

PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE
Friday, 6 December 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Applications Sub-Committee held at Livery
Hall - Guildhall on Friday, 6 December 2024 at 9.00 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Shravan Joshi MBE (Chairman)
Graham Packham (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Randall Anderson
Ian Bishop-Laggett
Mary Durcan
Deputy John Edwards
Deputy Marianne Fredericks
Jaspreet Hodgson
Alderswoman Elizabeth Anne King, BEM JP
Deputy Natasha Maria Cabrera Lloyd-Owen
Deputy Alastair Moss
Eamonn Mullally
Deborah Oliver
Hugh Selka
Jacqui Webster

Officers:

Baljit Bhandal	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Kerstin Kane	- Environment Department
Tom Nancollas	- Environment Department
Rachel Pye	- Environment Department
Gwyn Richards	- Environment Department
Anastasia Tampouridou	- Environment Department
Peter Wilson	- Environment Department
Joseph Anstee	- Town Clerk's Department
Callum Southern	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy John Fletcher, Deputy Brian Mooney, Alderswoman Jennette Newman, Judith Pleasance, Deputy Henry Pollard, Tom Sleight and Shailendra Umrada.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

The Deputy Chairman raised the issue of bogus cancellations of the meeting as it jeopardised the decision-making process and noted some members had wrong entries in their diaries and another who believed the meeting started at 10:30am. The Town Clerk indicated he had similar problems in preparation for the meeting and agreed to look into it.

A Member indicated it would be useful to have an explanation for why meetings were getting cancelled and stated that constantly moving the times of meetings was inconvenient. The Member indicated they only realised the meeting was still on at midnight as the meeting had been cancelled in their diary for the week. The Chairman appreciated it was an issue and asked for the Town Clerk to look into it.

4. 60 GRACECHURCH STREET

The Sub-Committee received a report which sought Planning Permission for the demolition of the existing building at 60 Gracechurch Street which would retain the existing basement and erect a new building comprising basement levels and ground floor plus 36 upper storeys, including office use (Class E), retail/café use (Class E). The report also stated it would provide a free publicly accessible area and learning space at level 35 (sui generis), cycle parking, servicing, refuse and plant areas, a new and improved public realm, highways works, and other works associated with the development.

The Town Clerk referred to those papers set out within the main agenda pack and noted an addendum pack was circulated to Members the day before the meeting with hard copies made available at the back of the room.

Officers presented the application to the Sub-Committee and noted that 60 Gracechurch Street was next to Grey Street on its west side, Fenchurch Street on its north side, the adjacent building at 55 Grey Street in St Benet's place to the south and buildings of 8-12 Fenchurch Street on its east side.

Officers explained there were heritage assets nearby and included the conservation areas of Bank extending to the West, Leadenhall Market to the north, Eastcheap was to the east and southeast and the Monument Grade One-listed building was located about 150m to the south of the site.

Officers stated that the existing building was built in the mid-1990s to comprise of nine floors above ground, two floors below and to offer predominantly office floor space with retail at ground and lower ground floor levels. They noted the front of Gracechurch Street dealt with level changes as shown on the

presentation on the slides and there was a drop kerb offering entry to the servicing on the site.

Officers stated that the application before the Sub-Committee was for the erection of a 37-storey office-led development which would deliver over 52,000sqm of flexible Grade A, best-in-class office floor space and complementary uses would support its function, including a ground floor café and provision of elevated public spaces at level 35. The site was also located on the southwestern periphery of the City Cluster and was considered to be appropriate for a tall building.

The Officers presented the layout plans of the proposed basement to the Sub-Committee and explained it retained the existing substructures with level 2 providing space for plant and level 1 accommodating cycle parking and end-of-trip facilities in compliance with London Plan policies.

The proposed ground floor plan was shown to the Sub-Committee by Officers who stated it addressed the level changes on the site with the provision of a level ground floor access from the northwest entrance which would give entry to an open and permeable office foyer and a public café. A dedicated cycle entrance was provided at Fenchurch Street which would give cyclists access to the basement facilities. Toward the south, a new public realm, also known as the undercroft, would be formed. Officers noted that works were also proposed for the enhancement of the public realm, including the widening and repaving of the roadways along the street frontages.

