

For the attention of Gwyn Richards, Planning and Development Director, Environment Department, City of London Corporation,

**RE:** 22/01155/FULEIA | *Partial demolition of existing building (Gracechurch Street frontage adapted) and the erection of a 32 storey (155.70m AOD) building plus basement levels including office use (Class E(g)(i)); flexible retail use (Class E(a), Class E(b), drinking establishments and hot food takeaway); Public Hall (sui generis); and Heritage Garden and Cultural Space at level 5 (sui generis), with cycle parking, servicing, refuse and plant areas, public realm improvements and other works associated with the development including access and highways works. | 85 Gracechurch Street London EC3V 0AA (the application)*

The application that wasn't registered until 30 November 2022 and amended plans were still being submitted less than two weeks ago. As a result, the submitted Whole Lifecycle Carbon Optioneering Assessment Study (WLCOAS) is based on last year's Planning Advice Note (PAN) and not the recently adopted version. In the circumstances, consideration of the application appears to be premature and justification, in itself, for refusal.

Certainly, there have to be questions not only over Whole Lifecycle Carbon (WLC) but, also the expertise of the officers dealing with the heritage and conservation issues. The latter is, of course, an area where residents were let down over the 1 Golden Lane application, 22/00203/LBC, but, in the light of your report's recommendation, not pursued in this response.

Qualifications 1a), 1b) and 2 to *Recommendation*, below:

1. *That planning permission be granted for the above proposal in accordance with the details set out in the attached schedule subject to:*
  - a) *The application be referred to the Mayor of London 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) *The application being referred to the Secretary of State pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) Direction 2021 and the application not being called in under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990;*
2. *That the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) be notified of the application and advised that the City Corporation intends to grant planning permission and that the Planning and Development Director be given delegated authority to consider any response received from DCMS, UNESCO or ICOMOS.*
3. *That your Officers be instructed to negotiate and execute obligations in respect of those matters set out in "Planning Obligations" under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and any necessary agreement under 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; and;*
4. *That your Officers be authorised to provide the information required by regulations 29 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, and to inform the public and the Secretary of State as required by regulation 30 of those regulations.*

suggest that pressure is coming from the applicant to make a determination within the statutory period and that the recommendation is, for the want of a better phrase, "passing the buck". From both the "Internal Target Date" and the "Determination Deadline" are 22 March, this appears to be the case. Whether or not it is, the request under 2 cannot be acceptable, particularly as whatever any such "response" maybe is, of course, is unknown, although "consider" is perhaps ambiguous.

Below is my response to the substance of your report and my conclusion:

### **Paragraphs 647 to 660 – Whole Lifecycle Carbon Assessment (WLCA)**

Despite City Corporation's much (self) acclaimed Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027, WLC is not considered in any detail until paragraph 647. Admittedly, the Dashboard indicates the total embodied carbon in the proposal will be over 57,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e and total carbon emissions in excess of 60,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e over 60 years. This compares with a total for the existing building, with a minor refurbishment (Option 1), of just under 15,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e over the same period.

As mentioned, the submitted WLCOAS is not in accordance with the PAN approved by P&TC on 07 March – for instance, there is no third-party input. In fact, your report appears to accept the submitted WLCA without question – simply taking Option 2 at face value, rather than questioning its purpose, which seems to be to produce Option 3 with limited deconstruction, rather than being a more objective scheme in “cutting one's coat according to the cloth”.

Option 1 is dismissed completely with no concern for any technological developments which will reduce its operational carbon emissions over 60 years, instead showing an ad infinitum increase. However, a failure to challenge the WLCA is understandable in the absence of third-party input but does little to justify the recent claim by the sub committee chair: *This pioneering planning guidance puts the City at the forefront of the growing drive to give substantial detailed consideration to retaining and refurbishing buildings rather than simply knocking them down and starting from scratch.*

Whilst an advocate of the PAN, there is, in the absence of third-party input, the danger that “opportuning” will replace “optioneering”. From section 2 of the WLCOAS it seems that the applicant has no intention of implementing Option 1. Worse though, is the fact, as confirmed in 3.3.4 of the WLCA that, when comparing Option 3 *to another City office development, it is immediately obvious in the above graphs how impactful and dominant the superstructure and façade is in the overall context of the emissions for this building.*

In the circumstances, your decision to recommend approval of Option 3 is surely unacceptable. Whilst the applicant would, no doubt, take steps to reduce the carbon impact through the choice of materials, the haste with which the application is progressing suggests a very limited timetable for doing so, something you haven't taken into account. If schemes, which applicants accept, don't even approach GLA “Benchmark”, let alone GLA “Aspirational” are to be approved, what is the purpose of the Climate Action Strategy? And sequestration and carbon offset payments shouldn't even be considered.

