

PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 9 September 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Applications Sub-Committee held at Livery
Hall - Guildhall on Tuesday, 9 September 2025 at 10.30 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Tom Sleigh (Chair)
Shravan Joshi MBE (Deputy Chair)
Tana Adkin KC
Samapti Bagchi
Matthew Bell
Deputy John Edwards
Deputy Marianne Fredericks
Alderman Alison Gowman CBE
Alderman Prem Goyal CBE
Deputy Madush Gupta
Josephine Hayes
Deputy Jaspreet Hodgson
Philip Kelvin
Alderwoman Elizabeth Anne King, BEM JP
Charles Edward Lord, OBE JP
Sophia Mooney
Deborah Oliver
Deputy Henry Pollard
Alderman Simon Pryke
Deputy Nighat Qureishi
Gaby Robertshaw
Hugh Selka
Naresh Hari Sonpar
Matthew Waters
Jacqui Webster

Officers:

Kate Alexander-Newton	- Environment Department
Chris Elliot	- Environment Department
Michael Folayan	- Environment Department
Fleur Francis	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Joanne Grimley	- Environment Department
Gareth Hall	- City Surveyors and Property Services Department
David Horkan	- Environment Department
Samuel James	- Environment Department
Georgia McBirney	- Environment Department
Kieran McCallum	- Environment Department
Rob McNicol	- Environment Department

Rachel Pye	- Environment Department
Gwyn Richards	- Planning and Development Director, Environment Department
Fiona Williams	- Environment Department
Peter Wilson	- Environment Department
Callum Southern	- Town Clerk's Department
Judith Dignum	- Town Clerk's Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Anthony Fitzpatrick, Amy Horscroft, Anthony Manchester, Tim McNally, Jeanette Newman and William Upton.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **CUSTOM HOUSE, 20 LOWER THAMES STREET AND RIVER WALLS, STAIRS AND CRANE, CUSTOM HOUSE QUAY**

The Sub-Committee received a report concerning two applications consisting of one planning application and one Listed Building Consent application. Approval was sought for:

1. Planning permission under application 25/00270/FULMAJ for the change of use of existing building and riverside car park from office (Use Class Eg(i)) to a hotel-led mixed-use building comprising the following components: 1. Hotel (Use Class C1); 2. Basement spa and health centre (Use Class E(d)); and 3. Ground floor food and beverage, public north/south route, gallery and events spaces (Sui Generis).

Together with the alteration, extension, and refurbishment works to the interior and exterior of all three (Western, Central and Eastern) wings of Custom House, to facilitate the redevelopment of the existing building. Introduction of new mechanical/electrical/plumbing services throughout the building to facilitate the proposed use and provision of associated rooftop plant enclosures. The implementation of a public realm scheme to the existing quayside including replacement of southern ground floor external stairs to the Central wing, introduction of a new river terrace, including stairs and step-free access, new steps and ramp to the site's south-western boundary, revised flood wall and removal of existing vehicle ramp and replacement with vehicle lift. The provision of a site-wide landscaping scheme as well as works to the river wall, works to the flood defence, walls, works to the western boundary wall and external works to

facilitate servicing, vehicular drop off, cycle and disabled parking and all associated works.

2. Listed Building Consent under application 25/00271/LBC for internal and external alteration, extension and refurbishment of Custom House (Grade 1), and works to the associated River Wall, Stairs and Cranes (Grade II*) for redevelopment into a hotel-led mixed-use building.

External works: New public realm scheme to the quayside including removal of railings around riverside car park; replacement of southern ground floor external stairs (Central Wing) for new river terrace with step-free access; works to the southern elevation for improved access; refurbishment and relocation of historic crane; removal of vehicle ramp, construction of new vehicle lift; rebuilding of East Wing steps; new plant on the East Wing roof, provision of PV panels (Central Wing); removal of roof lanterns/rooflights to West Wing; amendments to existing plant room. Repair and refurbishment of window frames and sashes, and introduction of restoration glass. Historic glass reinstated to West Wing Courtyard. Installation of hotel signage, cleaning and repair of elevations, installation of external blinds, lowering of five Long Room window cills and removal of cabinetry to create two new access points for first floor with railings to portico. Raising of West Wing courtyard floor for new external amenity space, including removal of existing lift and external staircase and the installation of a glazed extension. Introduction of a site-wide landscaping and lighting scheme, retention of historic fixtures, works to the river wall, western boundary wall and construction of new flood defences, servicing areas, vehicle drop-off, cycle and disabled parking.

Internal works: Installation of mechanical/electrical/plumbing services for hotel use; Hotel rooms with ensuite facilities, minor demolition and works for improved access and servicing; New spa (with pool) and decorative scheme throughout, New lifts in West and Central Wings; Repairs to historic floors, removal of modern raised floors; Refurbishment of existing cabinetry and all other associated internal works.

The Chair confirmed the process to be followed by the Sub-Committee in considering the applications and invited Officers to make their presentation.

Officers began by stating that the presentation concerned combined applications for planning permission and Listed Building Consent at Custom House, Lower Thames Street. What followed would be a summary of the more comprehensive presentation supplied to Members prior to the meeting in the form of a pack. Officers also highlighted that, following publication of the main agenda pack on Monday 1 September, an addendum had been circulated on Friday 6 September which provided clarification on matters contained in the report and captured an additional letter of support.

Officers introduced the application, noting that the site was located on the north bank of the River Thames, bound by Lower Thames Street to the north, Water Lane to the east, Old Billingsgate and Old Billingsgate Walk to the west and the

River Thames to the south. Custom House was a Grade I listed building, and the site also hosted the Grade II* listed River Wall, Stairs and Crane. The application site was not located in a conservation area.

The site was approximately 0.99 hectares in size and the existing building was arranged over basement, ground and first to fourth floor levels. The quayside area between the building and riverside walkway was currently in use as a car park for occupiers of the building and the Riverside Walkway ran along the southern edge of the site, immediately adjacent to the River Wall, providing a continuous connection between the walkway at Sugar Quay to the east and Old Billingsgate Market to the west. The existing mature trees onsite were subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

The application site was located within Flood Zone 1 and the quayside experienced flooding.

Officers showed a series of photographs of the current site, in support of the points set out above. These included images of the River Walk demonstrating its current separation from the quayside by blue railings and the impact of inundation during a spring tide, and the existing gated entrances on Water Lane and on Lower Thames Street, to Old Billingsgate Walk. Further photographs showed how the existing quayside was fenced off from the remainder of the Thames Path (area currently used as a car park), the view on Lower Thames Street, the central steps providing access to the building from the car park, the railings to the site perimeter and the existing ramp to the basement (which currently occupied a large extent of the quayside, adjacent to Water Lane).

A plan of the existing building showed that this comprised three distinct historic phases. Officers noted that the West Wing was the best preserved, retaining much of the original plan, form and fabric associated with David Laing, the original architect. The Central Wing and external facade were extensively rebuilt by Robert Smirke shortly after the first phase of the building. These works retained a neo-classical style and remained of high architectural and historic significance. The Eastern Wing was extensively rebuilt internally following bomb damage, and much of the historical fabric was removed. The overall sensitivity of the Eastern Wing was therefore substantially reduced.

Officers commented that the significance of Custom House was layered, comprising three key factors - its historic significance as a large, purpose-built Georgian office ensemble, its distinctive Greek revival architectural style and its importance as a key riverside building. It remained an important illustration of historic maritime activity and the rise of London at the heart of a global trading empire.

Photographs were shown of the key spaces inside the building, including the Long Room and the King's Warehousing Centre; both large, open areas which reflected the volume of goods and people which historically moved from the riverside through the building. It was noted that the rest of the building comprised well preserved formal circulation spaces and offices, including the Tidewaiters

Parlour, which had provided meeting and circulation space for customs officials who worked in the building.

Officers advised that planning permission and Listed Building Consent were being sought for a series of internal and external alterations to Custom House to facilitate its conversion to a hotel and accompanying uses, including a spa and health centre and ground floor food and beverage facilities, a public north/south route and a gallery and event space. The quayside would be comprehensively reimagined as part of the proposals. The proposed hotel would consist of 179 hotel rooms. The application was accompanied by market commentary and by financial market viability assessment which has been third party reviewed, and it had been demonstrated that the loss of office accommodation could be supported in this instance. The principal of a hotel and its accompanying uses are also supported for the reasons set out within the report.

Showing a CGI image of the proposed view from Sugar Quay, Officers highlighted the opening up of the quayside and the way in which the removal of the 1990's railings visually reconnected the riverfront with the quayside and the southern elevation, enhancing an appreciation of the building's historic function and character. Further CGIs presented the view from Water Lane, showing the replacement of the existing vehicle ramp, extending the level extent of the quayside. The new vehicle lift could also be seen, with planting used to soften its appearance in views along the quayside. The provision of awnings to the east and west wings was visible, and Officers explained that although the final design of these would be controlled by condition, the intention was to replicate historic external blind boxes found on site, whilst reducing the need for additional ventilation and plant to the interior.

