

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 1 February 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Transportation Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 10.30 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Alastair Moss (Chair)	Alderman Alastair King
Randall Anderson	Alderwoman Susan Langley
Mark Bostock	Alderman Bronek Masojada
John Edwards	Deputy Brian Mooney (Chief Commoner)
John Fletcher	Deputy Barbara Newman
Marianne Fredericks	Graham Packham
Graeme Harrower	Susan Pearson
Christopher Hayward	Judith Pleasance
Christopher Hill	James de Sausmarez
Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark	Alderman Sir David Wootton

Officers:

Gemma Stokley	- Town Clerk's Department
Jayne Moore	- Town Clerk's Department
Shani Annand-Baron	- Media Officer
Deborah Cluett	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Simon Owen	- Chamberlain's Department
Juliemma McLoughlin	- Executive Director, Environment
Gwyn Richards	- Chief Planning Officer and Development Director
Liam Hart	- Department of the Built Environment
Gordon Roy	- Department of the Built Environment
Ian Hughes	- Department of the Built Environment
Bhakti Depala	- Department of the Built Environment
Peter Shadbolt	- Department of the Built Environment
Bruce McVean	- Department of the Built Environment
Gemma Delves	- Department of the Built Environment
Simon Glynn	- Department of the Built Environment
Kerstin Kane	- Department of the Built Environment
Joanna Parker	- Department of the Built Environment
Dom Strickland	- Department of the Built Environment
Clarisse Tavin	- Department of the Built Environment
Robin Whitehouse	- Department of the Built Environment

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Oliver Sells QC (Deputy Chairman), Douglas Barrow, Peter Bennett, Deputy Peter Dunphy, Deputy Tom Hoffman (observing online only), Shravan Joshi, Oliver Lodge, Natasha Lloyd-Owen, Deputy Edward Lord and Deputy Henry Pollard (observing online only).

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the public minutes and summary of the hybrid, informal meeting held on 11 January 2022 and approved them as a correct record, subject to the addition of the point below.

MATTERS ARISING

Moor Lane (page 6) – A Member stated that he had been in email correspondence with Officers on this matter since the last meeting and had been informed that a report had also been issued to the Chair. He questioned whether the Chair was in a position to share this report with the wider Committee. Officers confirmed that this paper had been issued to the Chair and, by way of an update, reported that negotiations were continuing with the developer following the public consultation feedback received. Officers undertook to provide Members with further detail in writing. The Member stressed the importance of this issue and the need to find a resolution to this.

15 and 16 Minorities and Land Fronting Aldgate High Street, 62 Aldgate High Street: Deed of Variation in Respect of Affordable Housing Matters: Planning Permission 15/01067/FULL (page 7) – A Member reported that the Housing Sub Management Committee had had a very detailed discussion on this at their most recent meeting where a lot of concern had been raised as to the City's Affordable Housing Policy on payments in lieu and the current costs of this. The Member understood that this would now result in a resolution to this Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee requesting a meeting with Officers to outline these concerns and ensure that the City was delivering on affordable housing and were receiving the level of payments required with all of this reflected in the refreshed Local Plan. Another Member spoke to clarify that the resolution of the Housing Management Sub Committee was actually that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Sub Committee should write to the Chair of Planning expressing these concerns.

Another Member spoke to state that this Committee agreed a significant change in the commuted sum but that this change was then deferred as part of the response to the COVID pandemic. He therefore sought some clarity as to the current position and when this deferral might cease. Officers reported that, in terms of the deferral of CIL and Section 106 payments, the COVID deferral process had now ended and that, for CIL purposes, payments were now being sought in line with previous policy. In terms of Section 106, Members were reminded that the Committee adopted a revised Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which significantly increased the contribution to affordable

housing from both commercial and residential development last year and that this was implemented from 1 October 2021. This, however, did not apply to this scheme as this had been negotiated and agreed under the previous SPD.

A Member commented that the uplifted figure now in place was very welcome but questioned whether this was an absolute figure or whether there was any linkage to inflation given that there was currently very significant inflation in the building trade. Officers stated that the figure was index linked to the RICS index which was linked to build costs.

Another Member requested an update from Officers as to how negotiations with the developer around the proposed phasing of payments were now progressing. Officers reported that the applicant had confirmed that they were happy to accept the revised phasing of payments proposed by the Committee. Legal Officers were therefore now looking to revise the Section 106 agreement on this basis and working to progress sign-off of this to allow the development to get back on track.