A diagram of the undercroft area of the ground floor was presented to the Sub-Committee and Officers explained that it would provide one accessible car parking space and visitor cycle parking to its south. Publicly accessible toilets would also be provided on the ground floor with step-free access from the undercroft. Officers further stated that the area would have a dual purpose, offering a public space in the day and a servicing area during the hours of 11:00pm and 7:00am and it was considered that the provision of the public area would offer enhanced dynamic activation for the area and it was a unique benefit to the scheme and an unusual element to have it.

Officers presented an image of the visitors journey and stated the undercroft, as well as being enjoined in its own right, would also form the main point of arrival for those visiting the elevated public spaces at level 35 of the tower through the formation of a new passageway through a full designed design route which would incorporate cultural references to the site history

An illustration of the undercroft was shown to the Sub-Committee and Officers stated it offered an inclusive space of respite and a gain of over 360sqm of fabric room area which was designed to be highly biophilic and calming space away from the busy streets.

Officers presented a diagram of the proposed first floor and informed the Sub-Committee that it would provide the main office reception and lobby areas to access the upper floor plates. A diagram of the proposed typical office floor

plans were also shown to the Sub-Committee and Officers stated the proposed office spaces were designed with flexibility to accommodate a variety of tenant requirements and the demands of business growth with options that offered a range of interior and exterior environment amenity. The building would also incorporate planted spaces all above the ground floors which would add visual interest and softness to the facades, as well as provide opportunities to provide urban greening.

Officers presented the private amenity space at level 34 of the proposed development and informed the Sub-Committee a more generous private area would be provided which would incorporate extensive landscaping features for the enjoyment of office staff and created a compelling offer for the future occupiers of the building, as well as meeting market demand.

A diagram of the elevated floor space on level 35 was presented by Officers who stated the floor would incorporate the elevated public spaces of the building and offered free of charge indoor and outdoor spaces for the enjoyment of the public and an education room for the use of schools and community groups. Officers also stated the areas would offer exceptional panoramic views to the west and south towards the River Thames and would be made available to the public during the hours of 10:00am and 9:00pm through pre-bookings and walk-ins. Officers noted that the operational management plan of the spaces would secure further details under the Section 106 Agreement. Officers further stated that the provision of such spaces in that location contributed to seven day and evening attraction in the City and complimented the City's environment by offering amenity areas for workers, visitors and residents to enjoy unique views and urban spaces free of charge.

An illustration and diagram of the visitors journey in the public spaces at level 35 was shown by Officers who stated that visitors would be able to continue their journey from the ground level into the sanctuary, which would be an indoor area offering a café, a kiosk and a range of seating options and toilets facilities. They would also have access to a public roof garden.

The Officers presented an illustration of the roof garden and stated that the garden would provide extensive views over the west of the City, in addition to a variety of seating and a high level of soft landscaping features and its design incorporated suicide prevention measures in compliance with the City's planning advice. The design also incorporated noise and wind mitigation measures to ensure the space was safe for use and usable throughout the year.

An illustration of the educational room at level 35 of the proposed development was presented by Officers who stated that the public offer at that level would be different to that already offered in other tall building applications so far and it was considered to be an important contribution to the City's portfolio of elevated public spaces.

The proposed roof plan was presented to the Sub-Committee and Officers indicated the building had been designed to incorporate to fully incorporate

planting. Officers also presented a slide which highlighted the sustainability of the proposed development and stated that the building had been designed to exceed the minimum requirements of the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) and provide biodiversity as part of the sustainability strategy. Officers also stated that it embedded circular economic principles and whole life carbon approaches to minimise carbon emissions, hence the reuse of the existing basement on the site. It also achieved an overall 29% reduction in regulated carbon emissions which exceeded other commercial developments in the City of London recently assessed. Officers further stated that the proposal was targeting a BREEAM 'Outstanding' rating and promoted sustainable development and significant optimisation of the development potential on the site.