A CGI of the view from Billingsgate Walk demonstrated the improved riverside wall views towards the building as well as the minimal extent of intervention to the principal façade. An additional CGI of the view from Byward Street was also shown.

Officers presented a series of demolition and proposed plans to provide an overview of the internal works in each part of the proposed hotel. Proposed demolition works were highlighted in red on the initial plan presented, and served to illustrate the minimal extent of the proposed fabric works. Officers noted that, in the main, the proposals focused on retention, adaption and restoration of the existing platform and fabric.

Basement

A plan of the demolition at this level showed that the more substantive work would take place in the less sensitive rebuilt 20th Century East Wing, including removal of the existing vehicle ramp. Basement and lower basement plans showed that excavation for a lower basement was proposed. This would accommodate the proposed vehicle lift, allowing for replacement of the existing vehicle ramp and for servicing to take place at basement level.

The proposed spa and health centre would be located in the western central blocks, including the swimming pool to the central wing, and part of this facility

was shown in detail on a plan of the west wing part of the basement. The area was to be accessed separately via a stepped entrance in Old Billingsgate Walk, with step-free access to the spa to be provided either via Lower Thames Street or via the quayside.

Members viewed a detailed plan of the central part of the basement, where the existing sunken gym would be adapted and extended to create a swimming pool. The existing and proposed areas were illustrated in a photograph and CGI respectively.

Officers explained that Policy compliant long stay cycle parking and end of trip facilities would be provided in the eastern wing at basement level, where the fabric was less sensitive to alteration. The majority of the proposed plant was also planned for location in the east wing.

Ground floor

A proposed ground floor demolition plan again showed the substantive demolition taken place in the 20th century east wing. The majority of the historic platform within the central and west wings would be preserved.

Access to the building would be via the main reception on Lower Thames Street or from the quayside. Food and beverage uses were proposed within the King's Warehouse, retaining the existing 20th century timber partitioning in this space and adapting it to facilitate the new use. The final fit out of the space would be controlled by condition, noting that the kitchens for the restaurant uses would be located away from the King's Warehouse in the east wing.

Hotel rooms were proposed within both the east and west wings, retaining existing room sets and proportions within the historic spaces. Cultural uses were also proposed at ground floor level, including a café accessed directly from the riverside terrace and gallery spaces.

Mezzanine

Again, plans showed that the most substantive demolition works would take place in the 20th century east wing. Bedrooms were proposed at this level, with other hotel facilities.

First floor

Most of the demolition work was proposed for the 20th century east wing. Within the Long Room, one of the principal spaces on the first floor, proposals included the dropping of cills to create external access onto the existing portico (a CGI image was presented). Although this would involve the removal of historic fabric, with some harm arising, overall, Officers considered the works to be acceptable given that they were in keeping with the existing architectural character, using the existing glazing bar pattern to create sensitively designed new openings.

As with all the upper floors, the works were limited to minor adaptations to facilitate the creation of bedrooms and the necessary vertical circulation.

Third floor

Attention was drawn to the adaptation works to the eastern end of the West Wing courtyard to create additional circulation space at ground, first, second, third and fourth floor levels, with the provision of new lifts and stairs. Visuals were provided of the existing and proposed courtyard, illustrating removal of the modern glazed wall and servicing route replacing these later interventions with a simple, honest, contemporary elevation which restored the volume of the space and allowed for a step-free route around the courtyard perimeter. A CGI was shown of the courtyard at ground floor level, which would be accessible to hotel guests.

Works were also proposed to the East Wing courtyard (CGIs provided). These comprised the creation of a central circulation core and reimagined courtyard facades. These works would strip away the utilitarian postwar fabric, using a sympathetic palette of materials in keeping with the historic character of the building.

Fourth floor

Attention was drawn to the proposed rebuild of the East Wing roof to provide plant and air circulation for the whole of the scheme. Finishing would be in slate to match the adjacent wings. A plan demonstrated how the roof slope would be continued to match the existing roof profile and minimise visual impact.

Members viewed a slide showing the principles by which the interior would be converted to provide bedrooms within the West Wing. The works sought to retain the balanced volume within each room and to consolidate service into a single riser. Proportioned within a chimney breast or to appear as a headboard. The works would seek to preserve any decorative or historic features within each space, such as cornicing and fireplaces, as well as any interconnections to adjacent rooms where these form distinctive sets.

Overall, officers considered the approach taken to convert the interior to hotel rooms had minimised the harm arising from the conversion works, but a degree of less than substantial harm remained given the present intact quality to the interiors. The final decorative scheme and layout of each room was to be secured by condition and would be informed by the detailed gazetteer of all the interior spaces that had been submitted with the application.

Public access to the building and the Cultural Offer

The proposals included a public route into the building, importantly enabling the key space of the King's Warehouse to be appreciated but also the smaller parlours and offices within the West Wing. The public route led from the riverside to Lower Thames Street, creating access to a new cultural café and gallery space, as highlighted in pink and yellow on the plan displayed. The proposed north/south route from the quayside to the Reception via the King's Warehouse would incorporate historic displays which would tell the history of the Custom House and cover a changing range of topics. The route would be accessible to the public.

Galleries and an engagement space were proposed within the West Wing, the galleries being a series of historic rooms that would function as gallery space for hosting small-scale exhibitions. Public access to the galleries would be free of charge between the hours of 10am and 5pm. These works would partially restore a Laing-era route via a central parlour into the building interior. A cultural café was also proposed, with direct access via the quayside. An engagement space would be provided for schools, community groups, charities and cultural organisations, who could book the space free of charge, seven days a week between the hours of 10am and 5pm.

The Tidewaiters Room, a key historic space in the West Wing, would host a reference library and daily passes would be available free of charge. Other aspects of the cultural offer included historic tours of the building and the use of the Long Room for 24 slots a year by community groups.

Officers presented an image of the current landscape condition, showing existing use of the quayside as a car park. The space was not publicly accessible and was divorced from the riverfront, obscuring its historic function and its important relationship with the building. The proposals would create a new central raised terraced with incorporated ramp and steps access and a seating area. The creation of step-free access into the building was considered as a significant benefit of the proposals. While the works would create a change to the important principal façade, Officers considered that the proposals had successfully balanced the ambitions of a step-free access with the impact on the historic fabric. The re-siting of the historic crane ensured that the character and function of the quayside remained appreciable.

Officers displayed an image of the proposed adaptations to the façade to create access on the terrace and portico at first floor. The works were considered to be sympathetic to the existing architectural character while creating a significant new area of riverside seating for public enjoyment. A further CGI illustrated the improved relationship between the waterfront and Custom House

The proposals included removal of the current hard standing and its replacement with granite pavers. Flood resistant landscaping was to be created along the flood wall, including a series of public benches to allow the public to dwell in the space. The works also included the subtle historic interpretation with an inset masonry line in the quayside, illustrating the historic line of the quayside and wharves.

Members viewed a CGI showing the ramp and steps access to the café and café terrace, and route through to the King's Warehouse, encouraging access to the building and use of the public route through northwards to Lower Thames Street.

Officers commented that the work to the quayside would be transformative, not only in design terms but also in terms of public access, as unrestricted access would be provided 24 hours a day year-round, with no private closures of the quayside.

Within the transformed quayside, activation areas were proposed to the east and to the west to increase vibrancy of the riverside in line with policy aims. These areas had the potential to host food stores, market stalls, small scale performances associated with existing festivals such as the Thames Festival or the Docklands Festival. Conditions would be proposed under Section 106 obligations to ensure that the activation areas had an acceptable impact on neighbouring amenity.

Members viewed a CGI image of works to Billingsgate Walk, including the continuation of the flood wall to protect the east entry into the spa as well as the repair and replacement of granite setts and the provision of new cycle parking. A plan of the works showed how the realigned ramp ensured improved step-free access to the quayside during flooding events. The gates shown would be retained but would be fixed open to provide 24/7 access to the riverfront. The works along the lane included lowering of the existing brick wall to the east, improving free views onto the quayside and encouraging a sense of permeability. To Water Lane, the works included expansion of the existing footway to improve accessibility onto the Thames Path. Additional cycle path was provided in this location, together with the provision of two new Blue Badge parking bays. Vehicle access was restricted through the provision of additional bollards as shown on the plan displayed.

A plan was displayed of the works to Lower Thames Street, to include the adaption of the pavement levels to provide an accessible main entrance into the hotel and the creation of a layby with planters either side of the central door. Works to the entrance would retain the decorative door surround, including the stone coat of arms situated above the door. The layby was proposed to take taxi drop-off which, together with other improvements to Lower Thames Street, would be secured via a Section 278 agreement with TfL.

Finally, Officers presented images of the proposed elevations, showing the Lower Thames Street façade, the riverside façade as viewed within the quayside, the west elevation from Billingsgate Lane and the elevation from Water Lane. A current and proposed view of the site from London Bridge was also shown for information, illustrating the limited impact of the works in longer range views across the river, including the LVMF views across to the site.