The Committee were informed that its Local Plans Sub-Committee had met yesterday where Members had, again, expressed some concerns around affordable housing contributions and Officers had taken from this a very firm instruction to revise the Policy to address the requirements for on-site as opposed to off-site as well as to work very closely with colleagues in Community and Children's Services to ensure that the requirements of the City's own housing estates could be addressed. This piece of work would therefore be taken forward and Officers intended to report back to the Committee later in the year on this. Separately, the Sub Committee had also agreed that Officers should undertake a 'Call for Sites Consultation' – this would go out to landowners, developers, residents and the general public to ask for potential housing sites to be identified and brought forward for the City's consideration. This would take place in April and May of this year.

A Member commented that this was not solely about affordable housing payments but that it was also about ensuring that affordable housing was being delivered in the City. Design and the avoidance of things such as 'poor doors' would therefore be crucial as would the need to avoid very high service charges. The City therefore needed to be very clear from the outset on these expectations. The Member went on to state that she felt that this matter would merit discussion amongst the wider Court. The Chair assured the Committee that the Local Plans Sub Committee had taken a very broad overview of this matter at its meeting yesterday, including government policy and whether this was leading to the outcomes the City wanted, regional and national policy and what kind of housing the City wanted to see. He assured Members that discussions would be had with the policy makers and all stakeholders and that this would be an iterative process. He accepted that, at present, the Policy was not working and that the market was not providing what it needed to.

A Member questioned what the City were currently receiving per unit. She stated that she was very pleased to learn of the proposed call for sites exercise and questioned whether the City would also be calling on itself for this with

consideration given to sites such as London Wall and Bastion House. Officers confirmed that the call for sites would go out to everyone including the City Corporation in its capacity as a developer and that it would be open to anyone, including elected Members and City residents to suggest sites and put these forward. With regard to current costs, Officers stated that the guidance in the SPD stated that the affordable housing contribution would be calculated by looking at the viability of a fully market development and then the viability of a development with affordable housing and compare the two with the difference being the contribution that should be made. It also stated that this should be within the context of a minimum of £400,000 per unit which represented a significant increase from the previous SPD.

4. **61-65 HOLBORN VIADUCT, LONDON EC1A 2FD**

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Planning Officer and Development Director regarding 61-75 Holborn Viaduct, London EC1 2FD – specifically, the redevelopment of the site for a new building comprising two basement levels, lower ground, ground plus 12 upper floors including purpose built student accommodation and associated amenity space (Sui Generis), flexible cultural/community use at part ground and lower ground floor levels (Sui Generis), a publicly accessible roof terrace, a pedestrian route through the site, hard and soft landscaping, together with ancillary plant and servicing; and associated enabling works.

The Town Clerk introduced the item and also referenced the Officer Presentation slides and two addendums that had been published and circulated.

Officers presented the application stating that the site in question was located close to two conservation areas – Smithfield Conservation Area and Newgate Street Conservation Area. The grade I listed church of St Sepulchre was also adjacent to the site with the former Snow Hill Police Station which was Grade III listed to the north. Members were informed that the application was for a 12-storey, purpose-built student accommodation scheme with associated student accommodation amenities and facilities, a publicly accessible roof garden, a public route through and a ground floor cultural and community space and associated servicing bay and cycle parking. As noted in the papers, it was reported that the building was demolished in 2020 under an application for prior approval such that the existing site was now empty.

Officers shared some visuals of the proposed scheme and highlighted that the proposal did involve the loss of office space which was generally resisted in policy terms but could be acceptable where the proposed alternative use would meet the wider objectives of the Local Plan. In this case, the applicant proposed to deliver a high-quality student accommodation scheme with a generous cultural and community floor space at ground floor level both of which would provide social, inclusive infrastructure for the City to address a local and strategic need as well as contributing towards post-COVID recovery in terms of adding vibrancy and attracting activity to this part of the City. This would not have an adverse impact on the overall office stock for the City.

Members were reminded that there was an existing consent on the site for a hotel and partial office scheme with a publicly accessible roof terrace granted by this Committee in January 2020. For various reasons, including the economic climate and some construction difficulties, it was now unlikely that this scheme would come forward. There were also concerns around such extensive greening in a residential led development given new fire regulations.