Officers presented a diagram of the west elevation and highlighted the spine of green terraces. The existing and proposed diagrams of the south, north and east elevation were also shown to the Sub-Committee. Officers stated that the daylight and sunlight impacts identified were found to be acceptable and were not unusual to the urban city environment.

An image of the LVMF 10A.1 strategic viewpoint from Tower Bridge of the Tower of London was shown to the Sub-Committee and Officers indicated Historic England had not objected, but had raised concerns about the impact the proposals could have on the Tower of London. Officers noted that the development would be on the far side of the Cluster and were satisfied that it would preserve the outstanding universal value of the Tower of London.

Officers also presented images from the LVMF 25A.1 strategic viewpoint at The Queen's Walk at City Hall and the LVMF 15B.2 strategic viewpoint at Waterloo Bridge Downstream of the existing and proposed verified views.

A presentation of a model taken from the LVMF 16B.2 strategic viewpoint was also presented to the Sub-Committee of the cumulative cluster scenario by Officers.

An image of Gracechurch Street looking south with the existing and proposed development shown to the Sub-Committee, as well as another image from the junction looking south which Officers stated showed the current and proposed design. Officers also showed an image of the current and proposed development from Fenchurch Street looking west.

Officers presented an illustration of the façade detail of the proposed development and stated that one could see the terraces which would form a green spine along the western elevation. Officers also presented an illustration of how the ground floors would be glazed, along with the entrance to the undercroft and presented an aerial rendered view of the proposed development.

Officers stated that, overall, the scheme would create over 52,000sqm of Grade A best-in-class office floor space supported by high quality greenery and flexible internal and external office amenity areas which would accommodate over 300 jobs. Officers indicated it would be a significant contribution of floor

space to the City's targets and would strongly support the City's international competitiveness and strategic economic objectives. Officers also told the Sub-Committee that it would be a scheme with considerable social and educational value, delivering a new public and educational destination through a compelling new sequence of spaces, with the undercroft and passageway on the ground floor and the space on level 35. Level 35 would form the internal and external elevated public spaces at the top of the building and the development would be a significant new destination which would support the City's Destination City Agenda. Officers also stated the scheme would be a dynamic and striking work of architecture which would diversify the cluster and would deliver an exceptionally energy efficient, sustainable and green new office building which targeted a BREEAM 'Outstanding' rating and was fully compliant with the City's whole life carbon planning advice note. Officers concluded that the scheme would be a significant enrichment to the diversification of the City Cluster and would meet the City's strategic objectives and deliver a compelling new destination for the City and stated the development was recommended to the Sub-Committee for approval.

The Chairman invited the registered speakers in support of the proposed scheme to speak.

Mr. Connolly addressed the Sub-Committee and stated that Obayashi had an established history of 130 years as a business and a presence in the City since the 1980s with the purchase of Wacken House, the traditional home of the Financial Times. He noted that Obayashi had subsequently acquired both 20 and 60 Gracechurch Street and the application for 60 Gracechurch Street represented a strategic focus in a new build development to increase and diversify the firm's investment portfolio. He stated that the developer had collaborated with Sellar as their development managers, who he indicated would be known from both the development of The Shard and the redevelopment of Paddington Square, along with the developer's consultant team, all of whom had considerable development experience within the City. Mr. Connolly stated that the existing building was in a prominent position on the corner of Fenchurch and Gracechurch Streets was designed and built in the 1990s and no longer met the demands of prime City tenants and, due to its location within the City Cluster, it afforded an opportunity for redevelopment and the developer's ambition for a building that displayed the highest achievable ESG credentials within the cluster. He further stated that the developer sought to deliver the development by 2029 and, thereby, continue to meet the aspirations of both the Corporation and Obayashi.

