

PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE Tuesday, 31 January 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Applications Sub-Committee held at Old Library on Tuesday, 31 January 2023 at 10.30 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Shravan Joshi (Chairman)
Deputy Alastair Moss (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Randall Anderson
Emily Benn
Deputy Michael Cassidy
John Edwards
Anthony David Fitzpatrick
Deputy Edward Lord
Alderman Ian David Luder
Antony Manchester
Alderman Bronek Masojada
Deborah Oliver
Deputy Graham Packham
Deputy Henry Pollard
Luis Felipe Tilleria
Shailendra Kumar Kantilal Umradia

Officers:

Zoe Lewis	-	Town Clerk's Department
Gemma Stokley	-	Town Clerk's Department
Deborah Cluett	-	Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Tim Fletcher	-	Media Officer
Gwyn Richards	-	Planning and Development Director
Phillip Carroll	-	Environment Department
Catherine Evans	-	Environment Department
David Horkan	-	Environment Department
Iain Steele	-	Environment Department
Peter Wilson	-	Environment Department
Kerstin Kane	-	Environment Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Brendan Barns, Deputy Keith Bottomley, Deputy John Fletcher, Deputy Marianne Fredericks, Martha Grekos, Jaspreet Hodgson, Alderman and Sheriff Alastair King, Deputy Natasha Lloyd-Owen, Alderwoman Susan Pearson, Judith Pleasance, Ian Seaton, Deputy James Thomson, William Upton KC and Alderman Sir David Wootton.

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 of the Planning Applications Sub-Committee meeting held on 13 December 2022 and approved them as a correct record.

4. **FLEET HOUSE, 8-12 NEW BRIDGE STREET**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Planning and Development Director concerning 8 - 12 New Bridge Street London EC4V 6AL – specifically partial demolition of Fleet House and full demolition of St Bride's Tavern Public house (retention of basement levels) and the erection of a part replacement building with roof extension to provide an 8 storey building for office use (Class E) at levels 1-8, with office lobby (Class E) and commercial space (Class E) at ground floor and mezzanine level, and public house (sui generis) at ground floor level and part basement level; new pedestrian and servicing route from St Brides Lane to Bridewell Place.

The Town Clerk referred to those papers set out within the main agenda pack as well as the Officer presentation slides and an addendum that had been separately circulated and published. Officers advised that the addendum included two additional representations, a stopping up plan, amendments to the report and conditions and a corrected factsheet.

Officers presented the application, highlighting that the application site was bounded by New Bridge Street to the east, Bride Lane to the north and Bridewell Place to the south. It was reported that the site was within the Fleet Street Conservation Area, adjacent to the Whitefriars Conservation Area and that the Fleet House was built in the late 1950s.

Officers shared visuals of the planning permission that was granted for the redevelopment of the site in 2015 and had been implemented. This planning permission was for the total demolition of the building and the redevelopment of the site. This building would accommodate two flexible retail units; one that could be used as a public house and office space.

In relation to the scheme before members, images of the retention strategy were shown to the Sub-Committee. These showed the large part of the existing structure, which was to be retained, the area to be demolished and the proposed new structure. The eastern half of the existing structure would be maintained, along with the basement. The western half, including St Bride's Tavern, would be demolished along with the top floor of the building. The additional structure included two new floors.

Members were shown a visual of the proposed massing. One additional storey would be added to the top of the building, resulting in the height of the building increasing by 3.2 metres. The envelope of the building would fill out towards the

centre, increasing the amount of floorspace on the site. The image showed the stepping back at the top of the building which provided roof terraces for the office tenants and the location of these roof terraces was outlined.

The Sub-Committee were shown an existing ground floor plan. Along New Bridge Street there is retail space at ground floor level. There is a betting shop on the corner of Bridewell Place and New Bridge Street, a restaurant in the middle of the New Bridge Street frontage and an office entrance on the corner. St Bride's Tavern sits on the southwest corner on Bridewell Place next to the vehicular access point to the courtyard. The elevation on Bride Lane is very inactive and the façade is defensive offering little intervention with the public realm. The ground floor slab is raised above street level and there is stepped access into the public house, retail units and office, with no level access.

Members were shown the proposed ground floor plan. The proposed public house would have prominent frontages facing Bridewell Place and New Bridge Street. The public house would also have space in the basement. The office entrance would be positioned in a visually prominent location at the centre of the building on New Bridge Street. Steps and a ramp would make the lobby accessible. A retail unit was proposed in the north-east corner in a prominent location on New Bridge Street and Bride Lane which would create an active frontage.