Members were shown some floorplans of the proposed development. Officers reported that the proposed basement one plan would mainly house part of the social amenity hub for the students and would comprise the gym, music room, cinema room, breakout spaces and a bar. Some of the development's long-stay cycle spaces would also be housed here. Basement two would house the plant equipment. At lower ground floor, Officers remarked that there would be an extensive level change moving from Snow Hill down to Holborn Viaduct. There would be a pedestrian route through the site which would be stepped from Snow Hill with DDA compliant platform lifts also provided to allow for step-free access. Officers indicated the location of the servicing bay at this level, reporting that all servicing would be within the building and that consolidation was proposed with restrictions at peak times during the day and no servicing during night time to protect the amenity of nearby occupiers. The student entrance was to be located off of Snow Hill. The proposed ground floor plan depicted the proposed short-stay cycle spaces with Officers reporting that the number of both long and short stay cycle parking spaces were London Plan Policy compliant and were all provided on private land. The dedicated lift to the public access viewing gallery was also visible here. Members were informed that the ground floor was predominantly cultural and community use and that the space here was a dedicated, flexible space for cultural consumption and cultural production, curated by cultural creatives to provide a double-height exhibition and performance space, cellular workshops and shared spaces where creatives could come together. This would also provide animation to the ground floor along Holborn Viaduct and the route through which would be run and managed by a third party to be secured through Section 106. Members were informed that, in recent discussions, the applicant had stated that they were happy to commit to working with local schools and cultural groups in the area too.

A plan showing the existing ground floor public realm depicted quite an impermeable site, with the proposal providing a route through the scheme which would link the City Thames Link station to the new future Museum of London site. The route would be accessible from 7am-11.30pm. The eastern end of the building would feature a cover which would house cycle parking spaces but would also be counted towards the increase in public realm. In addition, there would be 543 square meters of publicly accessible roof terrace which would be open seven days per week from 10am-6pm. This would be secured by the Section 106 agreement where there would also be restrictions on any private closures as well as certain restrictions around things such as music, secured by condition.

The proposed first floor plan showed more of the social amenity hub for students in the way of quiet rooms and social spaces. Student bedrooms would

also begin to be introduced at this level. Officers highlighted that the West side of the building would feature a light well which would run the entire height of the scheme. Members were shown a typical floor layout at other levels, featuring student accommodation units all the way around as well as some facing into the light well. Members were informed that London Plan Policy required that purpose-built student accommodation should be occupied in association with a higher education provider. As such, it was reported that the applicant had been in advanced talks with the London School of Economics (LSE) who were proposing to occupy the majority of the bedrooms – again, this would all be secured by a Section 106 agreement and a nomination agreement to that effect. It was recognised that LSE had submitted a letter in support of this scheme and had identified a need for student accommodation for them, especially close to their central London campuses. Officers went on to report that the scheme also provided 35% affordable student accommodation which would be secured through Section 106 and would also require a plan showing the typologies of all of these bedrooms to ensure that there was an even mix across the building. Officers also underlined that a total of 644 bedrooms would be provided and that, in accordance with policy, this would account for approximately 262 new homes towards the City's housing target.

Next, the Committee were shown the proposed twelfth floor plan where the building would begin to set back with the green roof below. The proposed roof plan showed the publicly accessible roof terrace on the eastern side of the building which would afford exceptional views over the dome of St Paul's and the Old Bailey. The west of the building would incorporate blue and green roofs and solar PV panels. In sustainability terms, the Committee were informed that BREEAM 'excellent' was being targeted and that circular economy principles had been positively applied. It was reported that the building had been designed to respond to climate change resilience through the use of natural ventilation through openable windows, the use of fins to mitigate solar shading, urban greening and water saving measures – all of which contribute towards reducing the operational carbon emissions.

Officers went on to take the Committee through various elevations of the proposed scheme in context. It was underlined that the height of the building was to be broadly similar to what was established in the area on Holborn Viaduct and Snow Hill, with the design of the building considered to respect the historic context of the adjacent Conservation Areas and listed buildings. In terms of daylight and sunlight, Members were shown an image depicting sensitive properties. Officers reported that the applicant had undertaken extensive daylight/sunlight assessments and radiance studies with the impact of the proposed scheme considered to be acceptable.

Officers took the Committee through some illustrative views and local townscape views, underlining that the scheme did not breach any LVMF strategic views. Officers shared the existing townscape views from the junction of Newgate Street and Old Bailey, from Holborn Viaduct, from Snow Hill and from West Smithfield alongside the proposed views from each of these vantage points.