Mr. Aktar addressed the Sub-Committee and stated that when designing 60 Gracechurch Street, it had been important that the building was part of the ecosystem of Destination City, and should be a distinctive landmark and a tower that should be leading the way in sustainability and user experience. He also noted that understanding the tower's location, its relationship with the nearby conservation areas and the building that is part of the wider cluster of towers had been important factors when studying the site. Mr. Aktar further stated that a series of workshops had been held with the City to understand the site's potential and refine the scheme. Mr Aktar also informed the Sub-

Committee that a thorough townscape study looking at the building in 40 townscape views from distance and up close had been carried out and had formed the design approach to the project. He stated that the proposed development related to three scales, the skyline scale as seen from afar, being part of the cluster; the city scale and its connection to the urban fabric and its surrounding streets; and the user scale, providing quality spaces for people. Mr Aktar stated that looking at the building from a distance in relationship to the cluster, the concept of the development provided a green diagonal ribbon which connected the top of the building with a series of green spaces all the way to the ground and also created a distinctive silhouette that could be experienced from afar. Mr Aktar also explained as one came closer to the building, they could see the tower was divided into two elements, a light transparent tower and a podium. He also stated that the detailing and colour connected it with its historic context at Gracechurch Street and the surrounding buildings. Mr Aktar concluded that the building provided the best-in-class flexible office floor plates with every single floor having access to a green terrace, and the building provided varied working environments for its users, contributed to biodiversity, and the public could access a green garden while enjoying views of the City at the top of the tower.

Mr Davey addressed the Sub-Committee and stated that every element of the 60 Gracechurch Street development had been considered to provide a new beacon of sustainability and that ethos had touched every aspect of the proposal. He also stated that the composition of the development retained significant portions of the existing building and form and function had optimised the systems which would drive down energy and eliminate on-site combustion. Mr Davey told the Sub-Committee that the appearance reflected the developer's ethos by integrating rich planting on every floor which created a green connection from the ground to the sky and, with early and iterative engagement from Officers, had been through an extensive retrofit first carbon optioneering process. He informed the Sub-Committee that nine redevelopment options were assessed at a high level with further detailed interrogation of six options. He noted that using a set of criteria including the overall performance, quality of space and the carbon expended per additional work supported, the developer arrived at the current proposals which retained a majority of the basement and foundations of the existing building. Mr Davey stated that 60 Gracechurch Street would be the most sustainable tall building in the City and no single measure made it sustainable, it was the agglomeration of hundreds of decisions that had been made to date and the multitude that still needed to be made in order to deliver the operate the building. He continued that the developer could demonstrate 60 Gracechurch Street's leading performance as it was tracking the lowest energy performance with a 29% reduction against Part L which set a record for a tall building. Mr Aktar stated that Officers had noted that the proposal's energy performance was an exceptional achievement and exceeded other commercial developments they had recently assessed. He also stated that BREEAM point score of 91.8% at the planning application stage which was also a record for a tall building. Mr Aktar told the Sub-Committee that 60 Gracechurch Street would offer the City's leading wellness and sustainability offer which would outperform the cluster and set a new standard for excellence. Mr Aktar concluded that 60 Gracechurch Street would

be the first of the next generation of tall buildings and hoped it would set a benchmark for others to follow.

Mr. Robinson addressed the Sub-Committee and stated that the public offer vision was to support Destination City by creating a rooftop garden that enabled the public to freely access the unique views over the City. He told the Sub-Committee that it was the first in a new type of curated experiences from street level to sky, which differentiated it from other roof terraces and it was a journey through five spaces and connected users to the location in the City, and enabled learning about the City's heritage and provided important respite from the busy local environment through integrated green planting and design. Mr. Robinson noted it started from the public realm with widened footways to improve comfort for public users and create civic animation at the corner of Fenchurch Street and Gracechurch Street. He also stated that from there, the undercroft could be entered which was a free, safe, green haven off the busy street and was a welcoming space with seating and access to an internal café. Mr Robinson told the Sub-Committee that from that space, there was a passageway with an engaging route which told the history of St Bennett's Church which stood on the site, and was a wide comfortable space suitable for users waiting for either of the two lifts which would take visitors up to level 35. From there, one entered the sanctuary internal space with panoramic views across an external garden which was complimentary to the external garden and enabled the location's use in all weather. As one moved out of the sanctuary, visitors would move into the external garden which was a lush green space and afforded views in multiple directions across the City and captured key sites from the Shard quarter through St. Paul's and the Barbican. He further stated that one would experience planting designed to thrive in the context of climate change, with dry tolerant plant along pollinators to support biodiversity and the roof terrace capacity would be 125 people at any one time, supported by half a million visitors a year. Mr. Robinson stated there was also the learning space, as part of the proposal, and engagement with schools in East London and beyond which fed into its design as a dedicated space for school groups to freely book and use as part of their day trips to the City to see various local sites. Mr Robinson concluded that as the first public garden offer to combine both interior and exterior green space from the street level to the roof, he hoped 60 Gracechurch Street would provide strong social value to all public users as part of its legacy.

