

Appendix 2 - Pre-application advice letter for the 2021 scheme

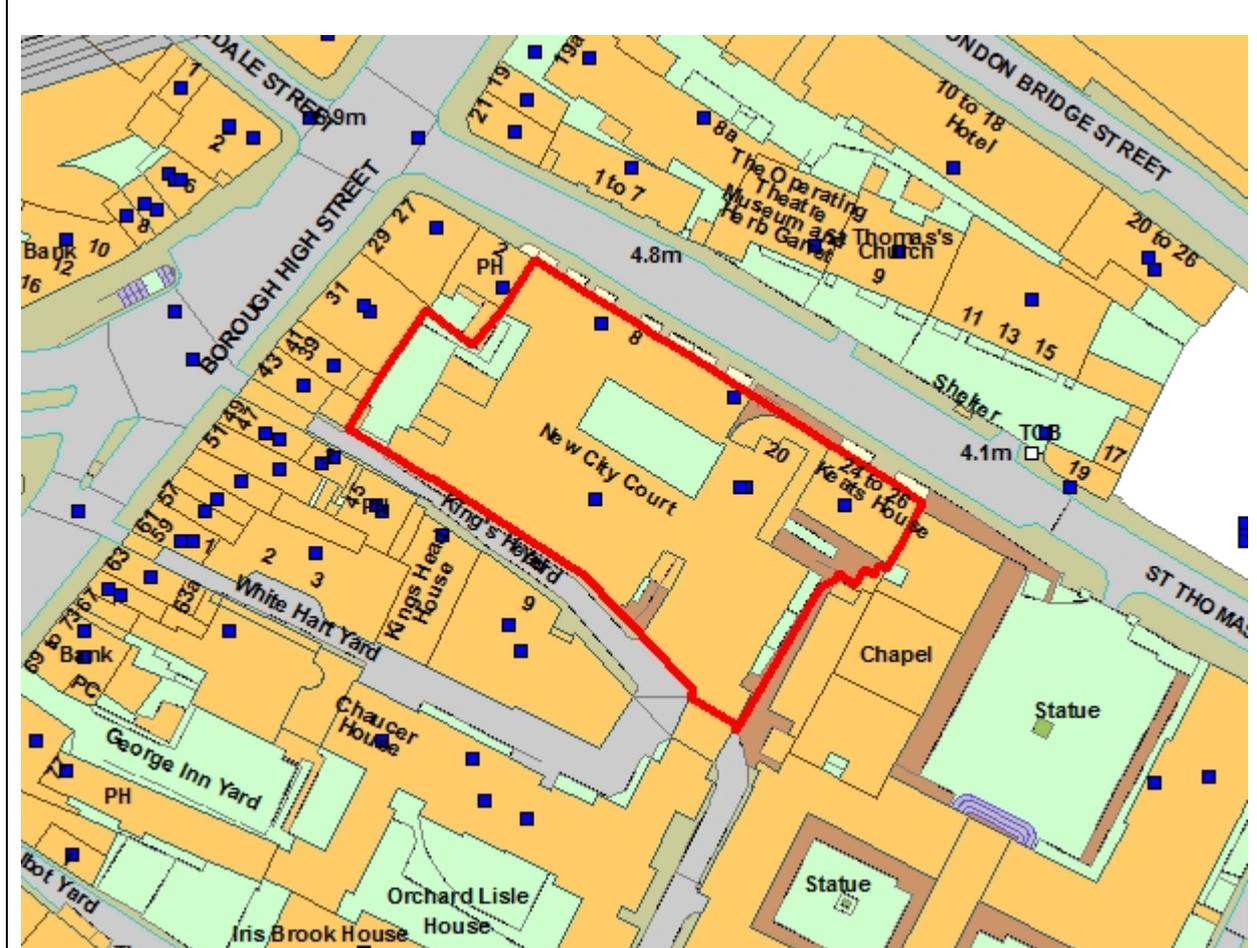


www.southwark.gov.uk

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT – PREAPPLICATION RESPONSE – COVER SHEET