Officers concluded by stating that, overall, the proposal would welcome an influx of a new demographic of young people in close proximity to the future Museum of London site, within the Cultural Quarter. It was felt that the site would really help to cultivate and transform the City to a 24/7 destination providing vibrancy and activation. It would diversify the City's building stock and land uses. Whilst the potential for the loss of office on site was recognised, it was reiterated that the proposal would go some way to addressing the local and strategic needs of the Local Plan and was therefore recommended to the Committee for approval subject to the Section 106 obligations and conditions.

The Chair introduced Mr Barnaby Collins of DP9, addressing the meeting on behalf of the applicant, in favour of the application. Mr Barnaby explained that the applicant had been seeking to develop the site since 2019 and had demolished the pre-existing building and prepared the site in 2020 in readiness for the consented hotel development. Mr Barnaby stated that Members would recall that the hotel scheme proposed a revolutionary green wall. At the time, post-Grenfell fire regulations were under review, however, there was a window to build the scheme before any changes occurred. The applicant had engaged an engineering team on detailed design but, sadly, the window was subsequently closed by COVID freezing funding supply and insurers backing away from taking. This pause allowed for a rethink and led to discussions with LSE who were shortly due to lose two accommodation blocks elsewhere and are searching for replacements. The idea to connect learners with earners and earners with learners was then conceived – something that was perhaps the missing piece to the current ancillary supporting function to the City's core business base. In the meantime, the cleared site was also put to good use as Gaia's Garden in Summer 2021 which was a roaring success with the local community and led the applicant to think that a culturally based community use would be of significant benefit. This also led the applicant to develop a programme based upon what the community wanted and needed rather than the applicant guessing at this. The result of all of this was now before the Committee today – a highly developed mixture of maker and consumption spaces that would animate and engage at ground floor level and would be created by the Creative Land Trust to 'establish long-term affordable space for artists and creators' and on which the applicant had consulted at length with the City's Culture Mile Team. Mr Barnaby spoke of his excitement at this new dynamic and the creation of a multi-purpose building. He commented that the accommodation was first class with students in situ for short term times on undergraduate postgraduate courses – typically one to three years. They would attend lectures and seminars and socialise on campus and have a multitude of study options on campus or in the proposed building in the form of dedicated group and communal study rooms as well as their own rooms where every desk would have a window. The LSE were supportive of the proposed layout of rooms and considered the design to be exceptional. Mr Collins therefore commended the scheme to the Committee.

The Chair thanked Mr Collins for his contribution and invited any questions which Members might now have of him and the wider applicant team.

A Member questioned whether the lift from Snow Hill would be self-operated. With regard to the rooftop garden, she also questioned whether wheelchair users would be able to move around in this space without obstruction. The applicant assured Members that the lift would be self-operable and that the roof would be fully wheelchair accessible.

A Member questioned the difference in height between the previously consented scheme and this scheme. She also questioned whether the light well would be roofed or open to the elements. Finally, she queried the height distance between the Snow Hill entrance to the pedestrian route and the Holborn Viaduct entrance. The applicant responded by stating that the proposals were very similar in terms of height with just a 340mm difference. The applicant clarified that, when the original application was first submitted, it had featured a taller glass balustrade around the rooftop garden which had been reduced so that the highest point on current scheme was 55.34 meters with the newly proposed scheme's highest point being 55 meters. Members were informed that this would still sit under the LVMF corridor. It was confirmed that the light well would be open.

Another Member questioned who the applicant envisaged managing the communal areas, how this was to be financed and how secure this arrangement was likely to be. The applicant underlined that the management of these spaces would be built into the Section 106 agreement with a service charge to fund the maintenance of this and a long-term Management Plan to ensure that the creative users managed the space properly.

A Member noted that there were 644 rooms proposed but questioned how many students would be housed within the building. She went on to question where healthcare facilities/GP services would be located for the students. The applicant responded that it would be one student per room so a total of 644 students would be housed here. They added that social welfare facilities were normally provided on site within the campus at LSE.

Another Member spoke, declaring a non-pecuniary interest as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He stated that the School would love to have limited access to this accommodation and was therefore disappointed to see that LSE were proposing to brand this and utilise all of the available space. He questioned whether it would therefore be possible to introduce a Section 106 clause suggesting that a small proportion of the accommodation be allocated to the Guildhall School. The applicant confirmed that negotiations with LSE that were currently underway were around them taking the whole building but, if this were not to be the case, they stated that they would be happy to explore the possibility of the Guildhall School using some of this space.