In summary, Officers considered the proposals to have sensitively adapted this important riverside building for hotel use. While the extent of the interventions to create the necessary servicing, plant and circulation required the loss of historic fabric, this loss was considered to have been minimised. The present intact quality of the interiors and change of use meant that an overall level of less than substantial harm to a grade one listed building arose as a result of the works. The harm had been given great weight within the planning balance and considered against the public benefits of the scheme, which include the considerable improved and transformative quality of the public realm with unrestricted access to this prominent riverside location. It was noted that no objection on design and conservation grounds had been received.

Taking all these considerations together, Officers found the scheme acceptable and recommended approval, subject to conditions in the execution of planning applications.

The Chair thanked Officers for their presentation, noting that Members were likely to have some questions when invited to contribute later during the meeting.

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that there were no objectors to the application and invited the supporters to address the meeting. The Town Clerk explained the protocol for speaking, whereby speakers would have a total of ten minutes to address the meeting with no one person being able to speak for longer than five minutes. The Town Clerk also explained the traffic light system in place for managing speaking times.

Elyse Howell-Price of Orms Architects and Designers expressed her thanks for the opportunity to speak. She explained that their conservation-led approach was built on the 1817 design principles of the original architect, David Laing, which were convenience, strength and beauty. These were overlaid with current conservation values to enhance the Grade 1 listed building and remove harmful additions that had accumulated over time. Their proposals would restore the site's historic significance while enabling sustainable hotel operations, deliver substantial public benefits, both within the building, but also around it, and meet technical excellence across all planning requirements to ensure its long-term use and protection.

Ms Howell-Price stated that the project had benefitted from extensive consultation. The King's Foundation facilitated initial workshops in October 2023, and this set out initial principles for the development. Since those workshops, there had been continuous engagement with key heritage stakeholders including Historic England, the Georgian Group, Save Britain's Heritage and numerous other heritage and technical bodies and, most fascinatingly, the previous employees of His Majesty's Customs and Excise who occupied the building until 2021. Work had been undertaken with the City's officers through 25 pre-application meetings held between December 2023 and January 2025, resulting in a consultation process that had been genuinely collaborative. This had led to design modifications which strengthened the proposals, such as adjustments to the quay-side ramp which would enable step-free access to the building for the first time in its 200-year life. The City's accessibility advisory group had also been involved. Public consultation had yielded 226 responses, with 90% welcoming public access and 79% supporting the hotel-led refurbishment.

At the heart of the proposals was a 2,880 square metre Thames-side public space accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This was equivalent to the area in front of the National Theatre on the South Bank. The space would enhance the Thames Path, protect the 13 existing plane trees and directly support the Pool of London quay area vision. It delivered urban greening and biodiversity net gain and provided resilience to the historic building from the increased flood levels with the introduction of planted SUD beds. The retention of 85% of the existing structure would significantly reduce the project's embodied carbon, and operational carbon would also be reduced by active and passive

systems. Air-source heat pumps, located on the 1966-rebuilt east wing roof, would allow the development to be fully electric, and reinstated external blinds passively reduced solar gains and heat loads.

The transport assessment confirmed that the proposed use could be accommodated within the existing infrastructure and provided a designated off-street basement loading bay, concealed below the quayside, with operational arrangements designed to protect residential amenity from noise and disruption.

In conclusion, Ms Howell-Price stated that the proposals demonstrated a conservation approach - rigorous consultation, detailed research and analysis and a design that recognised the building's importance. Custom House had witnessed London's evolution for centuries; the proposals ensured it would continue to serve the city, not as a museum piece but as a living, accessible part of London's historic fabric and Destination City vision.

Joss Brushfield, Managing Director of Custom House (City) Ltd, which owned Custom House and was part of Jastar Capital (the Applicant), addressed the meeting. Mr Brushfield stated that the company was a family-owned hotelier which bought the property in 2023 because they believed its unique location, position and heritage would allow them to create a new hospitality destination for the City of London. It would be a core asset to the company through development, opening, stabilisation and operation. They were not developers seeking a short-term profit; this would be a long-term legacy ownership.

Through the extensive design and planning process, there had been lots of discussions with stakeholders, not only through pre-application discussions with officers but also stakeholder workshops, stakeholder tours and public consultations. The positive engagement with everyone was evident in the stakeholder responses.

Mr Brushfield stated that the completed project would not be a typical hotel. Whilst non-resident engagement with hotels was usually an afterthought. For Custom House, the hotel would be a vital component which ensured the viability of the whole project. They did not wish to be the most luxurious or most expensive hotel in the city, but rather the hotel where people really wanted to stay because it was interesting, fun, exciting and comfortable. However, the expectation was that many visitors would not even realise that it was a hotel. Their design approach was all about ramps drawing people up and into the ground floor of the building - no velvet ropes and a clear encouragement to go in. Tables with umbrellas on the terraces, open doors to the river, a variety of offers and price points, all of which had been carefully designed to attract visitors as well as serving the resident guests. It would be a mixed-use space with lots going on in the building independent of the hotel, one of the best event spaces in the City in the Long Room, a World-class spa in the basement, outward-facing cafés, restaurants and bars, and, most importantly, a history that is fascinating, accessible and has something to suit everyone's diverse requirements. It would also have something that could not be replicated elsewhere – 160m of direct river frontage, at the heart of the Pool of London, at the heart of where London started. The quayside would be shared with London as part of the development.

The principles of the cultural strategy were to tell the stories of the building and the people who worked in it and what they did, in a free and inclusive way, to attract a diverse range of people. Stories shared by former and current customs officers during their tours of the building, and more, would be told. There would be a dramatic social media-friendly cultural display running north to south through the centre of the King's Warehouse on the ground floor, where the stories could be brought to life alongside the building's new uses. There would also be more dynamic residences of art, collections and history in the less formal ground floor cultural café, galleries and engagement space – the latter free to book for community groups or schools. On the quayside would be a programme of small-scale, free to access events, alongside the generously landscaped public open space released from the existing office car park. Back inside the building, charities and organisations could hold events in the Long Room. Academics and students would be able to access the Tidewaiters Library and people could book on a guided tour of the building.

When it was built, Custom House was a dynamic place with visitors from around the World clearing customs, but as time be, that changes and it became a rather dull, secure office building. The proposed development would open up the building to the public, bringing the building back to life with over 400,000 visitors a year, fulfilling the Destination City aims by pulling people on a journey through the city rather than just to the Tower and away again. The sensitive restoration, repair and reintroduction of the building and its features would help to show off its history and heritage. Whether inside or out, it would give people a reason to engage with that part of the city, to stay a little longer and understand it a little better. The project was to be done in a way that respected the environment, reusing a fantastic building of some 200 years' standing, reusing what there was and making it better. The aim was to receive an Excellent rating under BREEAM sustainable building certification. Air-source heat pumps were being used, but alongside opening windows and natural ventilation to avoid the creation of a silent hall insulated from the outside world. The building was planned as a destination for people to visit 'just because', whether that be to look at the exhibits, have a sandwich on the terrace or celebrate a family occasion in one of the restaurants. This would happen in a building older than Buckingham Palace, older than Tower Bridge, older than railways in Britain, older than Big Ben, with just as many stories to tell as all of them. The Applicant had worked collaboratively with officers to deliver the maximum benefit for the City of London and to secure that benefit through design, planning conditions and Section 106. They now stood ready to deliver on all the work put in by everyone. However, the first step was for consent to be granted.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions of the applicants, reminding them that they would also be able to ask detailed questions of officers on the report later in the meeting.

A member expressed his support for the application. Regarding landscaping, he asked whether consideration had been given to extending the circles of resin to be put around each new tree. A series of linear strips would create more permeable space, thereby facilitating sports activity and increasing both drainage

and root ball space. Gareth Fox of Montagu Evans LLP responded, explaining that, although the use of soft landscaping and planting had been considered, the site's susceptibility to flooding and the need to facilitate use of the space for sports and other physical recreation had led to the decision to opt mainly for hard standing. This would, it was believed, balance flood impact versus facilitation of recreational use as described. The use of mats and temporary equipment was anticipated to adapt the area for sports and physical activity as required.

In response to a follow-up question, Gareth Baylor of Publica, landscape architects for the project, clarified that the rubber-coated resin to be used around the base of the tree stems would be unsuitable for wider use in that location as it was not designed for high-traffic areas. He also explained the reasons for using the particular type of permeable resin, namely that it softened the predominantly granite-paved space while also providing much better conditions for the 13 existing plane trees. The granite paving to be used on the majority of the quayside had different maintenance conditions and could cope much better with intermittent flooding than could the resin surface. Additionally, the flexible nature of the material would facilitate much easier cleaning after a flooding event.

Another member expressed his support for the application. Referring to the proposed layby at the proposed entrance to the hotel on Lower Thames Street, he enquired as to the suitability of the location as a taxi drop-off given the busy nature of the road and the junction with Byward Street. Acknowledging the issue, Mr Brushfield stated that locating the drop-off there would release Water Lane, which had been the alternative location. Additionally, during discussions with TfL, Lower Thames Street had emerged as the only suitable option for drop-off to the hotel, representing the best compromise on a very constrained site. The cultural engagement space in the West Wing that could be booked by groups. In response to a comment by another member, Mr Brushfield concurred that the majority of visitors to the hotel were expected to arrive by public transport or on foot rather than to require vehicle access or drop-off, which reflected the position at the company's other premises.