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Reference Number: | 20/EQ/0286 |
| Site Address: | New City Court, 20 St Thomas Street 4-26 St Thomas Street , London, Southwark, |

Location Plan:



| KEY DATES | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Application Start Date: | 16.12.2020 | Application Expiry Date: | 17.03.2021 |
| Earliest Decision Date: | | Committee Date: | Not applicable |

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT – PREAPPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION DETAILS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Application Type: | Pre Application Enquiry |
| Proposal: | Pre-application advice for redevelopment to include demolition of the 1980s office buildings and erection of an office building, restoration and refurbishment of the listed terrace and works to Keats House, provision of retail floorspace, associated public realm and highways improvements, provision for a new LUL station access, cycle parking, car parking, service, refuse and plant areas, and all ancillary or associated works. |
| Ward(s): | London Bridge And West Bermondsey |
| From: | Director of Planning |
| Case Officer and Team: | Victoria Crosby, Strategic Applications |

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

Executive summary

There is much to commend about the speed with which the project team has sought to progress changes, which explored whether reducing the height from the 2018 application submission to a revised scheme of 25/26 storeys and a revised architecture would enable officers to make a positive recommendation. However, officers' view is that the reduced height (which is accompanied by a significant increase in bulk of the building) does not overcome the principal concerns expressed in relation to the 2018 scheme, particularly on the harm to the townscape, the conservation area and setting of a large number of listed buildings, and would not be supported were it to be formally submitted. The revised servicing arrangement may address one issue with the 2018 application but would need to be agreed by TfL as it would now affect its road. The increased width of the proposal would likely affect the amenity of neighbouring properties more than the original submitted tower.

The pre-application response set out below is based upon the information provided for the three pre-application meetings, and is proportionate in the level of detail that can be given in response.

Site description

The site extends between St Thomas Street and Kings Head Yard to the south, and is mostly covered by a 1980s office building.

The site is located within the:

- Central Activities Zone
- Bankside, Borough and London Bridge Opportunity Area
- London Bridge district town centre
- Bankside, Borough and London Bridge Strategic Cultural Area
- Borough High Street Conservation Area

- Archaeological Priority Zone
- Air Quality Management Area

The heritage assets within the site boundary area include the grade II listed nos 4-8 and 12-16 St Thomas Street as well as Keats House and the Victorian facade along Kings Head Yard. The site is within the Borough High Street Conservation Area.

The heritage assets within the wider context of the site include:

Listed buildings:

- Grade I - Cathedral church of St Saviour and St Mary Overie (Southwark Cathedral) and The George Inn.
- Grade II* - Guys Hospital main building, 9, 9A, 11 and 13 St Thomas Street.
- Grade II - Kings Head public house, Bunch of Grapes public house, no. 15 St Thomas Street, K2 telephone box outside nos. 17 and 19 St Thomas Street, Statue of Thomas Guy in the courtyard of Guys Hospital, the gates, piers and street railings to Guys Hospital along the St Thomas Street frontage, and the alcove from old London Bridge in the inner quadrangle of Guys Hospital. London Bridge station (platforms 9-16) and the railway viaduct arches along Crucifix Lane and St Thomas Street. Several properties along Borough High Street including numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 19A, 28, 30, 32, 34, 38, 40, 50, 52, 53, 53A, 54, 55, 58, 66, 67, 68, 70, 91, 93, 95, 101 and 103, the St Saviours Southwark war memorial, and the bollards at the entrance to Green Dragon Court. The Hop Exchange, 1B and 3 Southwark Street, bollard between nos 1 and 2 Stoney Street, 5 and 6 Stoney Street. The Globe public house (and bollards and lamp post to rear), and post at north corner of Bedale Street.