A Member questioned the greening of the building, noting that the original consented scheme had featured a green wall on the exterior – an innovation which the Committee had been very proud of. He felt that the newly proposed building now offered very little greening and therefore questioned the extent of this. The applicant reported that greening was now to be introduced at rooftop

level with greening also provided within the light well and as part of the public realm at the base of the building. Members were informed that it was true that greening on the elevations of the building had generally been avoided predominantly because this was now considered differently from a fire perspective as it was to be a permanent residential building and not a hotel. That being said, the development would still have a high urban greening factor of 0.37.

In response to a question regarding the capacity of the roof garden, the applicant reported that this would be 200 people.

The Chair then asked that the Committee move to any questions they might now have of Officers as well as to debating the application.

A Member picked up again on the provision of GP services for students, recognising that whilst there was some provision on campus, many of these were oversubscribed meaning that students often needed to try and register with local GPs. He noted that the City was currently served by just one GP surgery that was currently full and therefore questioned what further thought had been given to this issue. He went on to note that the report suggested that deliveries were to be consolidate but questioned how this would be possible given that all of the students residing here could individually place orders with whomever they wished for things such as food and stationery. The Member went on to focus on the carbon calculations and questioned whether these were inclusive of the building which had been demolished. Finally, he questioned what affordable actually meant in this context.

Officers responded to state that there was no real policy to require an additional GP practice but that, through the Section 106 agreement, they would urge the higher education provider to include this within their provision. With regard to deliveries, it was highlighted that there was a section within the report which referred to moving in and moving out days as well as to the fact that students were expected to order quite a few deliveries which were likely to be through cycle and motorcycle drop off. These would not therefore be expected to use the servicing bay, but this would be articulated within the Student Management Plan with the management company expected to adequately manage this. With regards to 'affordable', Officers reiterated that 35% of rooms (approximately 225 rooms) would be affordable and would see students paying £174 per week for 39 weeks per academic year. This was equivalent to an approximately 55% decrease in the market rate to other students. Finally, it was confirmed that the carbon figures did not include the demolition of the previous building on this site.

The Member pressed further on the issue of deliveries noting that the students residing here were likely to regularly order things such as clothing and books from various e-commerce companies and that this was likely to result in many, many more than the 120 deliveries per week quoted within the report. He stated that it appeared that there was nothing under current consideration to address this. Officers responded further to report that there would be a Delivery Servicing Management Plan in place to monitor and control this which would be

secured through Section 106, as was the case for all developments. It was underlined that this would be subject to review. Officers also highlighted that paragraph 242 of the report noted that it was expected that students may order deliveries but that this was felt to be no different to how office occupiers would often order personal deliveries to their workplace.

Another Member stated that he was broadly supportive of the scheme but wanted to check, with regard to daylight and sunlight, whether all local residents and neighbours were content with the proposals in this respect. Officers confirmed that there were no objections from any nearby occupiers and that the impact to these properties had been rigorously assessed with Officers considering that these were largely minor in nature with retained value still very generous.

A Member revisited the notion of offering student accommodation to those higher education organisations closely associated with the City of London Corporation including the Guildhall School and City University. On a broader point, he questioned whether there was a mechanism by which such schemes coming forward in future could show some preference towards these organisations in the first instance. The Comptroller and City Solicitor responded to state that the Section 106 agreement could include a reasonable endeavours clause to seek nominations from local higher education providers for the space but stressed that she would be anxious about doing anything to potentially impede the LSE nominations agreement in this particular case. The reasonable endeavours clause could, however, state that first refusal might be offered to those providers closely linked with the City Corporation if there were any remaining vacancies. The Chair noted that the applicant had specifically mentioned the Guildhall School in this respect and had suggested that they would look favourably on this request.

Another Member responded to this point to state that it seemed clear from the LSE's representation that they were keen to take all of the available accommodation and therefore questioned what leverage there was in this instance. The Comptroller and City Solicitor reiterated that she would be wary of going beyond a reasonable endeavours clause with the level of information currently available. She added that, in considering the appropriate 106 obligations, the Committee had to be guided by material planning considerations and that, without separate evidence and policy guidance as to the Guildhall School need, she was not convinced that this was material. These were all discussions that would need to be explored based on need, the LSE's position and on the importance of achieving a nominations agreement that could operate for the site. The Chair stressed that the applicants had heard the strength of feeling around this and questioned whether, going forward, it would be proper for the Committee to have regard to the requirements of institutions within the City. The Comptroller responded to state that this was possible and that these discussions could certainly be explored as the S106 drafting proceeded with an update provided to Members as appropriate.