Responding to a Member who had asked for an assessment of the proposal in terms of social value, Mr Brushfield commented on the cultural engagement inherent in creating a new destination in the City, the open-door policy whereby access would be available to everyone who wished to engage with the building and the cultural engagements space that could be booked by groups. The business would seek to engage with the various training and apprenticeship initiatives available for major sites in the City and elsewhere. As a major employer, and in common with many hospitality venues, it would expect to employ numbers of young people and there would be outreach into communities for recruitment. The roles available would offer structured career opportunities upwards from the most junior positions.

In response to a question from a member regarding the timescale for completion of the project should planning permission be granted, Mr Brushfield stated that the aim was to commence work on site in the first half of 2026, with the expectation that it would take between two and three years to complete. He also

confirmed that the building was currently empty, though parts of the site enjoyed occasional use as a film location.

The Chair invited Members of the Sub-Committee to ask questions of the officers in attendance.

Referring to the apparent significant increase in carbon emissions cited in the addendum to the report circulated prior to the meeting, compared with those originally stated, a Member asked why this had happened and whether officers considered it to be acceptable. She also asked how the figures compared with those for other hotels. Officers stated that the original carbon figures provided had accounted for the future decarbonisation of the electricity grid. However, because the rate of decarbonisation was uncertain, updated figures had been provided which did not account for decarbonisation, in line with the GLA guidance. Therefore, the updated figures reflected a worst-case scenario. The high levels of operational carbon were mainly associated with the spa and there was currently limited information about the operation and management of the building and spa. Additionally, high levels of operational carbon were associated with constraints around improving the building envelope. Regarding comparison with other hotels, officers advised that typically they would expect to see figures of around 1,000 kg/m². However, although the figures for this project were higher than for other schemes, this could be explained by the severe constraints associated with the site which were not usually seen for other sites.

The Chair moved the meeting to a debate of the Sub-Committee.

A Member expressed support for the proposal, commenting that it was now 20 years since the transformation of Somerset House, also government buildings, of which the success was now obvious. Custom House was a magnificent Grade 1 building, but it could easily become a carbuncle without the right user or indeed any user, and the Sub-Committee was aware of the high cost of repurposing such sites. She wished all the best to the applicants.

Also expressing support for the application, a Member praised the ramps which formed part of the building's new riverside elevation, welcoming the opportunities for wheelchair access which they introduced.

The Chair addressed the Sub-Committee, clarifying that Members were being asked to approve both planning permission and Listed Building Consent as set out in the report's recommendations. Two votes would therefore be taken, the first on the planning permission with a second vote on Listed Building Consent.

The Sub-Committee proceeded to the votes.

For the Planning Permission, votes were cast as follows:

FOR	26
AGAINST	0

There were zero abstentions.

For the Listed Building Consent, votes were cast as follows:

FOR 26

AGAINST 0

There were zero abstentions.

Therefore, the recommendations were carried and planning permission and Listed Building Consent granted.

Resolved: That Members approve the following recommendations:

Planning Permission

1. That, subject to the execution of planning obligation(s) and other agreements being entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act and S278 of the Highways Act 1980 in respect of the matters set out under the heading 'Planning Obligations', and recommended conditions of development, the Planning and Development Director be authorised to issue a decision notice granting planning permission under application 25/00270FULMAJ for the above proposal in accordance with the details set out in the schedule attached to the report, the decision notice not to be issued until the agreement has been executed; and
2. That 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 agreements under Section 278 of the Highway Act 1980 in respect of those matters set out in the report.

Listed Building Consent

3. That the Planning and Development Director be authorised to issue a decision notice granting Listed Building Consent under application 25/00271/LBC for the above proposal in accordance with the details set out in the schedule attached to the report.

4. SUGAR QUAY JETTY

The Sub-Committee received a report which sought the approval of planning permission for the use of part of Sugar Quay Jetty for seating and service in association with the restaurant and drinking establishment use (Sui Generis) located on the ground floor of the adjacent Sugar Quay, Lower Thames Street, together with associated works including installation of furniture, and perimeter planters and benches.

The Officer introduced the report and explained that the application is for the use of parts of Sugar Quay jetty for outdoor seating and service in connection with the lawful ground floor restaurants/drinking establishments to use Sugar Quay Lower Thames St. The Officer explained how the proposal includes the installation of tables and chairs, planters and integrated public benches and referred to some photos and aerial views for context. (The Officer displayed

pictures via a slideshow presentation for Members to show different angles of the Sugar Quay building with the jetty).

The Officer moved on to explain that Sugar quay comprises a residential building above a vacant commercial unit at ground floor and that its lawful use was covering class E and drinking establishments (Sui Generis). He explained how the jetty projects over the river and was currently fully accessible to the public, although the central section was private land under a 2014 labelled Planning Permission which was granted in 2016, and the associated section 106 deed of variation. The public route around the perimeter of the jetty was secured in perpetuity by that legal agreement. The Officer then displayed the public route and highlighted that it was shown in the red area and that this was the plan appended to that agreement.

The Officer explained that the applicant is seeking to use approximately 365 square metres of the jetty for seating and service in association with the lawful commercial use. He highlighted that Members will be aware of the concerns about the perceived loss of public space, and stressed the importance for officers to note that the central area of the jetty was always intended to remain private under the Section 106 agreement. The current proposal does not reduce the public route. Approximately 60% of the jetty would remain open to the public and the scheme would introduce new planting and landscaping and public seating on the public facing side.

The proposed seating area would have a maximum capacity of 157 covers and the opening hours are proposed from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM, with close-down to finish by 9:30 PM. The design includes planters forming a clear boundary with public facing benches. There are no covered seating areas within the seating area such as pods and no amplified music was proposed, and this would be secured by condition as well.

The Officer pointed out on a slide that Members can see the comparison showing the difference between the public route that was secured by the legal agreement and now the new proposed seating area. The minimum width, 3.5 metres, would be retained at the pinch points between the southern boundary of the sitting area and the steps down from the jetty to the river. So, through negotiation during the assessment, the proposed layout was slightly less than the private area and this was negotiated specifically to increase the sense of openness and to improve the experience for those walking around the jetty. He explained how as part of the design, the new planters will define the seating area, which would provide clear segregation whilst enhancing greening and biodiversity on the jetty. The benches ensure that the public realm remains inclusive and welcoming for all users, including a wheelchair user, with wheelchair seating spaces adjacent to the benches (the Officer pointed out a shaded green area which reflected this space). The final landscaping strategy, including detailed planting and maintenance scheme, the use of species appropriate for Riverside locations, and the retention and replacement of the planting for the lifetime of development, was to be secured by condition. The proposed planting will deliver a small, measurable biodiversity uplift from the

baseline of hard standing, as well as incorporating some sustainable drainage measures by capturing and attenuating water.

The Officer revealed that 62 objections have been received, citing loss of open space, increased noise and disturbance, antisocial behaviour, as well as safety concerns for those using the city walkway. The Officer acknowledged the potential change to the noise environment but also acknowledged that the site was located in a busy Riverside location within the central activity zone with high background noise and the residential units have been designed with triple glazing and mechanical ventilation. The impacts are considered to be acceptable but subject to mitigation, which was recommended to be secured by the following conditions:

- 9:00 PM closing time and 9:30 PM close down
- seated service only
- no music or promoted events on the jetty
- a detailed operational management plan to include noise controls, quiet set up and close down
- and specifications of the kinds of trolleys to be used and the capacity was capped at 157 covers.

The Officer moved on to discuss the transport safety concerns and how pedestrian comfort level assessments confirm that the comfort levels remain within policy compliance standards, with a minimum peak average of B+. Pedestrians approaching the area where Waiters will be crossing the walkway would have a good level of visibility and the recommended operational management plan condition covers the trolley design as previously mentioned and staff training details.

The Officer summarised the proposal and reassured Members that officers consider the scheme will deliver a use that was compatible of its Riverside context and contribute positively to the vibrancy and activity of this part of the Thames path. Subject to the recommended conditions, as previously mentioned, the impacts on residential amenity, pedestrian movement and heritage assets are considered to be acceptable and officers therefore recommend approval subject to the conditions set out in the report.

The Chair thanked the Officer for delivering a clear and concise report. He stated that Members will now get to hear from two registered objectors (David Dadds and Martha Grekos). He prompted the objectors to introduce themselves and explain their role in the process.

Objector 1

David Dadds, representing the residents, presented a detailed objection to the application, focusing primarily on noise impact, planning gaps, and resident rights. He criticised the officer's report for failing to adequately reflect the findings of the RBA acoustic consultants, who originally worked on the building and now conclude that the proposal would cause significant adverse noise effects due to patron activity on the jetty. He argued that common sense alone

suggests that placing 157 diners just 6 metres from residential windows would create substantial noise, especially on busy evenings. He noted that even the City's Environmental Health Officers had raised concerns not fully addressed by the Operational Management Plan, which has not yet been made available for scrutiny by either the Committee or residents.