### **Paragraphs 108 to 116 - Heritage Garden & Cultural Space**

One of the perceived benefits of the scheme is the so-called Heritage Garden and Cultural Space which is to be occupied by Museum of London (MoL) the applicant's cultural content partner. “Heritage” suggests that only native species will be grown in the garden but this won't be feasible as a result of climate change.

In any event, the urgent need for urban greening and biodiversity net gain are best addressed by investment – both capital and revenue - in existing green spaces throughout the City. This would be beneficial to both applicant and Destination City, especially if the investment was required prior to implementation of a permission.

MoL's involvement is a concern. Whilst this may not be a valid planning objection, it is surely a relevant public comment that the applicant is using MoL and MoL is allowing itself be used

as leverage. At the same time, Museum of London Archaeology Limited (MOLA) is providing archaeological information and more for the applicant.

The proposed development, if consented, is unlikely to be completed before MoL is due to open, as London Museum, in West Smithfield, which questions why MoL is involving itself in the application. Certainly, when City Corporation is providing the site, for which it paid around £35 million in 2014, as well as committing to over £400 million in refurbishment, alteration and fitting out costs, MoL appears ungrateful with its intention of expanding before it has even occupied the very expensive publicly provided space and without any regard to its then available resources.

Then, of course, there is the window dressing in the Culture Plan Addendum prepared by MOLA. What this is proposed to achieve other than provide pretty pictures in the hope of persuading sub committee members to approve the application? Certainly, none of it is site specific in that the proposed displays could be at West Smithfield, for instance. MoL's letter of 16 January contains the following paragraph:

This partnership will be built around the proposed cultural offer at 85 Gracechurch Street, including a significant space on Level 05 dedicated to a 'Heritage Garden', which will provide a publicly accessible outdoor garden space and a heritage walkway, with open views across the intricate and stunning rooftops of the Leadenhall Market. Additionally, this new space will offer opportunity to celebrate the historical significance of the site, which was once home to the Roman Forum, through the potential display of finds from the archaeological investigations of the project, as well as the use of Virtual/Augmented Reality to allow visitors the opportunity to experience the site as it once was.

but there's not much in the above that couldn't be achieved, and to a much higher standard, at West Smithfield. The virtual/augmented reality and artefact displays are what is justifying most of the public expenditure there; gardens and other open spaces already exist in the Square Mile but, as mentioned, urgently need investment; and *the intricate and stunning rooftops of Leadenhall Market* may be interesting but neither Roman nor high upon anyone's bucket list.

## Conclusion

Why should the proposed development should be approved? According to your report: *Historic England does acknowledge however, the benefits of the scheme including the reinstatement of a historic route through the site and improvements to the existing ground floor facade. Both of these were considered to provide an enhancement to the Leadenhall Conservation Area.* However, with or without some imagination, the *historic route through the site* could be restored within the existing building, although it's over 87 years since that benefit was last enjoyed. Probably not missed in the meantime but wholly contrary to the recently consented loss of Turn Back Lane.

Your report also states: *The scheme provides a Heritage Garden and cultural space at fifth floor level, totalling around 892sq.m of floorspace. The space will offer a Heritage Walkway which will provide new views over Leadenhall Market, revealing elements not currently available. Working with the Museum of London as a cultural content partner, the space would be available for the benefit of City workers, residents and visitor* but ignores the high carbon cost of provision.

It's interesting to note that planning permission was granted in September 2021 for the redevelopment of 70 Gracechurch Street (20/00816/FULEIA) following your report:

*The scheme delivers an increased and significant enhancement of public realm through the introduction of a new north-south public route through the building connecting Fenchurch Street to the network of passageways and lanes connecting Leadenhall Market and the introduction of a large permeable accessible space within the site, fronting Fenchurch Street and Lime Street, open to the public 24 hours a day.*

*The scheme provides a varied range of retail spaces at ground floor and lower ground mezzanine, including the retail forum hall fronting Gracechurch Street and a retail pop up area within the new permeable accessible space.*

*The scheme provides a free public viewing gallery at Levels 29 and 30, totalling around 1,125sq.m of floorspace. The public viewing gallery will offer views across London to the north, south and west. The space would be managed by the Applicant and will be made available for the benefit of City workers, residents and visitors.*

Sounds familiar, apart from the viewing gallery presumably being too high as to be able to: *provide new views over Leadenhall Market, revealing elements not currently available.* However, eighteen months after planning permission was granted, the only change to that building seems to be the consented temporary installation of a piece of sculpture.

The actual harm of the proposed development far outweighs any perceived benefit. The application should therefore be refused.

17 March 2023

Fred Rodgers



EC2Y 8PQ