

APPENDIX 2

To: Michael Welbank MBE (Chair),
Marianne Bernadett Fredericks (Deputy Chair) and members of
The City of London Planning and Transportation Committee

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Dear Mr Welbank and members of the Committee,

I am writing in a personal capacity having just visited the 'Walkie-Talkie' tower at No.20 Fenchurch Street.

My understanding is that the highly controversial decision to grant planning permission for this building was granted on the condition that the developers included a 'park in the sky with public access'. My experience was that what has been provided is neither a 'park' nor 'public' on a fair interpretation.

As you probably may know, access by day is regulated by applications to be made on-line no less than 3 days ahead. On arrival, photo i/d (passport or driving licence) must be provided. By evening, access is limited to those who have both a booking, and the means to pay for one of the two expensive restaurants. During the day, my wife bought 2 glasses of wine (small), 1/2 pint of cider, a pint of lager and 4 packets of crisps (small) for the total of £50.

Fortunately, I can afford such a grossly inflated amount, but this is well beyond the means of most members of the public - and it is strictly forbidden to bring your own food and drink. To describe such access as 'public' is not what most would understand by the term. It is far from it in practical terms.

As to the 'park' or even a 'garden', the position is well expressed in this article in the Architectural Record:

Wainwright: How Developers are Hiding Behind Shrubbery

Architectural Record, 04/16/2015

Spring has sprung and developers are getting green-fingered. Across London, their planning applications are sprouting leaves and bursting into bloom. They're promising trees on bridges and jungles in the clouds, sky-gardens and life-giving linear parks, along with a whole network of green ribbons weaving through town.

Who could say no to this fecund vision for London? What mean-spirited planning committee would stand in the way of this pastoral dream? Very few can resist the lure of a good garden. That is precisely the problem.

Developers have got wise to the power of a few plants in easing their bloated schemes through the planning system. They've realised that a little green garnish can mask a multitude of sins. A clutch of 40-storey luxury apartment towers in a conservation area, you

say? But check out that lovely lawn! A bridge-shaped tourist attraction for a stretch of the Thames that doesn't need another crossing, to be built at vast expense to the taxpayer? But what nice shrubs it has! The word "garden" has never been misused as such a damaging decoy.

If ever evidence were needed that the promised planting of a CGI mirage might not be as good in reality, it can be found 150 metres up in the air at No 20 Fenchurch Street. The 37-storey Walkie-Talkie tower was given planning permission in an area never intended for tall buildings – way outside the City's planned "cluster" – on the sole basis that it would come with a majestic "sky garden".

Leaving aside any issues about the rule of law, when planning permission is granted on one basis, and what is provided falls short, the authority of the planning authorities is called into question and its authority greatly diminished.

For these reasons, I would be grateful for the answers to two questions:

- 1) Does the City of London Corporation consider that the terms of the planning permission have been complied with (both in letter and spirit)?
- 2) Does the Committee have any plans to enforce the basis on which planning permission was given?

I am encouraged by the statement on your website which states:

The City's pre-eminence as a world financial centre has a strong influence on the work of this Committee. It ensures that the City and its residents and workers enjoy well planned buildings, safe, clean streets and a good public transport system.

I sincerely hope so,

yours,