Dadds urged the Committee to defer or refuse the application until the operational details are fully disclosed. He illustrated the potential noise impact by comparing it to the ambient sound in the committee room during recess, which involved only a fraction of the number of people proposed for the jetty. He also highlighted that 27 residential units face the riverside, with 12 residents formally objecting. These residents purchased their homes expecting to enjoy quiet balconies and open windows, not to face a permanent outdoor dining area. He contrasted the occasional aerobics class currently held on the jetty with the permanent, intensified use proposed.

Dadds criticised the applicant's use of Australian acoustic standards, suggesting it was an attempt to downplay the impact, and questioned why UK standards weren't used. He stressed that this detail was missing from the officer's report, which he found unacceptable.

He concluded by reminding Members of existing planning conditions that restrict noise from the commercial unit, including a 45 dBA limit, and argued that the proposed outdoor use would breach these protections. He asked Members to consider whether they would personally accept 157 diners outside their own homes, and urged the Committee to refuse the application to protect residents' amenity.

The Chair thanked Mr Dadds and introduced Martha Grekos as the next registered Objector.

Objector 2

Martha Grekos introduced herself to the committee as a planning Barrister and revealed that she will be representing Pat and Ross Goldrick, who are residents and leaseholders of 123 Sugar Quay. She discussed her objection letter submitted Members along with a petition of 1,530 signatures which sets out the planning policy reasons and why they object to this planning application. She highlighted three overall main considerations to the committee:

Martha Grekos raised the following three principal objections to the planning application:

Publicly Accessible Land

- The jetty at Sugar Quay was maintained by residents under their lease and was both privately maintained and publicly accessible. The proposed retail use would commercialise this space, undermining its current open and inclusive nature.
- Reference was made to the Mayor of London's Public London Charter, which promotes accessibility of public spaces.

- Concerns were raised about the loss of openness and the impact of segregating space for paying customers.
- The 2016 Section 73 application and associated deed of variation included obligations to comply with the River Works Licence, which supports the current use and accessibility of the jetty.

Environmental Amenity

- The proposals are expected to generate substantial noise, adversely affecting residential amenity.
- The planning officer's report was criticised for placing the burden of mitigating nuisance on residents rather than the applicant.
- No Section 106 agreement has been proposed to mitigate impacts.
- Practical concerns were raised about waiter movement between the restaurant and jetty, potentially causing disruption and safety risks on the public highway under the overhang.
- It was suggested that the applicant could have pursued an outdoor paving licence instead, preserving the jetty's current use.

Interference with Rights

- Residents hold 999-year leases and contribute to jetty maintenance; their rights to use the space are established in lease documents and associated plans.
- The proposed use would interfere with these rights and could lead to legal action.
- The objector warned that granting planning permission may result in injunctive proceedings and a private lawsuit.

The Chair thanked Martha, and informed colleagues that there was an opportunity to ask clarifying questions from the objectors, bearing in mind that they will also have opportunities to ask questions of Officers on the detailed report.

A Member asked for clarification on the current use and control of the jetty, specifically whether residents manage access and how the space was used. In response, Martha Grekos explained that the jetty was governed by a licence, and that the owner was currently in breach of its terms, as required planting and seating are missing. She stated that both residents and the public use the space similarly, (for walking, eating, taking photos, doing yoga, or spending time with family) highlighting that there was no physical demarcation separating public from private use. Ms Grekos described the jetty as privately owned but publicly accessible, akin to spaces behind Liverpool Street Station, where land was privately managed but open to all. She added that the building's management currently controls the gates, which are closed around 8:00 or 9:00 PM, and also handles bin collection twice daily. The City Corporation does not maintain the space, and under the agreement, the jetty was supposed to be open 24/7, which was not currently the case. Mr Dadds added that the jetty functions similarly to open space within private land, such as a communal garden, and that the visual and functional amenity it provides would be lost if the proposal proceeds. He

warned that the change would result in up to 157 diners overlooking residents' balconies, significantly altering the character and privacy of the space.

A Member raised a question about the analogy made between the jetty and a "village green", asking whether there are comparable spaces elsewhere in the City that residents can use in a similar way. In response, Mr Dadds clarified that the analogy was not about the physical structure of the jetty but about the principle of communal or designated resident space, similar to common land, village greens, or communal gardens. He explained that when planning consent was granted in 2016-2018, the jetty was understood by incoming residents to be their space, and that it would be inappropriate to now suggest they simply use another area instead.

The Chair thanked Mr Dadds and agreed that the committee must not stray into private matters. Which would include, for example, payments of costs for jetty maintenance, which will be a private matter. He then chose another Member to ask a clarifying question for objectors.

The Member revealed that she was the Chair of the planning committee at the time this application came to the committee, and that the committee was always aware that the whole of the jetty was identified as private use for the residents only. She explained how there was a previous problem with a developer, which was why the 106 agreement was put in place, and that the Section 106 agreements clearly identify the public route, so there was no misunderstanding going forward. On the contrary, the riverworks licence has the publicly accessible routes and then the private space was still identified for the residential use, which was why it was written into their lease agreement.

Mr Dadds answered this question, explaining how the 106 agreement and the lease agreements are all agreements made together and not in isolation, including all the licences. He revealed how as part of one of those conditions, it was made clear to protect the public space, protect the residents open space and ensure there was no breakout of any noise from the activity of the commercial space that would affect the residents at their immediate home or their balconies. He highlighted how there were many restraints on the commercial use through those agreements and that seems to be missed. Mr Dadds asked that Members think about what was considered in 2016/18, such as the conditions and why it was necessary then to protect the residents as it was today. He finished by stating that nothing has changed, the residents need protection from the commercial use.

Another Member asked a question regarding public safety and whether the structure can take the additional loading of the proposed tables and chairs and 157 people. She referred to the paper, reading the sentence "the Port of London authority do not object to the application". She asked whether that reference was in relation to the number of people on the jetty or the structure of the jetty.

The Chair requested that the question be saved to be asked to the Officers. The Chair gave his thanks to the objectors for answering the clarifying questions and

the Members for asking them. He introduced the next section of the meeting where Members would hear from the applicants.

Applicant

Charlotte Goodrum introduced herself to the committee and explained that she was a partner in the planning team at Daniel Watney and extended her appreciation and thanks to the presenting officer and to the assembled Members. She revealed how she will be speaking on behalf of the applicant at APML estate who intends to bring forward use of the jetty for outdoor seating in order to introduce vitality and vibrancy to the riverfront and enhance the area in line with the principles set out in Destination City and the soon to be adopted city Plan 2040. She explained how as previously mentioned, private use of part of the jetty was established in the planning history but highlighted to Members that the applicant was proposing to create a smaller private area and a larger public area - 61% of the jetty area than previously envisaged. Ms Goodrum explained how enhancements are proposed to the public area, such as; planting to add visual amenity and biodiversity enhancements, timber seating to encourage the public to dwell and accessible rest points to ensure a shared and inclusive setting. She revealed how access to the river will be unchanged, ensuring existing and future leisure and logistics repair and activities can continue to take place. Ms Goodrum went on to revealed how the Port of London Authority (PLA) have raised no objection to the proposals, and that the applicant was mindful of adopted and emerging policies in respect to the principles of change and noise. The applicant engaged with Sugar Quay residents in 2024 with an initial presentation open to all, and circa 10 apartments attended with follow up meetings as requested, and four apartments were provided reassurance as to the proposed operation. This application was supported by a draft operational management plan, a final version of which would be secured by planning condition. The OMP sets the parameters of the use of the jetty to ensure the opportunities presented by the proposed use are balanced against preserving the amenity of existing and future residents. The commitments within the OMP include a limitation on opening hours to comparable or shorter hours than neighbouring venues, a cap on custom numbers and table service only amongst others. Management training and close-down procedures would also be established. Environmental health officers have confirmed that with suitable planning conditions, they have no objections.

Ms Goodrum revealed how that the applicant has provided substantive highways evidence which confirms pedestrian comfort and safety will be preserved even at peak times of operation. Pedestrian comfort levels at average and peak flows would not fall below B+, the target in the city Plan 2040 and which Transport for London (TfL) described as allowing a comfortable environment for pedestrians. Furthermore, the long views along Riverside Walk would afford pedestrians 33 seconds to observe any customers or waiters crossing the walkway and adjust their course as required. Highways have not raised any objections to the proposals.

Ms Goodrum drew attention to previous discussions which have described Sugar Quay as a vibrant location as it falls within the city central activity zone. The Tower of London and Tower Bridge, HMS Belfast, the South Bank and of course

the River Thames form part of the setting. Ms Goodrum highlighted comparable uses in the immediate area, such as the next-door building, Cheval Three Quays. She revealed how this property was also owned by the applicant, reflecting their long term commitment to creating a high-quality mixed-use destination. Copper Club, a bar and restaurant, Paul and Pret a Manger operate from the ground floor of Cheval Three Quays, and all three benefit from outside seating and this was directly beneath residential balconies and windows. The respective opening hours of these venues range from 7:30 in the morning at Pret through to 11:00 PM for Copper Club. Ms Goodrum drew attention to further examples in comparable settings, such as the Horniman Pub and separately Côte, which both form part of Hay's Galleria and successfully operate across the pedestrian walkway (the Queen's Walk) with customer and staff trips between outdoor seating areas on the riverfront and the main restaurant. She explained how the walkway was narrower than Riverside walk, visibility more limited, and yet the locations are vibrant and buzzy with operating hours extending from 7:30 AM to 11:30 PM.