Another Member stated that the member of the applicant team who had given a presentation to the Committee earlier this week had also commented that they

were sure that the LSE would look favourably on such a request from the Guildhall School when the matter had been raised in this forum.

A Member underlined that he would also be very cautious about going beyond what had been outlined by the Comptroller and the reasonable endeavours clause described. Whilst it was entirely right for the Committee to take into account the residential student requirements of local institutions, taking this further to suggest, at the point of decision, that consent would only be granted if some of the rooms were reserved for this purpose, would be inappropriate. In terms of the scheme in general, the Member stated that he was also of the view that it would bring vibrancy to this area and would be voting in support of the application.

Another Member came back on the issue of GP provision noting that Members were well aware that this was drastically lacking in the City. The one surgery serving City residents was currently overwhelmed in terms of people requesting appointments. The Member underlined that, for many years now, this Committee had called for wider services to be incorporated when granting consent for schemes. When previous schemes such as this had come forward, the Member stated that she had been assured that these services would be provided by the university with no impact upon GP services in the City however, upon becoming Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board, she had found that those living in the City (regardless of whether they were students) were fully entitled to sign up to a GP service in the City. She went on to report that a new GP service had finally been introduced in Tower Hamlets and whilst it was hoped that this would serve the east of the City, it had subsequently arisen that the only City residents eligible to use the service were those in Middlesex Street. This scheme would introduce an additional 664 people eligible to register with a City GP and would only add to the huge number who were already unable to do so. The Member stressed the need to address this problem and the unacceptable impact that it had on residential amenity.

Officers responded further to state that, whilst they could not commit the applicant to providing a GP service, they could seek to explore the use of CIL funds in consultation with the Primary Care Trust to see how more health care support services might be provided within the City. The Chair commented that this clearly ought to be a consideration within the Local Plan too with regards to the provision of housing.

Another Member noted the Officer's reference as to how this scheme would contribute towards a 24/7 City and commented that he felt that it would have a lot of potential and would also please those on the Committee who were keen to see more housing and affordable housing in the City, albeit for students. He went on to state that he was of the view that the massing of the building was appropriate for the site and that the introduction of student accommodation here would enhance the vibrancy of this particular area, with the scheme offering more diversity for the City and its economic base.

A Member spoke to comment that, during the past 12 months, he had felt able to vote in favour of 3 out of 13 applications put to this Committee. Whilst he was

hopeful that this application might be the fourth given that it did not propose additional office space at a time when demand for this was falling (something referred to by the applicant in their presentation to the Committee earlier this week) and that it had no material impact upon residential amenity or heritage assets, he felt that the image of the proposed building was of no architectural merit. He went on to state that this issue was rarely discussed by this Committee but stressed that design, appearance and materials as it was known in planning terms, was a material planning consideration and that, in other authorities, the objective assessment of this was provided by a suitably qualified design review panel. The City, however, did not have such a panel – an issue repeatedly raised in the recent Tulip inquiry. In the absence of such an expert Panel it was therefore the duty of this Committee to make an objective assessment of the design of this building and the Member noted that the Officer's report was unhelpful in this respect given that it referred to this as generous, dynamic and celebrated – terms frequently used to describe buildings that this Committee were asked to consider. He went on to note that the report also quoted the Greater London Authority as stating that 'further consideration should be given to enhance the architectural quality of the proposal' – something which Officers had failed to respond to. He went on to state that, ultimately, Members would therefore need to rely upon their own judgement and that he was of the view that this building was not good architecture. He added that it was important that the Policy on design was applied rigorously given that the City covered just 1.2 square miles and had a rich architectural heritage which he felt had already been degraded by mediocre to ugly buildings with this proposal being at the latter end of that spectrum. He stated that the approval of this application would be a mistake which would blight the cityscape for decades to come to the detriment of future generations.

A Member commented that there were a large number of sandwich bars and coffee shops in the vicinity of this site that would be very grateful to have this additional footfall with in excess of 600 additional residents nearby.