Conservation areas:

- Borough High Street Conservation Area extends on all sides of the application site
- Tooley Street Conservation Area (to the north-east)
- Bermondsey Street Conservation Area (to the south-east)
- Liberty of the Mint Conservation Area (to the south-west)
- Union Street Conservation Area (to the south-west)
- Thrale Street Conservation Area (to the west).

Planning policy and material considerations

The statutory development plan for the borough currently comprises The London Plan (2021), the Core Strategy (2011) and saved policies from the Southwark Plan (2007).

The following will be key material considerations for a future application:

- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The New Southwark Plan (Southwark Council's proposed changes to the submission NSP) August 2020 - and any later versions.
- Section 106 Planning Obligations and CIL SPD (2015 as amended)
- Draft Bankside, Borough and London Bridge SPD 2010.

The weight that can be given to the policies in the draft New Southwark Plan will depend upon their stage in the adoption process at the time any future application is determined. The examination in public will have concluded, and the Inspectors' comments would likely have been published by that stage.

Land use

With the changes made to the Use Classes last year, the application would propose Class E uses, although the individual uses would need to be specified in the different subcategories in the proposal description and supporting documents to allow a full assessment.

There is policy support for office use in this location within the CAZ, Opportunity Area and town centre. Draft policy P29 of the NSP requires a marketing strategy to be provided for the use and occupation of the employment space being delivered, to demonstrate how it would meet market demand. The revisions no longer include retail floorspace on the ground level, and would be mainly office space in the Georgian terrace, Keats House, and the tower. There is no objection to the omission of the proposed retail use.

Initial detail was provided on the affordable workspace offer ahead of an April meeting. Proposing 10% of the office floor area is in line with the NSP draft policy P30, and is a dramatic improvement on the 2018 submission. The different buildings would include a variety of unit sizes and different characters which is welcomed. The intention for it to be office space, suitable for tech, creative and biomedical industries is supported.

Further discussions on the management of the affordable workspace, the level of fit out, the rent levels, service charge level, the targeted business/individuals and marketing could continue through the application as they would form heads of terms on any permission (although for the reasons set out below the application is unlikely to be recommended for approval). The local planning authority needs to be confident that the affordable space being proposed would be affordable to occupiers that need discounted rents and meet our eligibility criteria.

Height, form, heritage impacts and landscaping

The applicant has reduced the proposal by 12 storeys when compared to the 2018 scheme. However it remains a significantly tall building that is considered to fail to accord with tall buildings policies in the development plan, and cause harm to many heritage assets in the immediate area and wider London context.

The reduction in height has reduced the prominence of the tower to some degree in some of the wider London views. While it is removed from certain views towards St Paul's, such as around Clerkenwell Road and Farringdon Lane for example, it would remain visible in LVMF views (including next to St Paul's Cathedral), from the Tower of London and from within the City of London.

The revised scheme is still considered to be far too tall in this sensitive location, some 20 storeys higher than its immediate context, and retaining the same floorspace as the 2018 scheme has resulted in a much longer and wider building. It remains a broad tall building in a historic setting, harming the conservation area and setting of listed buildings. A very significant reduction in height, to respond more specifically to the context of the area around Borough High Street and Southwark Street would be needed to be able to conclude that the harm could be outweighed by the benefits. Despite the changes, in our view this revised scheme remains a substantial and incongruous incursion into a sensitive historic setting and, based on the information currently available to us, it could not be supported.

The viewpoints to be included in the TVIA have been set out in a separate email, and generally include the same views as in the 2018 application with some removed where the lower tower would no longer be visible.

The revised proposal has removed the enclosed public garden within the tower, and instead proposes a more typical roof top location for the public space, which would benefit from better light levels and need less management for the planting to thrive. This change is welcomed and helps to address concerns with the 2018 submission on the quality of public access being offered in the tall building. Comments were made in the meetings about the size of the public terrace, questioning what would attract people up to it, and limited information is currently available about the extent of the public access. The design of the crown having a continuous greening around the top to soften the appearance of the tower from all sides has merit, although the pedestrian route along the perimeter is narrow and difficult to use freely. It was also suggested that the vertical greening be incorporated on the southern elevation to help break the width of this tower. The technical detailing of the roof volume, planting types etc will be assessed at the application stage.