It was reported that a new route was proposed which would be known as Bridewell Passage and this would link Bride Lane and Bridewell Place. It would be both a servicing route and a pedestrian route. The entrance to cycle parking in the basement would be from the Bride Lane end of the passageway.

Officers reported that vehicular servicing would predominantly take place from Bridewell Passage. Vehicles larger than 7.5 tonnes would continue to service the site from the loading bays on New Bridge Street. An offsite consolidation site would be used and there would be a maximum of 12 deliveries per day. The existing site when fully occupied had 24 deliveries per day.

Members were shown images of the existing mezzanine level and the proposed mezzanine level. The proposed retail unit would be at two levels.

Officers reported that terraces were proposed for office tenants on level 4 on the southwest corner of the building with climbing planters for vertical greening. Terraces were proposed on levels 7 and 8 which would wrap around the building and a roof terrace was proposed on the roof which would have substantial landscaping with trees and low-level planting.

Members were shown a number of images of existing and proposed elevations. Officers reported that the proposed elevations to Bridewell Passage included proposed art boards, the contents of which would be designed in collaboration with the St Bride's Foundation through the cultural plan. This would be secured through the Section 106 agreement.

It was reported that the building would be finished in pigmented, masonry panels with light coloured concrete lintels and columns, glazed bricks and anodised bronze metal work for the fenestration. The colour of the pigmented masonry panels would turn to a red tone towards the west of the building.

Members were shown the existing view from Ludgate Circus and the proposed view. The building line stepped out in this view. In the consented and implemented scheme the façade line protruded further into the street. The scheme had a curved façade which would have appeared more prominent as a result of its form in views up and down New Bridge Street. The proposed scheme would stay within that façade line and would sit more comfortably on the street.

Members were shown the existing and proposed views from New Bridge Street and Blackfriars Station and were advised that in the view of officers, the proposal would cause no harm to the character or appearance of the conservation areas, existing buildings or views. Members were also shown computer generated images of the proposal.

Officers reported that the public house was designed so that it would be integrated into the office building but would also be a distinct public house. The design made reference to existing public houses in the wider area. It would have attractive brickwork, details, planters and signage which would capture the essence of the public house façade design. The new public house would wrap around the corner of Bridewell Place and Bridewell Passage. Overall, the proposed public house would be 23 square metres larger than the existing public house in terms of gross internal area and 132 square metres larger in terms of net internal area. The ground floor frontage would be approximately 24 metres longer and would face two streets instead of one.

Officers concluded that the proposed building would result in the aesthetic enhancement of the dated 1950s building, the addition of one additional storey and the increased massing would all sit well in its context and a significant proportion of the existing structure would be retained. The proposals would add approximately 1,800 square metres of floor space and double the occupancy of the building. They would provide enhanced public realm at ground floor, offer vibrant active frontages and would provide a new pedestrian route. The public house was considered to be high quality with a distinct character and appearance and would make a positive contribution to the surrounding area. The application would secure development that was environmentally responsible. The application for planning permission was therefore recommended for approval.

The Chairman explained that there were no registered objectors to address the meeting on this occasion and he therefore invited the applicant to speak.

Eoin Conroy, speaking on behalf of Atenor UK, the owner of the applicant advised that Atenor is a pan-European developer and investor in real estate. Atenor's business model is investment in sustainable development both social and environmental. Fleet House was Atenor's first investment in the City of

London. It was acquired on a leasehold basis in February 2022. Fleet House came with existing planning consent but following acquisition, it was decided that there was an opportunity to improve the scheme by applying the sustainable principles and modern workplace principles to reflect the new lifestyles and workplace environments. The revised proposal adopted Atenor's in-house principles of sustainable development and tried to apply that to the design development of the project. Members were shown images of the consented and proposed schemes.

David Weatherhead, Design Director for the applicant's architect explained that the proposed building would be sensitive in its location and acknowledge the conservation area and looked to enhance the area in a positive way. The site had a heritage in publishing from the 16th century to the 20th century. It was important to provide long term benefits. A sustainable strategy had been embedded into the proposals. Embodied carbon was an important consideration as was attracting people back to the City post pandemic. The passageway would create improved connectivity. Some people's values had changed since the pandemic and it was important to provide a building which was sustainable and encouraged natural daylight, views and positive distraction.

An optimisation strategy had been produced to ascertain the greatest amount of carbon that could be kept in the building while also having safe on-site servicing and a modern building with efficient cores and a safe design. Adding a new area would make the building more adaptable for the next 75 years. 80% of the usable office structure and 73% of the existing building were being retained and 3,428 square metres of new structure would be added. A storey would be added to the building but this would be set back and the main frame of the building would be retained.

