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PRESENTATION TO PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS
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Thank for you for the opportunity to address you.

I speak to you as an international expert on Jewish history, with extensive experience working with national and international heritage organisations like Historic England, the National Trust, and the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage.

I also speak in a personal capacity: my family have worshipped in this synagogue since it was built, and I too was married here.

SLIDE 2: BM SYNAGOGUE AND SETTING

Bevis Marks: Synagogue and Setting



- '...the curtilage of a building (the principal building) is in general terms any area of land and other buildings that is around and associated with that principal building'
- '...unless the list entry explicitly says otherwise, the law (Section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) says that the listed building includes any ancillary object or structure within the curtilage of the building, which forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July, 1948.'

Historic England, *Listed Buildings and Curtilage: Historic England Advice Note 10* (February 2018), pp.4 & 5.

You are asked to consider the impact of this proposal on this Grade 1 listed building **AND ITS SETTING**, that is to say it's **curtilage**. The principle of curtilage listing is established by law.

For this reason, both the City of London Local Plan 2015 and the London Plan 2021 underline the importance of **SETTING, as we see here.**

SLIDE 3: BM CITY OF LONDON POLICIES

City of London Policies

- “Safeguarding the City’s **listed buildings and their settings**, while allowing appropriate adaptation and new uses” (CoL Local Plan 2015: CS1)
- ““To **sustain and enhance heritage assets, their settings and significance**” (CoL Local Plan 2015: DM12.1)
- “Development will be required to **respect the significance, character, scale and amenities of surrounding heritage assets and spaces and their settings.**” (CoL Local Plan 2015: DM12.1)
- 4. “Delivering tall buildings on appropriate sites that enhance the overall appearance of the cluster on the skyline, and the relationship with the space around them at ground level, **while adhering to the principles of sustainable design, conservation of heritage assets and their settings...**” (CoL Local Plan 2015: DM 12.1)

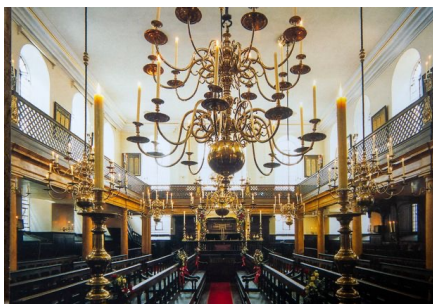
Note the use of words like “sustain” and “respect”.

So what does it mean to sustain and respect a Grade 1 heritage asset?

These are the principles that Historic England recommend you should apply.

SLIDE 4: HERITGE PRINCIPLES

Bevis Marks: Heritage Principles and Values



- Principle 3: Understanding the significance of places is vital
- Principle 4: **Significant places should be managed to sustain their values**
 - *Historic England Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2015)*

I want to draw your attention to **Principle 4 which highlights the connection between places and “their values”**. With a site of powerful religious significance like Bevis Marks, **this is the key**.

Historic England defines the importance of heritage assets through 4 key heritage values. All apply in this case.

SLIDE 5: HERITAGE VALUES

4 Kinds of Heritage Value

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Historic England Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2015)

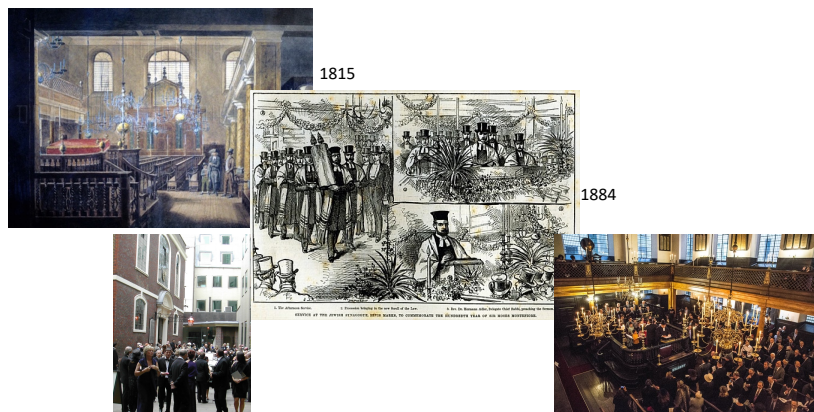
Bevis Marks has aesthetic value.

It has evidential value as a perfectly preserved early 18th century synagogue in a secluded setting that recalls the private courtyard in which it was built.

But its real value is **historic** and **communal**, and that value lies in **the unique fact of its continuous use over centuries**.

SLIDE 6: PEOPLE AND PLACE OVER TIME

People and Place over time: 1701-2021



The point is that **for this site historic and communal value cannot be disentangled**.

All over Europe there are beautiful synagogues which are empty shells, because the Jews were either killed or left. They have historic value, **not** communal value.