Another Member spoke on the importance of Health and Wellbeing and also safety, noting that the London Plan called for exemplar standards in terms of housing. She went on to state that it was worrying to see the number of times the word 'concern' was used within the report, underlining that the GLA had concerns as to the limited daylight into the rooms with the LSE and the London Plan calling for high-quality design and City Officers describing this offering as 'adequate' only. With regard to safety, the Member noted the concerns around fire or smoke exiting a flat or window and entering adjacent flats or windows expressed at pages 37 and 38 of the agenda pack. She expressed concern at a building of this size being designed with no firefighting lift and that this oversight had to be addressed afterwards particularly after the horrific events of Grenfell. The Member went on to comment that, if this was social housing, it would not have progressed this far as it would fail the London Plan policies in terms of space and design. If this was to be classed as housing in the City, the Member felt that it should be future proofed, stating that, if at some point in the future, it was no longer required for student accommodation, the City would be left with small, substandard rooms that would be difficult to repurpose. The Member

concluded by stating that she did not believe that this building was fit for purpose and felt that it was attempting to cram too much into the space in order to make a profit. With regard to the LSE's support of this scheme, she noted that they called for high-quality, sustainable properties with affordable rent and did not believe that this scheme would deliver this.

Another Member shared concerns as to the building being overcrowded by incorporating 644 units, yet just 470 cycle spaces and less than 200 people being able to utilise the roof terrace at any one time. The floorplans also depicted tiny internal kitchens with no real table space. The proposed rooms would also appear to be very small and dark spaces as would the communal facilities which would have no natural lighting at all and would be situated in the basement of the building. The Member went on to state that highlighting the public route through as a plus to this scheme was questionable given that there were two lifts that some would have to take and 13 stairs (which was the equivalent of a domestic, one-storey home) and a further 7 for others. The time that it would take to traverse this meant that pedestrians could just as easily walk around the building and the Member commented that the original junction with Snow Hill and High Holborn was already open and allowed pedestrians to cut across. With regard to sustainability, the calculations provided did not include the demolition of the building previously on site and it was also clear that the building would never reach requirements due to the hot water service.

A Member questioned whether Officers were able to provide any guidance on two of the matters raised in objection to the scheme – firstly the aesthetics and secondly the perceived overcrowding. He questioned whether the aesthetics point was a valid planning consideration and also whether, if the size of the rooms complied with building regulations, there was any valid reason to reject this application. The Chief Planning Officer stated that it was correct that the design of a building and its architectural appearance was a material consideration and that if, for example, something was considered to be an incongruous or inappropriate design within its context this would be a very sound reason to object to a scheme. Officers were not of the opinion that this was the case for this scheme and were of the view that its height was in proportion and that its detailing and massing was also appropriate to the context. The Chair thanked the Chief Planning Officer for this guidance and underlined that the City were very lucky to have a very qualified design team to advise on these matters. With regard to comments around overcrowding and the number of rooms proposed, Officers underlined that there were no standards in the London or Local Plan for the size of student bedrooms. Equally, BRE guidelines did not specifically identify student rooms but, in any case, Officers had applied these guidelines to the scheme in an attempt to achieve the best lighting levels possible for the rooms. The scheme had been improved with the applicant asked to reduce the number of poor performing rooms. Taking into account the LSE's requirements for accommodation and the fact that there was also quite high quality social, community hub, breakout spaces and study spaces that students could also rely upon within the building Officers felt that, on balance, the proposals were acceptable.

Another Member commented that whilst he did not like the appearance of the proposed building and would agree that it was rather average, he would be voting in favour of the application. He went on to state that he also had sympathy with the points made around healthcare provision and deliveries and noted that these were matters that would clearly merit further discussion. In terms of the quality of the accommodation, the Member stressed the need to be realistic and suggested that much larger accommodation space for students would inevitably make the rooms unaffordable.

Another Member agreed with the point made around the size of the accommodation proposed and suggested that this was actually rather generous when compared with the space that most students enjoyed.

A Member referred to Local Plan Policy DM21 which stated that new housing, including student accommodation, will only be permitted where development would not result in poor residential amenity within the existing and proposed development and that housing quality standards required all new housing to be designed to a standard that facilitates the health and wellbeing of occupants including taking into account provisions of acceptable daylight of dwellings in a city centre location. She stated that she did not believe that this scheme fulfilled any of these policies. Officers reiterated that breakout spaces, communal and study areas would all go some way to addressing some of these points.

Members proceeded to vote on the application and the recommendations before the Committee.

Votes were cast as follows: FOR: 16 Votes
 AGAINST: 3 Votes

There were no abstentions.