The Chairman invited Members to ask questions to the Supporters.

A Member sought to confirm whether all the speakers were working for the applicant and the date of when the existing building was built. A supporter confirmed that all the parties who had spoken in support were contracted by Obayashi and the building was originally completed in 1998.

Another Member sought assurance, in response to planting being pest resistant, that the pests the planting would be resistant to was not butterflies, bumblebees and other 280 species of native pollinators. The Member also asked for an explanation about the duration the building would be vacant during construction and whether meanwhile uses would be reviewed. A supporter

explained that a planting pallet had been designed that would be very persistent to dry seasons, using plants such as lavenders, Amelanchier and Cornus that did not need a lot of water. Another supporter explained that the intention was for the building to be vacant in January 2026 with construction set to begin in the same month.

A Member asked what mitigations would be taken to minimise environmental impact relating to air and noise pollution, especially as larger vehicles would have to service at night and would have to reverse which would produce noise. The Member also queried how the historical integrity of nearby buildings, including the Monument and St Magnus the Martyr, would be preserved as views would be obstructed that would not be available following development. A supporter stated that the undercroft had been designed so reversing would not be required into that space as one would drive-in and then reverse once they were in the loading bay itself. The supporter also stated that there was increased number of electric vehicles in the City and hoped that as it was an open space, noise and any air pollution would be contained purely during the hours of operation and, during the day, the space would be completely open to the public and would not impact on neighbouring properties as there would be no vehicles in that space during the day. The Member suggested the answer presupposed that larger vehicles would be able to use something other than petrol, but that was not the case and there was no reasonable substitute for what was available at the moment due to the nature of technology and particularly around the issue of noise. The Member also expressed concerns that larger vehicles could move into the servicing space and reverse, especially as they would need to reload from the rear. The supporter responded that the undercroft and servicing strategy had been completely redesigned to be a very different space post the proposal being carried out as it currently was and the strategy for delivering and servicing was a consolidated strategy which avoided the use of big wagons and articulated lorries and, instead, using smaller nine tonne trucks that would be limited in their hours of access. The supporter further stated that it would be a more volumetric space than that currently available on site and was optimistic about providing electric charging. Another supporter stated that there would be views looking toward the Monument from the south along Gracechurch Street which would be preserved fully and the view from the south to the north from Fish Street Hill would have the building create a partial backdrop in a kinetic experience walking up toward the backdrop which would be a very similar backdrop to the previously consented scheme at 55 Gracechurch Street. The supporter further stated that the flaming orb at the top of the Monument would not be backdropped. As for the legibility of the church, the supporter stated that no harm had been identified as there would not be a very direct backdrop and would still be part of the backdrop of the cluster.

The Chairman invited Members to ask questions to the Officers.

A Member stated they understood that the proposed cluster counter lines were the maximum heights that were proposed to balance the weight of concern around the City along with what was appropriate and questioned why another application had been received for consideration that went above the lines

before the inspection stage. The Member also asked how much above the lines the height of the proposal was and why it was above the lines. Officers explained it was 2 metres, the lines were at 160m and the scheme's highest point was at 162m. Officers stated that the scheme came forward in design evolution as the contour lines were being developed which was one reason why they did not align. The second reason why it was considered acceptable was because there were no adverse impacts on views flowing from the scheme, so the contour lines in that area were designed to keep the scheme invisible from Fleet Street, and the proposed scheme was. Officers further stated that it was, therefore, a small technical breach of the contour lines in a very localised area, and while the City Plan was emerging and was about to go out in examination in public, it could only be given a certain amount of weight over the adopted 2015 development plan against which the scheme was considered. The Member queried that if Officers were aware it would be above the contour line whether they would have shifted the height in the plan. Officers confirmed that as they were finalising and setting the contour lines, the scheme had also finalised and settled its height. After the two had been compared, it was concluded that the breach was very minor and, most crucially, there was no adverse impact on the strategic views in question and why it was considered acceptable.

