

London Borough of Islington

**Planning Committee - 5 September 2022**

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 5 September 2022 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**      **Councillors:**      North (Vice-Chair), Clarke, Convery, Hamdache, Hayes, Ibrahim, Jackson and McHugh

**Councillor North in the Chair**

**1      INTRODUCTIONS (Item A1)**

Councillor Toby North welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members of the Committee and officers introduced themselves and the Chair outlined the procedures for the meeting.

**2      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A2)**

Apologies were received from Councillors Klute and Poyser.

**3      DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A3)**

Councillor Kay substituted for Councillor Poyser.

**4      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A4)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5      ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item A5)**

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

**6      MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A6)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**7      1 TORRENS STREET, LONDON , EC1V 1NY (Item B1)**

Application for full planning permission for the partial demolition of the existing building, construction of two new floors, reconfiguration of floorspace and renewal of the existing facades to provide new office floorspace (Use Class E(g)), retail floorspace (Use Class E(a)&(b)), a replacement public house (Sui Generis), alongside new access arrangements, landscaping improvements, new public realm and other associated works.

(Planning application number: P2022/0871/FUL

The Chair informed Councillor McHugh that having left the room briefly while the item was being considered she could not participate in the deliberation and decision.

In the discussion the following points were made:

- The Planning Officer informed the meeting that since Committee papers were published objections were received from 5 local residents and also the Angel Association, the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society and Historic Building's and Places, objecting on issues already addressed and outlined in the report, with the following additional points raised:
  - That any impacts on the amenity of residents on Duncan Terrace should be considered within the context of the existing building at 391-393 City Road
  - Additional impacts relating to noise and disturbance associated with the replacement public house and proposed plant equipment in particular air conditioning units would be unacceptable if not suitably controlled
  - That the development should have more active frontages and should involve significant improvements to Torrens Street
  - That a building that has been so recently constructed should not be demolished
- The Planning Officer informed the meeting of an amendment to condition 18, requesting a revised Fire Statement to address a number of minor issues regarding fire safety.
- Meeting was advised that the site is within London's Central Activities Zone and is located within the Angel Town Centre and forms part of the Angel & Upper Street Special Policy Area.
- Members were informed that the proposal is not considered to cause harm to the character or appearance of surrounding heritage assets.
- In Land use terms, the Planning officer advised that the proposal would result in a 7,152sqm uplift of office floor space in London's Central Activity Zone; a maximisation of commercial floor space in accordance with the NPPF, London Plan Policies and the adopted & emerging Local Plan; a 255sqm new retail unit with active frontages in the Angel Town Centre; the re-provision of the public house, 715sqm new affordable workspace fitted out to Cat A+ specification at peppercorn rent for 20 years and a substantial improvement to the public realm including improvements to Torrens Street and a route through to the High Street.
- Also on the site's western elevation, at street level along Islington High Street, flexible retail uses (Class E (a) & (b)) are proposed which will introduce a new active frontage to the proposed development and the public house (Sui Generis) will be retained on the site's south-eastern elevation, along Torrens Street.
- In addition to the above, the Planning Officer noted that the existing basement level would be retained and reconfigured providing space for on-

site servicing, delivery and waste refuse vehicles. Cycle facilities are also proposed at lower ground level as well as the majority of the building's plant machinery.

- Members were advised that on the upper ground levels, one through to six, the proposal will provide flexible office workspace (Class E (g) (i)) which is suitable for a range of tenants. On the lower and upper ground levels at the north-eastern side of the site, flexible affordable workspace is proposed.
- On the issue of the heritage matters, the Principal Urban Design Officer informed the meeting that although there have been request for the building to be classified as a non-designated heritage asset by Save Britain's Heritage and the 20<sup>th</sup> C society, the application block is not considered to be an exemplar of postmodern architecture worthy of protection or retention. It is considered to fall well short of the qualities and characteristics that are evident in those that benefit from listing.
- Members were advised that Historic England, with responsibility for the consideration and listing of buildings of architectural historical and cultural merit over the last few years have listed 24 Postmodern buildings, the first being in 2016 with the most recent tranche in mid 2018, with such buildings being referred to as "bold, playful, and brightly coloured" that date from the late 1970s to the mid 1990s.
- The Officer highlighted 4 postmodern buildings to illustrate the standard of unique, bespoke, and joyous properties that contributed to their qualifying characteristics which resulted in the buildings being listed, and they include No 1 Poultry which like Angel Square is a large commercial building which occupies much of an urban block; The Circle, a large scale Mixed-use residential development with offices and commercial units; Isle of Dogs Pumping Station, 1988 and The Cambridge Judge Business School 1993, incorporating the former Addenbrooke's Hospital.
- Members were advised that having analysed the qualities and characteristics of listed postmodern buildings, details which are highlighted in the report and those of the existing building, officers have found Angel Square wanting by comparison as it simply does not possess the extraordinary qualities of those postmodern buildings deemed eligible for listing by experts in the field.
- The Officer stated that the detailing of the existing building is in part clumsy, and clunky, particularly to parts of the roofscape, and the materials palette is somewhat ordinary with its predominantly yellow brickwork, pale stone, and render. In addition its fenestration is similarly very ordinary while its entrancing properties are particularly challenged.
- Members were advised that that the greatest failing of the existing building is its interface with the public realm which is particularly harsh as the pavement is tightly squeezed at what is an intensively used pedestrian route to and from transport nodes and to the commercial hearts of Angel and Upper Street, that Pedestrians jostle hard up to the heavily trafficked street edge with ensuing noise and air pollution.
- Other failings of the existing building highlighted are that the building edge to the High Street and its return to City Road is jagged with its varying setbacks and, protrusions, lightwells and vents, elements which are not conducive to pedestrian amenity, that there are very extensive runs of dead