RESOLVED: That planning permission be granted for the above proposal in accordance with the details set out in the attached schedule subject to:

- (a) the Mayor of London being given 14 days to decide whether to allow the Corporation to grant planning permission as recommended, or to direct refusal, or to determine the application himself (Article 5(1)(a) of the Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008);
- (b) planning obligations and other agreements being entered into under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 278 of the Highway Act 1980 in respect of those matters set out in the report, the decision notice not to be issued until the Section 106 obligations have been executed;
- (c) Officers being instructed to negotiate and execute obligations in respect of those matters set out in 'Planning Obligations' under Section 106 and any necessary agreements under Section 278 of the Highway Act 1980.

5. **BARBICAN AND GOLDEN LANE CONSERVATION AREA - CHARACTER SUMMARY AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - FOR ADOPTION**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment proposing several amendments to a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area following comments received as part of a public consultation undertaken during May, June and July 2021.

RESOLVED – That the Planning and Transportation Committee:

- Agree the amendments to the Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area SPD as set out in appendices B and C.
- Resolve to adopt the amended Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area SPD (appendix D).

6. **ANNUAL ON-STREET PARKING ACCOUNTS 2020/21 AND RELATED FUNDING OF HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS AND SCHEMES**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain informing Members of the surplus arising from on-street parking activities in 2020/21, how much of this had been applied in 2020/21 to fund approved projects and the surplus remaining on the On-Street Parking Reserve at 31st March 2021.

A Member referred to the surplus and spoke of the temporary barrier in place on London Bridge between pedestrians and traffic. He questioned at what point this would be turned into a permanent barrier and who would be responsible for taking this initiative. Officers responded to state that, as this was a security matter there was a limit as to what could be reported publicly. However, he clarified that the City were actively working with Transport for London on a resolution for this matter.

RESOLVED – That Members note the contents of this report for their information before submission to the Mayor of London.

7. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk setting out its list of Outstanding Actions.

RECEIVED.

8. **DELEGATED DECISIONS OF THE CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Planning Officer and Development Director detailing development and advertisement applications determined by the Chief Planning Officer and Development Director or those so authorised under their delegated powers since the report to the last meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. **VALID PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY DEPARTMENT OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Planning Officer and Development Director detailing development applications received by the Department of the Built Environment since the report to the last meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Skateboarding and Public Realm Design

A Member raised a question about skateboarding and public realm design, particularly in Vine Street. Permission for student accommodation had been granted here and, at the time, Members were told that Vine Street would be semi-pedestrianised with trees planted here to soften the noise impact for nearby residents and also to mitigate any overlooking of properties. She stressed that whilst the area had been beautifully paved, there was no planting here and it now looked like an ideal space for skateboarders and was currently being frequently used for this purpose. This was causing a lot of aggravation and conflict for security staff of sites in the area. The Member went on to report that the area was also being used by students living here for drinking games late at night. She went on to state that the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee had spoken on many occasions about the need to design out skateboarding and ensuring that when public realm was designed, anti-social behaviour was also designed out. This did not seem to be happening in practice. The Member questioned why Ward Members had not been consulted on the change of plans and lack of planting in this space. She stressed that if these problems were not going to be designed out (which was the preferred route) then more resource would need to go into policing the resulting issues.

Another Member supported this view and agreed that the same mistakes could not continue to be made. As Chairman of the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee, he undertook to look into this matter further and asked that Officers prepare a future paper on the matter for consideration.

The Chair asked that Officers respond directly to the Member on this matter and also copy him and his Deputy Chairman into this response.

Another Member highlighted that the cycleway on the recently completed Aldgate Square development was also proving to be extremely popular with skateboarders where the problem had almost been designed in.

London Wall Car Park Logistics Centre

A Member questioned whether this matter was still to be considered by this Committee and, if so, what the likely timetable for this was. She underlined that many local residents had expressed concerns around this and that it was therefore a matter that was very likely to be raised with Members as Ward elections approached. The Chief Planning Officer confirmed that it was

currently intended that this matter be considered by this Committee at its meeting on 26 April 2022 – the first of the new municipal year.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
Peter Murray's Speech at the Annual Committee Dinner

The Chair referred to the speech given by Peter Murray at the recently held annual Committee dinner and suggested that it might be helpful to circulate this to all Members to facilitate further discussion.

The meeting closed at 11.58 am

Chair

Contact Officer: Gemma Stokley
gemma.stokley@cityoflondon.gov.uk