Ms Goodrum made further comparisons to Butler's Wharf which comprises of Wharf warehouses converted to residential apartments which have restaurants, cafes and bars on the ground floors with external seating. She explained how the opening hours of these premises range from 9:00 AM till midnight and the ground floor activity introduces day into nighttime vitality and vibrancy to the South Bank.

In a summary statement, Ms Goodrum highlighted how the proposal:

- Would create external seating area to 39% of Sugar Quay jetty
- The public parts of the jetty would be enhanced by soft landscaping and public seating, encouraging the public to dwell in the area and engage with the riverfront.
- The application was supported by robust technical assessments and with suitably worded conditions there are no objections from statutory consultees.
- Encourage greater engagement with and bring activity to the riverfront, supporting economic growth within the CASS and this part of the City of London, adjacent to several landmarks. There are many precedents in the surrounding area which demonstrate that a mix of uses with suitable controls in place generate vibrant and vital areas for residents, visitors and workers.
- Encouraging greater use of the jetty alongside the retention and enhancement of pedestrian access and public access to the Thames forms part of the city plan 2040 spatial strategy and key policies and we hope you could support these proposals.

Acoustic Expert Report

Paul Gray introduced himself to the committee as a director of Quantum Acoustics. He explained how his practice has supported the applicant with the assessment of noise from the development proposals. Mr Gray revealed that the officer report provides a very detailed and thorough consideration of the potential noise impacts of the scheme, taking into account the acoustics assessment and the consultation responses from the city's environmental health and licencing teams. Mr Gray highlighted that when considering the potential noise impacts of development proposals, it was important for Members to note that the planning policy does not seek to prevent any noise from new development. The

overarching aims of noise management and noise related planning policy in England was for noise to be mitigated and reduced to a minimum and for significant adverse impacts to be avoided, which does not mean no noise at all. Mr Gray explains how it was accepted that the proposal before you will generate noise and that he would lose his credibility instantly if he contended otherwise. However, his professional judgement based on an objective and reasonable assessment of the proposed use, concludes that impacts are not significant and that reasonable controls are proposed to mitigate noise to a minimum. This judgement is informed by a number of matters, including the character of the area, the sensitivity of neighbouring properties and how noise can be regulated. Mr Gray goes on to list his findings:

- The character of the area - the jetty was located in an area characterised by high ambient noise levels including a mix of pedestrian activity on the Riverside walkway, public use of the jetty including sitting, eating and drinking, noise from passing river traffic, noise from boat stocking at Millennium Pier and distant road traffic noise and overhead aircraft. It was a vibrant location. Mr Gray highlights how the objectors seek to assert that there was a fundamental incompatibility of the proposed use in such a location, but as Charlotte has already highlighted, there exists satisfactory coexistence of restaurants and bars in similar vibrant locations along the banks of the river. That satisfactory coexistence was determined by a number of factors, including how the restaurant was operated and opening hours.
- When Sugar Quay was constructed, the vibrancy and high ambient noise levels characterising the location guided the design of the apartments. Consequently, these embed an extensive package of noise mitigation, including high performance acoustic glazing, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (which means that apartments can be ventilated without the need to open windows), air conditioning (which means that residents can thermally control their apartments to prevent overheating without a need to open windows) and also inset balconies and glazed balustrades. The design features will also mitigate noise associated with the proposed use which includes noise on balconies. The glazed balustrades further up the building provide even more increased protection to the higher units.
- The proposed terminal hour for use by the public was 9:00 PM. The application was also accompanied by a draft operational and noise management plan which sets out how noise associated with day-to-day operations can be undertaken to minimise noise. The proposed use will require the operator to obtain a premises licence which will add further control over the use, including powers to further regulate opening hours, impose conditions, call in licences for review.

Mr Gray summarised and stated how the above controls are fully in line with the Licencing Act objective for the prevention of public nuisance. He also revealed how the Corporation Statement of Licencing Policy for the management of noise was also entirely in accord with policy developments of the Corporation's Noise Strategy 2016 to 2026. In such context, it was perhaps critical to note that the Corporation's licencing team raised no in principal objection to the proposal. Mr Gray drew Members attention to paragraph 27 of the officer report, where it was stated: "no objection from a licencing perspective". Mr Gray acknowledged how the Council's environmental health team has noted some noise concerns, but

confirmed that these can be addressed through conditions, including controlling opening hours and the submission and approval of a detailed operational noise management plan, which the client was happy to accept.

The Chair thanked Mr Gray for his thorough assessment and gave Members the opportunity to ask clarifying questions of the applicants

A Member drew attention to Mr Dadds previous point regarding the use of the Australian standard for calculating noise. Mr Gray explained how he used an Australian standard because there was no widely accepted UK assessment procedure for looking at noise from licenced premises. Australia was more advanced than the UK, and therefore they have dedicated standards that specifically look at noise from entertainment establishments. Mr Gray drew attention to Mr Dadds acoustic consultant who had used an American standard.

A Member queried the prolonged vacancy of the restaurant unit. Stuart Abbot, Director of Asset Management at APML Estate, explained that his client acquired the long leasehold in 2017 to maintain control in the area, given their ownership of 159 adjacent apartments. They later purchased the freehold in 2018. Marketing efforts were delayed due to COVID-19, but resumed in 2023. The unit remains unlet, with ongoing discussions with potential occupiers. Outdoor seating has become a key consideration post-COVID, and uncertainty around the jetty has complicated letting the space to a suitable food and beverage operator.

A Member raised concerns about the safety of staff carrying hot food and drink across a busy pedestrian walkway to the jetty. In response, Charlotte Goodrum explained that the operational management plan includes mandatory training for all staff from day one to ensure they navigate the walkway safely. She highlighted that the walkway offers good visibility, with approximately 33 seconds for pedestrians to observe and adjust to any crossing activity. The combination of staff training and clear sightlines was expected to mitigate any potential conflicts during operations.

A Member raised concerns about the cleaning of the jetty, particularly regarding water usage amid shortages and the potential environmental impact of chemicals entering the river. They also queried the flood risk, referencing the City's Resilience Officer's objection noted on page 503 of the report. In response, Charlotte Goodrum confirmed that cleaning arrangements, including the use of any chemicals, would be detailed in the final operational management plan, which was to be secured via planning condition. The operator will submit this plan, and officers - including Environmental Health - will assess its appropriateness. Regarding flood risk, she noted that an addendum was submitted during the application process and deemed acceptable, with no outstanding concerns, though she suggested officers may wish to comment further.

A Member expressed concern that the proposal may reduce public access to walkways, despite frequent references to the City Plan 2040. They questioned the reliability of the operational management plan, noting its aspirational nature and the lack of assurance that a future restaurant occupier would adhere to it.

The Member highlighted the expected high footfall - over 1,000 people per month - on the Sugar Quay walkway and queried how public access would be maintained given the anticipated 8 staff trips per minute across the jetty. In response, Mark Bubb from Odyssey, responsible for transport matters, stated that staff training under the operational management plan would be key. He added that pedestrian surveys had been conducted and confirmed that usage levels were within Transport for London (TfL) guidance, suggesting no significant issues with pedestrian flow or access.

The same Member challenged the relevance of comparisons made to nearby eating establishments, arguing that they are not directly comparable. They noted that Copper Club has a covered outdoor seating area adjacent to the restaurant, and that other venues mentioned, such as Paul's eateries, have tables and chairs positioned directly on the pavement, not on a separate space 6 metres away like the proposed jetty arrangement. Therefore, the Member questioned the validity of drawing parallels between these setups. In response, Charlotte Goodrum clarified that the intention was not to present a direct comparative analysis, but rather to illustrate that similar venues in the vicinity—such as Horniman and Côte on the South Bank—operate successfully in pedestrian-heavy environments. The examples were meant to demonstrate operational feasibility, not equivalence.

A Member reiterated a previous query for the record regarding the permanent placement of furniture on the jetty. They sought clarification on how tables and chairs would be secured and raised concerns about responsibility for the River Works Licence, including its associated costs, maintenance, and insurance. The Member noted that the Section 106 agreement requires adherence to Port of London Authority (PLA) conditions, which currently fall to residents who pay the licence fee and cover maintenance costs. In response, Charlotte Goodrum confirmed that the draft operational management plan proposes fixed furniture elements on the jetty, with movable items to be secured overnight to prevent crime or antisocial behaviour. Final details would be provided by the operator once appointed and reviewed as part of the planning condition process. Stuart Abbott addressed the point referring to the cost of the River Works licence. He explained that this would be incorporated into the commercial agreement with the future occupier of the restaurant. It was likely that APML Estate would manage the licence directly, with costs recovered from the restaurant operator as part of the lease arrangement.

