be more suitable. Crowds would also impact residents trying to go about with their daily lives
- Contest the scheme would conserve and safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value of the world heritage site
- Impact on highways, traffic and congestion.
- Large gathering of crowds will cause public realm damage and effect people's daily lives
- Concern post the incident in Manchester over applicant's ability to control their personnel
- Inadequate and failed consultation with residents and local Councillors.

Further to questions from Committee Members, planning officers provided more information on:

- Protest management conditions and input/analysis from TFL.
- The likely impact on roads and congestion from the increase in parking spaces.
- Separation distances policy and recommendations.
- Plans to prevent over-congestion during the construction process.
- More details on the heritage assessment. Overall assessment was the proposals would improve and enhance heritage.
- Work to ascertain the likely frequency of protests. TFL and Met Police were satisfied the site can cope.
- Further details of consultation meetings attendance.
- Further details of ecological survey and access to heritage site of the different installations.
- The procurement process for the Council's commissioned blast assessment
- Anticipated impact on local residents around the site of the freehold acquisition by the Chinese state, including non-application of the Vienna Convention.
- How financial and non-financial obligations could be used to secure local value and benefits.
- The interpretation of planning policy on protection of heritage assets, buffer zones; the input of Historic England and its relevance to this matter. The overall conclusion was the proposal protects and enhances the setting to the world heritage sites.
- The role of the Council and Secretary of State in determination of the planning application. Officers asked the Committee to note that the Council was the relevant planning authority and had no authority to request or to influence the Secretary of State to determine this matter.

Further to questions from Committee Members, objectors provided more information on:

- Communications between the applicant and local residents in the consultation stage.

The Chair invited Inspector Lukvinder Singh (Metropolitan Police) to address the meeting to respond to concerns raised relating to crime and policing. Inspector Singh provided responses on the following:

- Protest and event management strategies to ensure residents' protection.
- Likely impact of protests or a breach of security on local policing and how response would be coordinated.
- Mitigation measures to prevent hostile attacks.
- Rationale for the restriction placed on documentation regarding security assessment.
- Risk assessment and modelling for protests. Met Police were confident these could be managed and additional resources could be called-upon if necessary.

Councillors debated the application and made the following points:

- The risk of large crowds and demonstrators coming to the Borough would exacerbate over congestion in the local area, especially on The Highway.
- The existence of an embassy on the site would put residents' safety and security at risk.
- Tower Hamlets already suffered with high crime. Policing demonstrations would place an additional burden on the borough's policing resources.
- Any damage resulting from bomb blasts would place additional funding strains on the Council if it had to repair buildings affected.
- Some elements of the proposal were welcomed, specifically the bringing back into usage of a site which had been out of use for nearly ten years; works to protect and preserve architectural elements; and its sustainability and carbon reduction proposals.
- The responses from officers and other participants had not provided satisfactory responses to members concerns that the scheme adequately conserves, promotes and enhances the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site, including the authenticity integrity and significance of their objectives and supports these goals through their management and protection

At this point in the meeting, the Chair **moved** that the Committee agree an extension of up to one-hour to conclude the application. This was **AGREED** without further discussion.

At this point in the meeting, the Chair **moved** that the meeting be adjourned for five minutes. This was **AGREED** without further discussion. The meeting adjourned at 9.30pm and resumed at 9.35pm.

PA/21/01327

On a unanimous vote the Officers recommendation to **GRANT** planning permission was **not agreed**.

Councillor Gulam Kibria Chowdhury moved and Councillor Kamrul Hussain seconded to **REFUSE** the application. On a vote of 7 in favour, 0 against with 1 abstention, it was **RESOLVED** that the planning application be **REFUSED** at Royal Mint Court, London, EC3N 4QN for the following development:

- Redevelopment of the site to provide an embassy (Sui Generis use class), involving the refurbishment and restoration of the Johnson Smirke Building (Grade II listed), partial demolition, remodelling and refurbishment of Seaman's Registry (Grade II listed), with alterations to the west elevation of the building, the retention, part demolition, alterations and extensions to Murray House and Dexter House, the erection of a standalone entrance pavilion building, alterations to the existing boundary wall and demolition of substation, associated public realm and landscaping, highway works, car and cycle parking and all ancillary and associated works.

The reasons for the resolution to refuse are as follows:

- Impact on residents safety and security
- Impact on heritage assets both within the application site and around the site.
- Impact on the location as the key borough tourist destination Impact and strain on local police resources.
- Congested nature of the area and interrelationship that has with safety and security

PA/21/01349

On a vote of 3 in favour, 5 against the Officers recommendation to **GRANT** permission for listed building consent was **not agreed**.

Councillor Suluk Ahmed moved and Councillor Abdul Wahid seconded to **REFUSE** the application for listed building consent. On a vote of 5 in favour, 2 against with 1 abstention, it was **RESOLVED** that the listed building consent be **REFUSED** at Royal Mint Court, London, EC3N 4QN for the following development:

- Redevelopment of the site to provide an embassy (Sui Generis use class), involving the refurbishment and restoration of the Johnson Smirke Building (Grade II listed), partial demolition, remodelling and refurbishment of Seaman's Registry (Grade II listed), with alterations to the west elevation of the building, the retention, part demolition, alterations and extensions to Murray House and Dexter House, the erection of a standalone entrance pavilion building, alterations to the

existing boundary wall and demolition of substation, associated public realm and landscaping, highway works, car and cycle parking and all ancillary and associated works.

The reasons for the resolution to refuse are that this application is intrinsically linked to the planning application PA/21/01327 to create an embassy on the site.

The meeting ended at 10.10 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Amin Rahman
Strategic Development Committee