In the floorplan drawings provided with the affordable workspace information, a series of columns beneath the tower have been added across the ground floor. The appearance of these columns and how they allow for or impede pedestrian flows across the site and up from the yards (for walkers and wheelchair users) with sufficient clear space will need to be demonstrated in the application to allow assessment.

We have not discussed in detail the works to the listed Georgian terrace on the site, and how these differ from the 2018 LBC application, but in summary it was confirmed in a meeting that the works were broadly the same with the exception of the rear wall (no longer proposing shopfronts) and changes to how many stairwells were being reinstated. This would need to be worked through in detail during the assessment of the LBC application to establish the loss of historic fabric and whether there is any harm.

Neighbour amenity impacts

The broader form of the revised proposal compared with the smaller footprint of the 2018 tower would likely have greater daylight impacts on neighbouring properties, especially those on Borough High Street and the yards. The closer proximity also would raise outlook and privacy issues that are less pronounced with the 2018 scheme. Should the revised scheme be progressed, these neighbour amenity issues would need to be worked through carefully, and are likely to be additional harms that fail the neighbour amenity policies.

Transport and highways

The applicant has kept the new Underground station entrance in the revised scheme, and the route through the site, which are welcomed.

A key issue that is not resolved with the 2018 application is the servicing arrangements. Having all servicing on site, and moving all servicing traffic onto St Thomas Street and away from the yards is supported by internal colleagues (subject to the detail of the turning movements, visibility splays, path widths etc), but most importantly would need TfL's agreement as the highway authority. On-site servicing might address TfL's earlier objections to the on-street arrangement for larger vehicles, however the road designs were not resolved and TfL's agreement is needed if the

revisions are progressed. The applicant is encouraged to enter into TfL's own detailed pre-application process to resolve this ahead of submission. Off-site highway works and contribution towards the redesign of St Thomas Street would be further heads of terms if permission were being recommended.

With a larger footprint to the proposed building, there does not appear to be space to accommodate a cycle docking station, nor convenient visitor cycle parking - although the recent changes at the rear of the Georgian terrace may allow for some to be provided.

Sustainable development implications

The London Plan 2021 introduced new requirements in terms of zero carbon development, whole life cycle assessment, and circular economy statements which will require additional documentation not originally required for the 2018 submission. A carbon offset payment would be required, in line with the November 2020 addendum to the council's Section 106 and CIL SPD. The project's response to these topics have not been discussed during the pre-application process, so no comment is given. A fire statement is a further additional requirement introduced by policy D12 of the London Plan.

Planning obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy

A major proposal of this scale would trigger various planning obligation requirements as set out in the council's Section 106 Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy SPD.

Planning obligations will be required to offset the negative impacts of any development on the site including mitigation highlighted through the ES and to secure policy compliance, for example the affordable workspace, free public access to the roof terrace and public realm, works to secure the Underground access, public transport improvements and contribution towards the St Thomas Street highway improvements. It is important to ensure that all future development is sustainable and contributes towards the provision of appropriate infrastructure and services in the area that future staff and visitors may use. Draft Heads of Terms should be submitted as part of the planning application.

The proposal would be liable for Mayoral CIL2 and Southwark CIL. Further information can be found on these links and an CIL additional information form should be provided with the future application:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/applications/howtoapply/whattosubmit/cil>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/communityinfrastructurelevymay11>

Other matters

As the overall scale of the proposal remains much the same as the 2018 application, the proposal is EIA development. It is understood that the applicant does not intend to submit a request for a fresh scoping opinion, but will use the same topic chapters of the 2018 application EIA. The applicant's assessment of the heritage impacts in the 2018 application is considered by the local planning authority to be inadequate (in terms of the method of the assessment, the unclear reporting of the environmental effects in the ES, on the scale of harm in NPPF terms, and the balancing exercise of the public benefits) and will be a recommended reason for refusal of the 2018

application. The applicant repeating the same approach in the ES for the new application will result in the same conclusion.