Following a site visit, a Member raised safety concerns regarding the placement of restaurant furniture on the jetty, specifically in relation to a life ring currently positioned there for public safety. Referring to photographs in the meeting bundle, the Member noted that the proposed restaurant layout would obstruct access to the life ring, potentially compromising safety for anyone falling into the Thames. Charlotte Goodrum confirmed that the issue had been considered, noting the presence of another life ring on the opposite side of the jetty. However, the Member pointed out that the nearest life ring would be inaccessible due to the restaurant's footprint and questioned whether this had been formally assessed. Goodrum acknowledged that it had not yet been discussed with officers but agreed that additional life rings could be considered if necessary. The

Member also raised concerns about accessibility, asking whether the previously stated 33-second crossing time accounted for individuals with mobility or visual impairments. Mark Bubb confirmed that the 33-second crossing time does not account for individuals in wheelchairs or those with visual impairments. The Member expressed concern that this oversight could disadvantage vulnerable pedestrians, especially given the frequency of staff crossings - estimated at one every 20 seconds. Bubb responded that the analysis was based on a minimum 40-metre visibility distance, which he believed allowed sufficient time for pedestrians to adjust their route. However, the Member highlighted that this assumption places the burden on the public, including those with mobility or sight challenges, to move aside for staff carrying hot food and drink, raising further concerns about inclusivity and pedestrian safety.

The same Member also raised environmental concerns about the potential for litter, (such as serviettes, food waste, and broken glass) from the proposed restaurant setup on the jetty which could enter the River Thames, particularly given the open barrier near the life ring shown in the site photographs. Charlotte Goodrum responded that the benefit of a managed outdoor seating area was that staff would be present to promptly clean up any spills or breakages, offering more control than the current public access arrangement. However, the Member pointed out that staff would not be able to retrieve items that fall into the river, which Goodrum acknowledged, noting that such recovery was not currently feasible either. The Chair reminded Members to direct questions through the Chair, prompting the Member to continue in accordance with protocol.

The Chair moved on to invite the Alderman for the relevant ward in question, Bronek Masojada, to present to the committee. Alderman Bronek Masojada addressed the Committee, noting the unusual circumstance of two planning applications affecting the Ward of Billingsgate: Customs House and Sugar Quay Wharf. He expressed strong support for the Customs House proposal, which he felt would positively animate the riverside area, contrasting this with his reservations about the Sugar Quay application. He raised concerns about noise impacts on residents, particularly during warmer months when windows are open, despite assurances about air conditioning and triple glazing. He also questioned the frequency of staff crossings, which are estimated at one every 20 seconds, and the implications of leaving furniture out overnight. While acknowledging the proposed greening as a benefit, he noted that such improvements were promised a decade ago and should not now be used to justify the scheme. Masojada emphasised his broader support for development in the ward, sharing personal reflections on how the riverside has evolved from an unanimated space to a vibrant area. He encouraged further enhancements to the Customs House proposal, suggesting that outdoor seating at Thames Walk level could contribute to public realm activation. He concluded by urging Members not to support the Sugar Quay application, while commending Customs House and encouraging them to go further in their contribution to the area.

Clarifying Questions to Officers

A Member referred to her previous question and queried whether the jetty structure could safely support the additional load from the proposed restaurant setup, including tables, chairs, and up to 157 people, referencing public safety

concerns shown on page 437 of the meeting bundle. She noted that while the applicant mentioned robust technical analysis, it was unclear whether a formal loading report had been submitted. In response, the Planning Officer confirmed that no loading report had been reviewed as part of their assessment. However, they clarified that the Port of London Authority (PLA), as co-owner of the jetty, was responsible for its structural safety. The Officer stated that if the PLA had concerns about the jetty's capacity to bear the proposed load, they would have objected to the application. It was therefore assumed that the PLA had undertaken or reviewed the necessary calculations to ensure safety.

A Member revisited her concern regarding the objection noted on page 503, which stated that the Lead Local Flood Authority did not consider the proposed scheme to meet planning policy requirements related to flood risk. The Member asked why this objection was not addressed in the officer's report and how it had been considered. In response, the Planning Officer clarified that the objection was initially a request for further information concerning safety during flooding. Once the applicant provided the requested details, the objection was formally withdrawn. The Lead Local Flood Authority subsequently reviewed the additional information and deemed the application acceptable in terms of flood risk.

The Chair requested legal clarification on complex matters raised during the meeting, particularly around land ownership, lease obligations, and maintenance payments. Fleur Francis, Chief Planning Lawyer from the Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department, responded by confirming that private rights under leases and related obligations are not material planning considerations for the Committee. She emphasised that the Committee was not responsible for interpreting or enforcing private lease terms, especially as full details of those rights are not available. Francis clarified that granting planning permission does not override any private rights, and any disputes over such rights must be resolved through private legal remedies between landlords and tenants. She also noted that private rights can be renegotiated or acquired, meaning they are not fixed or permanent barriers to development. Regarding the Port of London Authority (PLA) licence, Ms Francis acknowledged that there may be inconsistencies with its terms but stated that these could be addressed separately, either through renegotiation or by applying for a new licence, outside the planning process. She concluded by offering to answer further legal questions if needed.

A Member raised concerns about the loss of accessible public space on the jetty, noting that it is currently used by residents and the public. They emphasised that this was the first time the jetty has been included in a planning application, as previous permissions in 2012 and 2014 did not cover it. The Member argued that the proposed change represents a significant shift in use and questioned why officers had not addressed the loss of open space, a matter typically given high priority in planning decisions due to the scarcity of public space in the City. They also rejected the notion that this issue could be dismissed as a matter of private rights, pointing out that both the Port of London Authority and local residents treat the jetty as accessible public space.

The Officer clarified the historical planning context and explained that during negotiations for the Sugar Quay scheme, the red-lined area was designated as publicly accessible space under the Section 106 agreement, following the riverside route. In contrast, the grey area, which includes the jetty, was never included in that agreement and was always identified as private space. The Member pressed further, asking what weight should be given to the fact that the jetty was currently used by the public, regardless of ownership. The Officer reiterated that while the public has not been prevented from accessing the jetty, its designation under the Section 106 agreement was clear - it was private space, and only the red area was formally recognised as publicly accessible.

A Member sought clarification regarding the uncertainty surrounding legal ownership of the jetty and questioned how the Committee could grant planning permission without clarity on whether the applicant has the right to use the space. They suggested that such matters should be resolved before the application was considered. In response, Fleur Francis clarified that, to the City Corporation's knowledge, the jetty was owned by the Port of London Authority (PLA). She stated that there was no evidence to suggest residents have exclusive rights over the jetty under their leases, and it would not be feasible for the Committee to examine every lease to determine private rights. Importantly, she reiterated that private rights are not material planning considerations, and any breach of such rights would be enforceable through private legal remedies, such as a derogation of grant if a landlord attempted to override leaseholder rights. Ms Francis advised the Committee to focus on planning impacts, such as amenity and loss of open space, rather than ownership disputes. She referred to what the section 106 agreement required and noted that in legal terms, there was no requirement for the jetty to be used solely by residents or the public, reinforcing that planning permission does not override private legal arrangements.

Under standing order 39, Members agreed to extend the meeting.

A Member asked for clarification on how the Committee should interpret paragraph 198 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024, which advises against noise that causes significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life. The Member noted that "significant" does not necessarily mean "large," but rather more than minimal, and sought guidance on whether the acknowledged noise impacts in the report meet that threshold or can be discounted. In response, the Officer explained that the NPPF provides a strategic national framework, which was translated into local and London Plan policies that aim to balance residential amenity with broader objectives, such as promoting vibrancy along the riverfront. He acknowledged that there are competing policy tensions—some policies support activating the riverside, while others protect residential amenity. The Officer stated that the proposal includes mitigation measures, such as a cap on the number of covers and a 9:00 PM operating limit, which are intended to strike a balance between vibrancy and amenity. He concluded that, based on the planning assessment, the impacts are considered acceptable, and the recommendation to approve reflects what officers believe was a reasonable balance between the relevant policy objectives.

The Deputy Chair made several key points in support of the application. He began by urging Members to focus on the planning merits of the proposal and not be swayed by private legal matters or perceived legal threats from objectors. He emphasised that the Committee should make its decision independently and confidently, based on the planning application and the advice of its own officers. He cautioned against viewing the jetty as a “village green,” arguing instead that this was a vibrant, urban part of the City, identified as a key area of change. He noted that the building itself appears designed for such an environment, with features like triple glazing and recessed balconies that accommodate a lively setting. The Deputy Chair acknowledged the applicant’s willingness to accept conditions on hours of operation and service style, describing the proposed restaurant as a civilised and well-managed venue. He also supported the idea of activating the Thames frontage, suggesting that such uses should be celebrated rather than resisted. He found objections to potential uses like aerobics classes on the jetty overly cautious and pointed out that over 60% of the space would remain publicly accessible. He concluded by expressing his support for the application, stating that the planning concerns raised did not, in his view, justify refusal.