A Member stated they understood that the upper area of the garden area conformed to suicide prevention measures but queried how high the balustrades were on the terraces. The Member also stated that the bike entrance on Fenchurch Street was a very busy pavement and, although the footway had been extended into the road since Covid, it was still busy and noted that the pavement 20 Fenchurch Street ("the Walkie-Talkie" building) was set back from the road to allow for evacuations in the event of an emergency. The Member asked what could be done to improve the space around the bike entrance given it was a busy junction. Officers stated that an assessment had been carried out in the Section 278 agreement to secure the widening of the pavement to meet the appropriate level of comfort and there were also works in relation to traffic to the islands and the junction of Fenchurch Street and Gracechurch Street itself. Officers further stated, with regard to the business of the bike entrance, that cyclists would dismount at that point and travels plans had been secured through the Section 106 obligation which was commensurate with what had been seen on other schemes in terms of access into a building from cyclists with existing entrances along Fenchurch Street. Officers explained fire refuge strategy fell under separate legislation and different licensing of the building with regard to appropriate gathering spaces and the developer would need to clarify that.

The Member also raised a question on the impact of the height of the development on nearby heritage assets and why a modest reduction was not considered. Officers responded that various measures were taken to adapt the design which including looking at the levels and position of the rooftop stories to minimise the impact of heritage assets. Officers stated they concurred with English Heritage on harm to the Monument and to Tower Bridge, but in those cases the impact was fleeting and could be minimised and mitigated through

design to a point where can be taken into a balance and weighed against the strengths and public benefits of the scheme.

Another Member sought clarification on the Whole Life Carbon (WLC) emissions figures and requested graphs illustrating the data be made landscape. An Officer clarified the figures in the graphs and stated that initially the scheme had been calculated with the RICS measure which meant made it difficult to compare to GLA benchmarks. Therefore, it was then measured in accordance with GLA guidance. In response to further questions, Officers explained that the measurements were similar and, in both cases, and calculation methods, they both still achieved the GLA standard benchmark of 950kg of CO₂. Officers also explained that carbon emissions were slightly reduced using the old calculation method while the new calculation method added more detail to the calculation. that during the carbon optioneering, applicants had been asked to use decarbonised data, whereas in the application scheme, the GLA required applicants to use non-decarbonised data which made a big difference in overall carbon emissions and that during optioneering Officers ensured that the same method was calculated using the same assumptions. Officers continued that from the carbon optioneering exercise, one could see, for example, that Option 7 had the lowest carbon emissions overall out of all the tower options, whereas Option 4, a 12-storey scheme retaining the building with five additional storeys would have reduced carbon emissions due to less development.

The Deputy Chairman noted that the summary table indicated a loss of retail and sought an explanation for why it would be acceptable. The Deputy Chairman also asked for confirmation that it would be a consolidated 32 vehicles a day servicing the building. Officers explained that there was an existing retail unit of over 1000sqm on the north frontage of the existing site, which was working hard with level changes on Gracechurch Street and, for that reason, it provided a very poor shop front and did not activate the frontage. Therefore, the proposed scheme re-provided 187sqm of retail in the form of a café area in the south side of the ground floor of the building. Officers stated that the applicant would be able to change from retail to office without the need to seek planning permission and this formed as part of a fall-back position and it was highlighted that the proposed ground floor now addressed the level changes on the side with the provision of a level ground floor plate. Officers further noted that the new location of the retail made better sense as it now connected directly with the undercroft which formed the main point of arrival for visitors of the elevated public spaces and would activate Gracechurch Street. On the issue of servicing, Officers explained that it would be 117 trips a day without consolidation, with consolidation it dropped to 32 trips.

