

LOCAL PLANS SUB (PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 27 JUNE 2018

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

By virtue of paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. POOL OF LONDON PRESENTATION

The Sub-Committee heard a verbal presentation from local landowner Northern and Shell and their architects PLP that provided Members with a potential vision for redevelopment of the Pool of London area.

PLP presented a visualisation of their wider vision for the area and explained that this had previously been presented to Members, officers and others at the Pool of London workshop in April.

The Director of the Built Environment asked for clarification of the current status of the proposal. PLP explained that they were simply presenting a vision, and that no application had been submitted nor any action taken to proceed further than this.

A Member asked why the documents had been created, and PLP explained that they had been asked by Northern & Shell to provide a vision for the Pool of London alongside the redevelopment of Northern & Shell's site.

A Member asked if the Port of London Authority had been consulted on the vision, to which PLP confirmed that they had been, along with the Chairman and officers on previous occasions. The Member asked if any other stakeholders had been consulted, and PLP confirmed that they had not been.

PLP provided an update to Members on the historical development of the area that highlighted how trading on the riverside had reduced over time, and subsequently how the vibrancy of the area had dwindled. They explained that there was currently little activity in the riverside area. They explained that Lower Thames Street was even recommended in tourist literature as the main pedestrian route to the Tower of London rather than the Riverside Walk.

PLP argued that redevelopment of the Northern and Shell site as part of a more comprehensive redevelopment could help resolve servicing issues for several riverside sites along Lower Thames Street.

PLP suggested that more activities could be attracted to the riverfront through a greater mix of uses. They explained that a land use study carried out found that it was feasible to increase vibrancy at ground level without reducing employment space.

Northern & Shell explained that there was a unique opportunity to achieve change in the area, given that five of the buildings in the Pool of London Area were likely to have vacant possession in a similar timeframe. They noted that there was resistance to increased residential use within the City of London but suggested more flexibility on the riverside would be needed to make development economically viable without compromising the City's office provision. They suggested that the character of the Pool of London area was slightly different to that of the traditional City, and argued that this warranted the increased flexibility on development of ground level use by cafes and restaurants etc. to utilise a part of the riverside that is currently isolated. They emphasised that their ideas for the Pool of London represented nothing more than a vision and had not been submitted as a plan.

A Member explained that they were strongly in support of regeneration of the Pool of London and were interested to hear views on the appropriateness of the riverside sites for social housing. A Member interjected to raise concerns over the appropriateness of detailed discussions relating to specific sites, commenting that such detailed questions towards a developer's proposals were not appropriate for a non-public session of a sub-committee tasked with forming planning policy. The Member expressed concerns that the non-public session would prejudice members' ability to consider future planning applications. Northern & Shell explained that their intention was simply to present ideas to the Sub-Committee that they hoped would contribute to the policy debate. The Chairman recognised the danger of misconceptions in this regard, supported the Member's views on the importance of transparency and noted that all interested parties at the Pool of London workshop had been given equal opportunity to present ideas to the Sub-Committee and so no preferential treatment had been allowed to Northern & Shell. The Director of the Built Environment explained that this presentation aimed to inform the Sub-Committee's thinking as part of the local plan review process for the City as a whole and for the Pool of London in particular, emphasising that no detailed discussion over Northern and Shell's site proposals were appropriate.

A Member asked if this was the only option that would overcome the constraints on servicing. PLP explained that research they had conducted on Billingsgate found that large vehicles were forced to stop on the road, whilst only smaller vehicles could gain access to that part of the riverside. The inclusion of the cycle lane on Lower Thames Street was exacerbating the issue further. PLP considered there was a strong logic for basement servicing access for all the buildings in the area as part of a comprehensive approach. The Director of the Built Environment noted that improving servicing was a clear policy objective.

Members agreed that the Pool of London area required addressing. The Chairman noted the comparison with the utilisation of the river on the South Bank and illustrated his dissatisfaction with the current state of the riverside in the area.

The Director of the Built Environment confirmed that officers would bring bullet-point policy options for the Local Plan Areas of Change (including the Pool of London area) to the Sub-Committee prior to recess. (3)

A Member requested that notes of the Pool of London workshop held in April be circulated, including details of attendees and parties that had been invited to speak to the Sub-Committee should they wish to. (4)

RESOLVED – That Northern & Shell and PLP be heard.

9. NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

A Member asked if it would be feasible to have a policy that made demands around servicing considerations. The Director of the built Environment confirmed that this was the intention.

10. ANY OTHER NON-PUBLIC BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

A Member requested an update on policies to be brought to the next Sub-Committee. The Director of the Built Environment indicated that this meeting would consider office policies, design, views and tall buildings. (5)

A Member raised their concerns over potential accusations of Member lobbying and noted that the proposals brought to this meeting knowingly conflicted with the policy restricting residential development. The Member illustrated objections to the item being presented on the agenda for this sub-committee and particularly in the non-public session. The Chairman reiterated that equal opportunity had been provided for all developers and advice had been sought from officers to ensure that the process remained fair and transparent. The Town Clerk explained that the item was scheduled in the non-public session following advice from officers that it would contain commercially sensitive information that would not be suitable for publication. The Chairman noted that developers were entitled to give their views, regardless of whether or not they contradicted the Corporation's policies.

The meeting ended at 11.56 am

Chairman

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