frontage; large scale, noisy and smelly extractors vent directly onto the pavement and therefore the pedestrian; that there is minimal entrancing and what there is, is of a poor standard of design; accessibility into the complex is challenged with a single, narrow ramp positioned to the side of the main high street entrance and the site is not permeable with the existing pedestrian route connecting Torrens Street with the High Street being narrow, circuitous, and closed to the public.

- The Officer reminded members that the Council's emerging Local Plan which is nearing adoption and is a material consideration, that Site Allocation AUS 16 makes it clear that the Borough does not require the protection of the existing post-modern facade stating that '*Development should seek improvements to the building facade and aim to achieve a more positive relationship with Islington High Street.*'
- In summary, members were advised that for reasons stated above it is the view of officers that the existing building is not worthy of protection, including its classification as a non-designated heritage asset and that in line with emerging policy, Officers support its refurbishment, reconfiguration, extensions, and elevational simplification as proposed.
- Members were reminded that the proposed scheme will result in significant enhancements to the ground floor interface as demonstrated by an enlarged pavement to the high Street and City Road return creating a more attractive and useable pedestrian environment with a simplification of the building edge; new and additional entrances around the site all of which are fully accessible; multiple uses to the ground floor furthering animation; enhanced and publicly accessible pedestrian connection between Torrens Street and the High Street; a proposed pedestrian orientated treatment to the surface of Torrens Street and pavement.
- On height and massing concerns and in particular its impact on views, meeting was advised that the building is of a comparable storey height ambient to its neighbours and that given that it occupies a prominent position at the intersection of two primary routes, the relatively minor increase in height is considered appropriate relative to the scale and structure of the urban form.
- It was also noted that although the building lies within the St Paul's Viewing corridor, the new roof profile is linear and does not compete with the animation or form of the dome and the towers of the cathedral, ensuring that its legibility remains readily appreciated.
- A total of 1190 letters were sent out with 25 objections received, raising issues such as an overprovision of office floorspace in London, loss of daylight and sunlight, loss of privacy and increased overlooking to Duncan Terrace Other issues raised included noise, disturbance and light pollution, that the building should be protected considering that the existing building is of significant merit, that the proposed design is poor and fails to contribute to the intersection
- On the complaints of over provision of office floor space, members were reminded that London Plan states that significant office functions of the CAZ should be supported and enhanced by all stakeholders, including the

intensification and provision of sufficient space to meet demand for a range of types and sizes of occupier and rental values.