Members were advised that the ground floor would have new and vibrant uses and provide a building which was safe, sustainable and active. The existing ground floor has a public house, betting shop and a food and beverage outlet. It has a total of nine entrances all of which are stepped. The proposed scheme would provide level access to every use in the building, the servicing and stairways. The service yard of the existing building can not be used for many large vehicles. A service layby on Bridewell Place was used until it was removed in 2015 to provide a two-way street.

The provision of a new pedestrian passageway would link Bridewell Place to Bride Lane, would provide on-site servicing and also help to increase footfall to other attributes around the city including Bridewell Theatre and St Bride's Church. This would increase the network of passageways in the conservation area enforcing character and would also be the safest approach for the site.

The proposed building would be unique in terms of a ground floor that could be accessed on all sides and provide an active frontage on every corner. It would be an inviting building and it had been possible to retain the southern staircase in order to further enhance the embodied carbon of the building.

Ian Anderson from Litchfield's Planning and Development Consultancy, stated that the new scheme would provide tangible benefits and the new passageway would provide improved connectivity, safe off-street servicing and would enhance the quality of the conservation area. He stated that the development reflected green credentials with a prominent cycle parking entrance on Bride Lane as well as showers and changing rooms. The scheme would contribute to a vibrant economy delivering enhanced employment space supporting the aspirations of the Fleet Street Business Improvement District through the activation of ground floor space and enhanced inclusive and accessible public house.

The sustainable strategy retained 72% of the structure which meant there would be a shorter build time and disruption to neighbours.

The public house had been subject to significant discussions with Officers in terms of its design. The proposed public house would provide a modern interpretation and be inclusive and accessible providing double height space in a welcoming environment. The use of bricks and glazing was modern, however, the design acknowledged the location in the Conservation Area and other public houses in the locality. The pub windows were canted adding to the character of the pub. Flowerbox planters, solid banding, signage and hanging baskets would add to the character. Sash windows would lower to give an outside feel when the weather permitted.

Mr Anderson stated that the development had the full support of the Fleet Street BID who had noted that the predevelopment of Fleet House demonstrated a practical and necessary proposal that could invigorate and stimulate the local area with the potential to reinvigorate streetscapes, public spaces and economic prospects that were welcome and celebrated. It was hoped that the City of London Corporation would approve the application and continue to support the ongoing regeneration enhancements of the wider Fleet Street quarter area. The introduction of a new highly sustainable office building would drive the economic viability of the city as well as deliver tangible benefits to the local area through the provision of public realm, accessibility improvements, new public art, a cultural strategy and extensive greening and planting aligning with the ambitions of the BID.

The Chairman thanked the applicant team for their contributions and invited questions of them from the Sub-Committee.

A Member asked how long the public house would be closed during the demolition and construction works and was advised that there would be an approximate two-year construction period during which the pub would be closed. It was anticipated that construction would begin in 2023. The Member asked if the intention was for the public house to be reopened for the Christmas 2025 trade and was advised this was the developer's aspiration although there were many factors outside of the developer's control. The aim was to start and finish the construction as soon as possible.

A Member asked for more information about the mezzanine floor, where it would be located and how it would be used. Officers advised that the ground floor height was 5.8m high and the site further dipped down on Bridewell Place another 850mm. Therefore it was possible to put in a mezzanine floor along part of Bridewell Place and include a mezzanine height above the retail space to fit within the ground floor at double height volume.

A Member commented that servicing using Bride Lane could be problematic as there were residents living there. He stated that there were no residents living in Bridewell Place. He was advised that although vehicles would access the passage via Bride Lane, no servicing would take place on Bride Lane so there should not be any nuisance to residents.

A Member asked for clarification on the vehicular access proposed on Bridewell Passage. He was advised that there was an overnight servicing strategy to avoid vehicles using the passage during the day so pedestrians could freely use the passageway during the day. The passageway would be closed to vehicles during the day through the use of bollards. To promote the safety of pedestrians, there would be gates in the passage which would be closed during servicing. They would remain open at all other times.

A Member asked for details of the measures that would be taken to discourage anti-social behaviour. The applicants advised that there would be a robust passive surveillance and active surveillance strategy including a lighting strategy which would discourage anti-social behaviour. There would also be an active frontage with visibility of the lane at all times.

Members asked questions about the name of the new public house. The applicants stated that they were amenable to working with a third-party operator to discuss naming options but the applicant was unable to impose a name on a third-party operator. The applicants were willing to work on a good faith basis to have a public consultation about name options. Officers stated it was not considered reasonable or appropriate to impose a name but the matter could be included in the cultural management plan and be part of the legal agreement.