A Member raised the issue of wind as they had walked near the 'Walkie-Talkie' building frequently and indicated it could be very windy in that area and was also an issue of Fenchurch Street as the wind did not have to be fast for it to create a howling effect. The Member asked, given previous comments about the wind not being an issue with other developments, what impact the proposed development would have as they were sceptical of wind measurements. Officers stated that there were some safety exceedances in locations that were

already there and the proposed development did not change the levels of the wind categories. With the proposed development in place and some cumulative schemes, there was only one measurement location outside the secondary entrance of the retail unit at the ground level of 41 Gracechurch Street and there were no mitigation measures for that. However, Officers further stated that because it formed a secondary entrance, people would use the main entrance which was not affected by the proposed development and, overall, the ground floor conditions would remain within the acceptable wind conditions for the intended use.

The Member sought further clarity on wind conditions on the lower-level terraces, the podium and the upper terraces and the garden as the report mentioned some conditions would range from frequent sitting to standing and queried how viable planting would be given the wind conditions. The Member also asked how safe it would be at the public spaces on taller floors. Officers explained for the intended purpose of those areas, and in terms of planting, that the wind conditions were deemed to be acceptable as set out in the report.

A Member stated they were concerned that a building from 1998 could be knocked down and replaced with a structure much taller and approximately three times the total carbon emissions of the existing building and be considered the most sustainable building in the City. The Member further stated they felt it was a problematic building and were concerned about the breach of the contour lines and felt Historic England were well placed to comment on whether the development had a real impact. The Member stated that the London Borough of Tower Hamlet still objected to the application and when one looked across the river, it would draw attention away from the heritage asset. The Member felt this was not an application that, on balance, could be accepted as they were concerned about the loss of daylight and sunlight, as well as Historic England's comments and the sustainability implications.

Concerns were raised by a Member of the loss of retail and they felt there was an impact regardless of whether the pavement would be widened as the bike entrance would create obstructions for the pedestrian and the main entrance was on the corner of two very busy pedestrian junctions which was problematic. The Member also stated they were concerned that it was not an old building being knocked down and felt there was not a lot in the way of public benefits and felt there were already a lot of viewing galleries and learning centres in the City. The Member further stated they were concerned with the impact on heritage assets and stated it was interesting to see 55 Gracechurch Street had now elapsed and felt it provided an opportunity to rethink the space just outside the cluster and its impact on the heritage of the Monument, the Tower of London and Tower Bridge. The Member concluded that they were concerned a modest reduction in height was not negotiated as Historic England felt it would make the proposal more acceptable.

The Deputy Chairman felt the view from the South Bank did not present any harm to the Tower of London and stated, in relation to points raised regarding carbon, that the new building was bigger than the existing building and inevitably had a much higher carbon embedded penalty, but the point of the

new buildings was that they had far superior operational carbon per square metre. He further stated it was an extremely valuable piece of land which had unparalleled connections and felt the current building was not earning its keep in terms of the economic contribution it made to the City. He concluded that the proposal was very different from what was already in existence as it was open air and there was only one other open air, high public space in the City which was very popular and felt it would be beneficial. He concluded that he strongly supported the application and urged the Sub-Committee to do the same.

A Member stated they wanted to pick up on the whole life carbon debate and felt the underuse of space was the issue which was why a larger building was more efficient and fundamentally the right thing to do. The Member stated they regretted the previous developments from the 1980s and 1990s that they felt were inefficient and not maximising the space, but now proposals were. The Member stated they would support the scheme.

Another Member indicated they usually queried about toilet provision and stated they were delighted with their provision in the proposal. The Member also stated the proposal seemed to have covered issues such as mobility, scooter space, quiet rooms and multi-faith rooms and felt the proposals on the circular economy were excellent.

It was stated by another Member that policy asked applicants to put roof gardens in tall buildings and felt applicants could not be blamed for doing exactly as asked. The Member felt the main public benefit was the new floor space which would deliver office space that was needed in the City.

Assurance was sought by a Member on whether public toilets would be delivered as other applications, following revisions, had amenities removed either during construction before the building was completed and after completion as the provision of public toilets was critical to the smooth operation of the City.