A Member shared her thoughts and highlighted the historical significance and public value of the jetty space. She explained that the jetty was originally intended for private residential use, and for many years was inaccessible to the public. The City’s successful negotiation to open part of the jetty, particularly the eastern side, as public open space was seen as a major achievement, offering panoramic views of Tower Bridge and enhancing the riverside experience. The Member noted that the 2016 planning decision carefully balanced public access with residential amenity protections, including restrictions on noise and use. They referenced the current use of the jetty by the public for quiet activities like sitting and taking photographs, and stressed that the absence of furniture discourages lingering, rough sleeping, and antisocial behaviour. They warned that introducing tables and chairs would change the dynamic of the space, encouraging longer stays and increasing noise, particularly from outdoor drinking. They also pointed out that the Customs House application, approved earlier in the meeting, included strict conditions to protect nearby residents—such as requiring windows and doors facing residential areas to remain closed. In contrast, the Sugar Quay proposal would place up to 156 people directly outside residential windows, and the suggestion that residents should simply keep their windows closed was deemed unacceptable, especially for those who prefer natural ventilation over air conditioning. The Member concluded that the existing mixed-use of the jetty, public and residential, should be preserved, and that the proposed changes would introduce new risks rather than resolve existing ones. They argued that the only way to uphold the protections established in 2016 and maintain residential amenity was to refuse the application, stating that the proposed conditions were insufficient.

A Member shared her strong support for the application, sharing her perspective as a resident of Queen Hythe, a nearby riverside ward. She highlighted the positive transformation of the riverside over the past 20–30 years, describing it as a monumental improvement for residents, workers, and tourists alike. She emphasised the importance of continuing to activate and enliven the area to

attract more people and enhance its appeal. Drawing comparisons to European cities like Rome, Madrid, and Paris, she noted that outdoor cafés and active street life are common features, with waiters regularly crossing pedestrian areas. She acknowledged that England's weather differs from southern Europe, suggesting that seasonal variation would naturally limit noise levels during colder months. In conclusion, she reiterated her full support for the application, viewing it as a step toward making the riverside more vibrant and welcoming.

A Member voiced her objection to the application, expressing disappointment that the Committee was being asked to consider a proposal without full transparency. She highlighted that the existing Section 106 agreement and deed of variation explicitly reference residents' rights, which she felt were being overlooked in the current application. She challenged the legal interpretation presented by the City Solicitor's representative, citing statements from residents that their leases grant them use of the jetty, and questioned why the application was being considered without a change to those lease terms. The Member also raised concerns about noise impacts, referencing the Environmental Health Officer's own findings that the proposal would result in unacceptable noise levels. She questioned why such impacts were being dismissed and why the Committee would approve a scheme that breaches a material planning consideration—namely, the protection of residential amenity. Additionally, she pointed to the River Works Licence and leaseholder agreements, arguing that these are binding third-party legal instruments that should not be ignored. She concluded by stating her deep dissatisfaction with the report and confirmed her intention to object to the application, citing unresolved legal conflicts, unacceptable noise impacts, and disregard for established resident rights.

A Member expressed support for the application, framing the Thames riverbank in central London as a public amenity that should be enjoyed by all, not reserved for a select few. He referenced Mr Dadds' earlier comments and shared his long-standing admiration for the vibrant South Bank, where residents, visitors, and businesses coexist harmoniously. While he acknowledged the importance of quiet enjoyment of one's home, he argued that living by the Thames inherently involves noise, citing frequent river traffic as an example. Initially inclined to oppose the application due to unresolved private disputes, the Member explained that a conversation with Councillor Sophie Mooney, a long-time resident who supports the proposal, helped shift his perspective. He agreed with the Deputy Chair's sentiment that decisions should be made "without fear or favour", and expressed confidence that any private legal matters would be resolved appropriately. He concluded by confirming his support for the application, viewing it as a positive step for the city's public realm.

A Member raised his objection to the application, focusing on the suitability of the proposed use of the jetty space. He argued that the Committee has previously taken great care to protect residential amenity when approving similar external uses, such as restaurants, and that this proposal represents a contradiction to that approach by placing a high intensity use directly adjacent to residential units. The Member emphasised the need for consistency and rationality in planning decisions, rejecting the notion that the jetty's private ownership should diminish the importance of its current use and impact. They stressed that the primary

planning consideration should be the impact on residential amenity, which they felt was too significant to justify approval. Additionally, the Member raised concerns about the loss of accessible open space, noting that the jetty was actively used and valued by both residents and the public. They compared this to how the Committee would typically protect the amenity value of a private garden, arguing that similar principles should apply here. In conclusion, the Member stated that the proposal goes too far, both in terms of its impact on residents and the loss of valued public space, and therefore should be refused.

A Member expressed her opposition to the application, raising concerns about inconsistency with previous planning decisions. Although not a councillor at the time of the original approval, the Member was troubled by the fact that the jetty was never intended to accommodate a 157-cover restaurant, and suggested that had this been the case, it would have been made clear in earlier planning stages. They also questioned the lack of a loading report from the Port of London Authority, which would confirm whether the jetty can safely support the proposed use. Setting aside legal and technical uncertainties, the Member focused on the balance of stakeholder interests, highlighting the public and resident use of the jetty versus the commercial motivations behind the application. They noted that the applicant had admitted the proposal was intended to attract a tenant and criticised the lack of prior investment in the space, such as seating or planters, as evidence of a purely commercial intent.

Weighing the interests of the public, residents, and the applicant, the Member concluded that the proposal does not serve the wider community and confirmed their intention to vote against the application.

Deputy Henry Pollard spoke in support of the application, drawing on personal experience from working at Sugar Quay 35 years ago when the jetty was inaccessible and reserved for industrial use. He recalled how the wharf was originally built to handle heavy cargo, such as tonnes of sugar, and therefore believed it could easily accommodate people and restaurant use. He framed the proposal within the broader vision of Destination City, advocating for a welcoming, vibrant riverside that serves residents, workers, and visitors. Pollard acknowledged the challenges facing the hospitality sector, including rising taxes and job losses, and argued that the City should support diverse hospitality offerings to help the sector thrive. Representing Dowgate Ward, he expressed a desire for more hospitality venues along the river and saw this proposal as a valuable addition to Billingsgate Ward. He felt the 9:00 PM closing time was reasonable and not overly disruptive, especially for workers who finish late. Pollard expressed confidence in the officers' assessment, stating that they would not present an unlawful or inappropriate scheme. He recalled attending the 2016 committee meeting and had hoped then that the restaurant space would become active and vibrant, eventually needing outdoor space like the jetty. He dismissed concerns about waiters crossing pedestrian paths, noting that this was common in cities across the UK and abroad. Concluding, he urged the Committee to embrace the present, support dynamic restaurant spaces, and approve the application to help bring life to the riverside.

The Chair closed the debate by summarising the wide-ranging discussion and reaffirming the Committee's role. He reminded Members that they had received a clear legal steer on what constitutes a material planning consideration, and that the Committee was fully within its remit to make a decision based on the evidence presented by officers. He acknowledged that it was City officers who originally negotiated public access to the jetty, which had always included an element of private use—a use that would now be formalised if the application were approved. He also referenced the acoustic evidence, noting that while there were conflicting expert views, the applicant's acoustic consultant had concluded that the proposal would not cause a meaningful noise impact on residents. The Chair reflected on comments made by an objector, Mr Dadds, who described the potential outcome as “merry, jolly, and joyful.” He used this to underscore the point that the Committee was not a rural parish council, but the Planning Committee for the City of London, a global, bustling urban centre. He urged Members to keep that context in mind as he moved the meeting to a final vote on the application.

The Sub-Committee proceeded to vote on the recommendation before them.

Votes were cast as follows:

IN FAVOUR	13
OPPOSED	12

There were zero abstentions.

Therefore, the recommendation was carried and planning permission granted.

RESOLVED: That Members approve the following recommendation:

That, subject to the recommended conditions as set out under the heading ‘Schedule 1’, 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.

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

The Sub-Committee received details of development applications received by the Department of the Built Environment since the report to the previous meeting on 8 July.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- Note the report and its contents.

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

The Sub-Committee received details of 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 Members:

- Note the report and its contents.

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

Concern was expressed that Members had not had the opportunity to contribute to the Corporation's response to the Government consultation on the reform of planning committees. The Chair, while accepting that this was fair criticism, explained the challenges linked to the timescale for submitting the response. He undertook to make greater use of email for consultation where appropriate in future.

In response to a question, the Chair updated Members on the latest position regarding the City Plan process, noting that the examination hearings were scheduled to take place between March and June 2026. Agreement had been received to consult on the main modifications to the Plan, which were to be considered by the Local Plans Sub-Committee on 9 October and subsequently by the Planning and Transportation Committee on 21 October.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

No urgent business was identified.

The meeting ended at 1.01 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Judith Dignum
judith.dignum@cityoflondon.gov.uk