Seeing no further questions of the applicant, the Chair sought out any remaining questions of Officers.

A Member raised concern that if the application was approved, construction was likely to take place at the same time as the Salisbury Square development construction. He stated that there was already significant disruption in the Whitefriars area with heavy goods vehicles being parked on Tudor Street. He asked that officers work to ensure that construction of the two developments in parallel did not disrupt businesses and residents in the immediate vicinity. Officers stated that a construction and traffic management plan would be required for this development. The Salisbury Square development and other sites in the area also had construction traffic management plans.

A Member asked about the cultural plan, the link with St Bride's Foundation, how this would link with any art and naming and whether there was a connection with policy in recognising the pub as a heritage asset. Officers advised that there had been initial discussions about the use of advertising boards for the Bridewell Theatre and details would be agreed at a later date. The public house had been assessed as a non-designated heritage asset but fell short of the requirements to be listed as such.

The Sub-Committee then moved to debate the application.

A Member stated that the proposal was a positive reuse of the vast majority of the building, was an improvement on the consented scheme and would sit comfortably on New Bridge Street. The scheme would replace the 1950s block and the additional permeability with the new passageway was welcomed. Along with other passageways and footways being constructed through the Salisbury Square development to St Bride's Church, this would enhance the area and accessibility of the church. The importance of having a public house in this location was acknowledged. Although the existing pub was the Bride's Tavern, previous names were The White Friar and White Bear. If the public house was given one of these names it would be welcomed but it was not for the Sub-Committee to dictate the name. It was vital that the construction process was tied in with the development on Salisbury Square to minimise disruption.

A Member stated that this proposal was a major upgrade on the consented scheme and the submission from the BID was welcomed.

A member commented on the accessibility of the site and underlined the transport links including Blackfriars Station, nearby Crossrail Station which would have 140 trains an hour passing through, bus routes passing the site as well as a busy cycle lane. He welcomed the scheme which was more relevant to today's potential occupants than the previous consented scheme. The continued trend of close co-operation between architects, designers and planning officers was welcomed. The design of the scheme was sensitive to the location and its likely future use as part of the legal district Fleet Street had become with the new courts nearby.

A Member commended the work that had taken place in relation to sustainability since the previous scheme was approved in 2015.

The Chairman summed up the points made and stated that the sustainability improvements included the retention of embodied carbon, over 70% of the existing building being retained, the use of air source heat pumps and photovoltaic cells. This was a good exemplar of sustainability in the city. The inclusion of a public house double the size of the existing one was welcomed and it was hoped this would attract more business. The ground floor activation was important as was looking at the overall project.

Having fully debated the application, the Committee proceeded to vote on the recommendations before them.

Votes were cast as follows: IN FAVOUR – 16 votes
OPPOSED – None
There were no abstentions.

The recommendations were therefore carried unanimously.

RESOLVED -

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

(a) Planning obligations and other agreements being entered into under Section 106 of the Town and 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;

(2) That Officers be 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.

(3) That it be agreed in principle that the land affected by the building which is currently public highway and land over which the public have right of access may be stopped up to enable the development to proceed and, upon receipt of the formal application, officers be instructed to proceed with arrangements for advertising and (subject to consideration of consultation responses) making of a Stopping-up Order for the area shown marked on the Stopping-up Plan annexed to this report under the delegation arrangements approved by the Court of Common Council.

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

The Sub-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.

6. ***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 applications received by the Department of the Built Environment since the report to the last meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

Committee Visit to Wren Church with newly installed Air Source Heat Pumps

A Member commented that the Sub-Committee had recently been offered the opportunity to visit a church where air source heat pumps had been installed to

replace the heating system for economical reasons rather than for environmental reasons. The building had single glazing which could not be changed as they were stained glass windows and the walls could not be insulated. Only the roof could be insulated. The building had to be heated all the time as it was used seven days a week. The prices of electricity and gas had been considered before installing an air source heat pump system. He asked how this could be encouraged across the City of London.

An Officer advised that this could be included in the Climate Action work stream as a positive example along with another church where photovoltaic panels and a green roof had been installed on the roof. The city had many sensitive assets for which it was more difficult to include measures that could be used in an office building.

Thavies Inn

A Member asked a question about the inclusion in the delegated decisions report of the demolition of Thavies Inn House as this had been approved by the Sub-Committee. Officers advised that it was presumed that it had been issued as the Section 106 had been signed. The Member asked that in the future where this was the case, it was explained in the report.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT **Awayday**

The Chairman thanked officers for their work and requested that Members and Officers complete the feedback questionnaire that had been sent to them.

The meeting ended at 11.25 am

Chairman

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