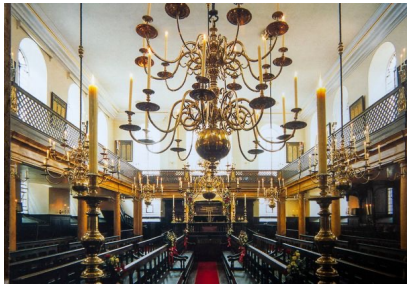
This synagogue is a living community. It is unique in the way that British Jewish history is unique because it did not experience the rupture of the Holocaust.

The Planning Officer's Report, and in particular what it says about Bevis Marks, demonstrates a limited understanding of the historic and communal value of this building and its setting, **because although some consideration is given to architectural and historic value, no consideration is given to communal value**, or to what London Supplementary Planning Guidance described in 2014 as "Character and Context".

It is clear from the strength of the response from members of the Jewish community that **the proposal does not reflect an attempt to manage the site in a way that respects its Character or sustains the values of those who use it: it ignores Principle 4.**

SLIDE 7: PRINCIPLES

Bevis Marks: Heritage Principles and Values



- Principle 3: Understanding the significance of places is vital
- Principle 4: Significant places should be managed to sustain their values
 - *Historic England Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2015)*

Too much attention is paid to the "visitor's" view, "aesthetic appreciation", "visual experience" and the technical capacity to read and lead a service.

No mention is made of **spiritual experience in which light plays such a fundamental role**, although this lies at the heart of **the use and historical significance of the building**.

No attention is paid to the **holistic experience of a community at prayer**, or the role of the courtyard as a social space in **sustaining that communal experience**.

These things may be intangible, but intangible heritage is an extremely important consideration when considering historic and communal value.

SLIDE 8: INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

What is intangible heritage?

- Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or **living expressions inherited from our ancestors** and passed on to our descendants....
- While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is **an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization**. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

Unesco Convention on Intangible Heritage

This is how the Unesco Convention defines intangible heritage.

In the City of London, you may want to think about the role respecting minority heritage plays in enhancing social cohesion and social inclusion.

SLIDE 9: PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

Social and Communal benefits?

- “Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it”

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act, 2010)

Your Planning report refers to the social and communal benefits of this proposal as significant.

No mention is made of **the damage that will be done to community relations and social cohesion** by the failure to treat the most important site in Britain for the Jewish community in a way that is consistent with the **values** of that community, or **respects** its attachment to it.

Here I draw your attention to **the Public Sector Equality Duty** to foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. That duty has plainly been ignored. There is no reference to it in your report.

So why does Bevis Marks matter?

SLIDE 10: TWO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Two World Heritage Sites



Historic England have focused on the Tower of London World Heritage Site, but **in terms of Jewish heritage this IS a world heritage site.**

Bevis Marks is the oldest continuing functioning synagogue in Europe. It preserves a unique liturgy. It lies at the heart of the Sephardic diaspora: a history that is properly global. That's why this has generated newspaper coverage in New York and Israel, and objections from Jewish groups in continental Europe and the US.

Both as a British and a Jewish historian, I would say that the Tower is in fact a more parochial, less internationally resonant site.

SLIDE 11: NATIONAL HERITAGE

National significance

- Bevis Marks Synagogue is .. much more than a Grade 1 listed building. It is the 'Cathedral' Synagogue to Anglo Jewry and should be protected in its cultural, historical and religious significance in the same vein that St Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey could expect from its local and national government. ... The Synagogue deserves the protection that ought to be afforded to it in ensuring that the building and its community are able to exist as intended which includes streaming natural light through its beautiful windows and being a place of private reflection for worshipers.

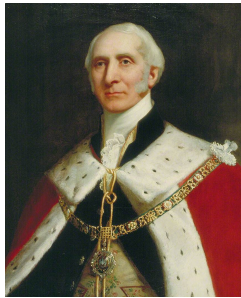
London Jewish Museum submission

The Jewish Museum's submission captures this very well.

This is the single most important historic site for British Jews. In the heart of the City, close to the Bank of England and the Mansion House, it speaks to their history since the readmission under Oliver Cromwell, and to their unique status as the only significant Jewish community in Europe with a continuous history of this kind.

SLIDE 12: JEWS IN THE CITY OF LONDON

Campaigning for civil and religious equality: Jews in the City of London



Sir David Salomons, MP: first Jewish Lord Mayor of London (1855).



Lionel de Rothschild, the first Jewish MP, is welcomed into the House of Commons in 1858.

He was first elected MP by the City of London in 1847, but could only take his seat ten years later.



Sir Albert Sassoon, a Jew, is the first Indian to receive the Freedom of the City of London (1873)

As the only non-Christian religious site in the City, Bevis Marks packs an enormous symbolic punch.

It speaks to the diversity of the City over centuries; to the vital role British Jews have played in the City's evolution as a global financial and commercial centre; and to the honourable role the City of London played as the platform from which British Jews asserted their claim to equal civil and political rights as non-Christians in this country – paving the way for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and other minorities.

The City has an extraordinary Jewish heritage, of which Bevis Marks is now the prime symbol. This heritage was valued in the 19th century, when non-Jews campaigned to defend the setting around this building. It was valued in the 1970s. This committee should have the courage to show that it still values that heritage today.

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