



20 April 2021

*Ref Planning Application: 20/00997/FULEIA – Salisbury Square*

I write, in a personal capacity, in support of the Salisbury Square proposal by Eric Parry Architects.

My credentials for so doing, such as they are, include my past chairing of the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment (CABE) and its design review committee; chairing for a decade the judging panel for the City of London design awards, organized by the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects; and chairing the INSPIRE! Appeal to (successfully) restore the spire of St Bride's, Fleet Street.

Currently I am Programme Director of the World Architecture Festival), overseeing an annual awards programme which attracts 1,000-plus entries, requiring more than 150 judges each year. I am also editorial director of the Architects' Journal and the Architectural Review, and co-editor since 1994 of the specialist quarterly, Planning in London (now online).

A keen interest in the architecture of the City of London began in my earliest days in publishing, in Essex Street, close to the development site, working for Building Design magazine. I have given evidence at two major public inquiries where I supported the City Corporation's recommendations, in respect of the Heron Tower and the 'Walkie Talkie' building. I have spoken at the City Architecture Forum and contributed to publications reviewing new architecture in the City.

In reviewing the Eric Parry proposal for the Salisbury Square buildings and public realm, the following attributes are very evident:

- The development site is crying out for constructive change. It is currently dismal in respect both of its monotonous, undistinguished architecture and the poverty of its public realm
- The proposal takes the worst aspects of the current condition and reverses them: a series of buildings considered as individual elements is provided, then related via a lively and welcoming public realm at both ground and roof level
- The ground plane has been properly considered both in respect of the street and back-land frontages, providing useful routes and landscape amenity
- Views, particularly of the St Bride's spire, have helped to inform the convincing site planning

- The roof gardens will be as successful as those introduced by the same architect elsewhere in the City
- The quality of contextual design is a continuation of the architect's history of successful City buildings and placemaking, evident in a variety of locations, for example at Aldermanbury Square, Fenchurch Street, Threadneedle Street and, in respect of interior architecture, Leathersellers' Hall in St Helen's Place
- The proposal, in terms of proportion, scale and use of materials is evidence of an architectural practice which is knowledgeable, mature and arguably at the height of its powers
- Each element of the proposal, and the explanation as to why it has been designed this way, has an inevitability about it which is the mark of high-quality architectural thinking. This includes the choice of complementary materials
- The way in which structure and elevations have been composed is satisfying to both eye and mind, as is the seamless way in which art has been incorporated into the project as a whole
- The location is a model of a walking-distance proposition that other local authorities would do well to emulate
- The design life of much of the proposal, at 125 years, is a welcome and symbolic declaration of support for environmental design principles
- It scarcely needs saying (but is worth emphasising) that the desirability of placing the multiple elements of legal processes and law enforcement in a single complex of this sort is admirable.

I have no hesitation in supporting this application. I trust and believe it will be approved, enabling delivery of a fine development.

Your sincerely,

Paul Finch OBE, HonFRIBA