The Chairman stated he considered that rooftop terraces should offer something that was not already there for visitors to experience, and the proposed development offered views to the West that were unique and would be distinctive to what was already on offer by other rooftop terraces. The Chairman further noted that the rooftop terrace would be one of only two that would be outdoors and would offer opportunities for rest and to enjoy the outdoor space. In addition, the Chairman stated that there had been a 10% increase in employment in the Square Mile in the last 12 months and the part of the Local Plan which identified 1.2 million square metres was based on figures that would show growth in 2051 to be about 730,000 employees. The Chairman stated that the City was already at 678,000 with the growth that had been had in the last twelve months and felt the need to maximise floor plates was exceptionally important and it was critical that floor plates and available footprints were maximised in the Eastern Cluster as 85% more floor space would be required by 2040 in the Local Plan. The Chairman further stated that there was increasingly strong language coming from heritage groups and felt the Sub-Committee needed to make sure it kept a balanced approach in how

heritage was regarded, harm against economic growth in the Square Mile. The Chairman further noted that while Officers could work hard on relationships with heritage groups, the Sub-Committee had to make the call on whether there was heritage harm or not which was subjective and felt he could not see how the Tower of London was affected by the development. The Chairman concluded that he would support the scheme.

The Chairman moved the meeting to a vote.

Votes were cast as follows: IN FAVOUR – 9
AGAINST – 4
ABSTENTIONS – 0

The Sub Committee - **RESOLVED –**

- 1) That the Planning and Development Director be authorised to issue a decision notice granting planning permission for the above proposal in accordance with the details set out in the attached schedule subject to:
 - a) The 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.
 - 2) 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.
 - 3) 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.
 - 4) 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 Highways Act 1980.
 - 5) 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.
5. * **VALID PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Chief Planning Officer and Development Director detailing development applications received by the Department of the Environment 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 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.

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

A Member asked Officers to give consideration to ensuring the carbon optioneering data in reports was presented in a more comprehensible way to Members. The Chairman noted it was a complex subject matter and asked Officers to look at providing data in a more quantifiable way.

A Member requested the Chairman to reflect on language used in relation to the wording of statutory consultees comments sometimes being aggressive and queried whether the increasingly strong language came from a place of increased concern from groups who were spending time providing information to the Sub-Committee to inform decisions on applications. The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee worked with all statutory consultees on an even footing and did not believe there was a negative bias against any statutory consultee that the City worked with. In addition he had a direct relationship with some of the groups considered their language had become increasingly aggressive over time and that his language had therefore been appropriate.

In relation to a Member's comment that some statutory consultees blurred the boundaries between their statutory role and tried to advise on other matters which strained to a more general planning debate and queried whether this was something the Chairman considered was increasing. The Chairman noted that relationships ebbed and flowed and gave a recent example of bridge-building in that he now had a direct relationship with the Chairman of Historic England and spoke with them on a regular basis whenever concerns were raised. The Chairman stated that relationship had not been in place previously in the last few years and felt some of those bridges were being re-built, but it did not stop the flow of work between Officers. He added it did take time to get right and people needed to understand their scope of work

Another Member stated they would be surprised if statutory consultees thought they were blurring the lines as they would comment on applications in a standard way for each local authority they responded to. The Member also

raised concern about any suggestion that Members were anti-Officers as they that Members recognised the time Officers spent writing reports and undertaking due diligence to enable the Sub-Committee to make decisions. He added that it did not make Members anti-City if they had a different view from the majority opinion. The Member hoped that those who sat on the Committee were seen as people who took a lot of time and effort to arrive at a decision and should not be made to feel that if they dissented with a different view, they would be shut off or might not be reappointed The Chairman indicated he did not read statutory consultees comments to other local authorities. He also stated he agreed with the Member's comments that Members should not feel pressurised into voting a particular way. The Chairman also noted that every ward had representation and, once on the Committee, it had to behave as a planning committee collectively and stated he had no power over who was appointed to the Sub-Committee.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no additional, urgent items of business for consideration.

The meeting ended at 10.25 am

Chairman

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