- With regard to the impact of the proposed scheme on neighbouring residents, the planning officer acknowledged that although there was some 5% daylight and sunlight loss to Duncan Terrace residents it was still within the accepted BRE guidelines. Some adverse losses to some windows of No3, 9 and 11 High street were noted, however still within the expected level. On the issue of overlooking, the Planning officer advised that the nearest development is over 18m separation distance although not an issue for consideration as it is an office /retail development.
- Conditions 8, 9 and 10 have been recommended to address noise disturbances from the plant or the use of the roof terraces and conditions 12, 13, and 14 relate to Operational Management Plan, internal lighting and security lighting.
- Meeting was advised that during the operation phase of development, scheme will result in 53.1% reductions in regulated CO2 emissions, that there will be a significant reduction of embodied carbon by retaining the existing frame and structure and the use of solar panels.
- 348 long stay cycle storage spaces will be provided, the proposal will involve public realm improvements around the site which will include the repaving of all footways which is to secured by section 106 agreement
- Planning Officer acknowledged that despite the reduction in daylight to windows/rooms to properties on Islington High Street, benefits outweigh disadvantages which include an uplift in commercial office space with the CAZ, the refurbishment of the existing office building by providing a greater degree of active frontage along Islington High Street, the provision of high quality affordable workspace and significant improvements to the public realm such as new paving, tree planting and the improvements to the energy efficiency of the operation of the building and reuse of structural elements of the existing building in its redevelopment.
- On the question of whether building had been designed to accommodate recent climate changes challenges especially with it being a glass dominated building and in the hot summer months when air conditioning systems will be used, the Officer noted that the building is designed to be energy efficient, that the Council's energy team had been consulted and no objections had been received.
- On the use of roof terraces and potential noise, meeting was advised that an operational management plan is attached which relates to office operating hours however members can amend the opening hours.
- A resident of Duncan Terrace was concerned that the proposed building was higher and bulkier than the existing building, that the design of the proposed frontage should be amended, and was concerned that history shows that attempts to revitalise the city centres never lives up to expectation.
- Another neighbouring resident requested application be adjourned, that the whole process is flawed and unfair noting that concerns relating to light loss and lack of privacy had not been addressed, and that residents were in the process of seeking advice on the possibility of a judicial review.

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- Other objections included loss of light and overlooking concerns due to the height of the building. It was noted that the proposed building has no character as it is a block of straight lines, and its lack of curves in the design of the building was to minimise developers cost. There was also concern that the proposed building would not be an energy efficient one.
- Another resident from Duncan Terrace was concerned that BRE guidelines had not been strictly adhered to as the assessment of sunlight and daylight did not take into account other tall buildings on City Road nearby. Resident was concerned with the roof terrace suggesting that if committee is minded to grant planning permission conditions be imposed to control any form of illumination into neighbouring properties and restrict hours of operation.
- Another resident noted that the proposed building is not a building worthy of its location, that it is a dull building of straight lines and it is noticeable that the scheme has not taken into account conservation areas hence it will impact the amenity of local residents.
- In response, the applicant stated that the team has engaged with residents for over 15 months on issues such as height, design and overlooking. Meeting was advised that building height has been reduced, noting that the height of the top floor has been set back, that a daylight/sunlight report had been submitted with the application and transgressions to windows were minimal and assessment included its impact on gardens.
- With regards to overlooking concerns, meeting was advised that as an office development it is not an issue and notably there is a separation distance of over 18m between the site and across the adopted road.
- In response to the use of glass across the building and its potential reliance on air conditioning, the applicant advised that this is the norm as office building needs natural light and glass is the best solution.
- On overheating concerns due to the proposed glass building, the applicant stated that a mechanical ventilation / air-conditioning system will be fitted with a system that switches the air-con as soon as the windows are opened.
- On the possibility of using 'grey water' instead of clean water for flushing toilets, the applicant advised that the building is being designed with the use of grey water to significantly reduce the water consumption by up to 50%, reminding members that a sustainability statement has been submitted with the application.
- On the suggestion of improving the offer of 7 placements /apprentices, the applicant agreed, suggesting that this could be improved to a minimum of 14.
- Committee agreed to amend the Heads of Terms for the s106, stating that there will be an increase in the number of work placements to 14No. during the construction phase and if not provided, LBI will request a fee of: £70,000.  
Councillor Clarke moved a motion to amend condition 21 which was seconded by Councillor North, that greywater recycling to be added as a requirement.
- On restricting the hours of use of the roof terrace, Councillor North moved a motion to amend condition 12, stating that the opening hours of the roof

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terraces to be from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday .This was seconded by Councillor Clarke.

- Councillor North also moved a motion to amend condition 37 which specifies opening hours of the pedestrian route, that it should state between 9am to 10pm, 7 days a week. This was seconded by Councillor Ibrahim
- Members welcomed the proposed scheme, that this was a partial demolition, noting the applicants improved offer for more placements and in general is policy compliant in terms of provision of office space and affordable work spaces.

Councillor Convery proposed a motion to grant planning permission subject to amendments to conditions noted above. This was seconded by Councillor Ibrahim and carried.

### **RESOLVED:**

That following consideration of the case officer's report (the assessment and recommendations therein), the presentation to Committee, submitted representations and objections provided verbally at this meeting, planning permission be granted subject to the conditions and informatives set out in Appendix 1 of the officer report ; and subject to the prior completion of a Deed of Planning Obligation made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 securing the heads of terms as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer report as amended above, the wording of which was delegated to officers;

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

### **CHAIR**