The council's Development Consultation Charter has introduced new requirements on applicants to engage with the community and consultees at pre-application, application and post-decision stages. It is a common point of discussion at Planning Committee about what changes the applicant has made in response to feedback. The pre-application plan should be shared with officers. The completed Development Consultation Charter template for the application stage is a validation requirement for the future application, and is separate from the Statement of Community Involvement document.

A range of other planning topics would need to be worked through with the revised scheme, such as the revised basement design's impact on potential archaeological remain, air quality impacts, biodiversity improvements, the flooding risk of the site and incorporation of sustainable drainage with a smaller area of public realm, and the telecommunication impacts.

Conclusion

Although the revised scheme has reduced the height of the tower from the 2018 scheme, it remains a very tall and much wider building in a historic part of the borough that will cause harm to the setting of listed buildings and to conservation areas within the immediate context of the site and further afield. An application for the revised proposal would not be supported.

Based on the information provided to date, it appears that the revised scheme would raise similar issues to the 2018 application in terms of the location of a tall building, its harmful impact on heritage assets not being outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme, and the insufficient ES heritage impact reporting (if the same approach is used again by the applicant). The principal concerns already communicated in relation to the 2018 application would continue to apply.

The change to on-site servicing may address the concerns of the current application as a positive change, but would need to be supported by TfL. The increased provision of affordable workspace to address the emerging New Southwark Plan policy is another welcomed change. The amended massing of the proposal may raise more significant neighbour amenity issues than the 2018 scheme, and may result in an additional recommended reason for refusal.

Comments in the letter above also refer to changes made since 2018 that require additional documentation to be provided with a new application.

Signed: Simon Bevan Director of Planning

Date: 17 April 2021

APPENDIX 1: PLANNING APPLICATION SITE HISTORY

| Reference | Status | Date | Proposal |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|---|
| 18/AP/2633 | Scoping Opinion | 04/10/2018 | <p>Request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion for the redevelopment of the site (comprising numbers 4-16, 20 and 24-26 St Thomas Street) including:</p> <p>Demolition of 20 St Thomas Street and construction of a new office tower building approximately 139m high (comprising double height ground floor reception and retail, 31 storeys of office space, and double height publicly accessible elevated garden and retail unit) totalling 31,200sqm of office and retail floorspace. Double basement for servicing, cycle storage, refuse storage and plant, with vehicle access from Kings Head Yard and two disabled parking spaces.</p> <p>Relocation of Keats House (24-26 St Thomas Street) facade 2m to the west in a new stand alone building. Alterations to and restoration of the listed terrace (8-14 St Thomas Street). Up to 1,800sqm of retail and office floorspace in the listed terrace and Keats House.</p> <p>A new access to the London Bridge Underground station.</p> <p>New ground level pedestrian routes and public realm throughout the site with hard and soft landscaping.</p> <p>Ancillary servicing, highway works and associated works.</p> |
| 18/AP/4039 | Pending consideration | | <p>Redevelopment to include demolition of the 1980s office buildings and erection of a 37 storey building (plus two basement levels) of a maximum height of 144m (AOD), restoration and refurbishment of the listed terrace (nos. 4-16 St Thomas Street) and change of use of lower floors to Class A1 retail, and redevelopment of Keats House (nos. 24-26 St Thomas Street) with removal, relocation and reinstatement of the historic facade on a proposed building, to provide a total of 46,374sqm of Class B1 office floorspace, 765sqm of Class A1 retail floorspace, 1,139sqm of Class A3 retail floorspace, 615sqm of leisure floorspace (Class D2), 719sqm hub space (Class B1/D2) and a 825sqm elevated public garden within the 37-storey building, associated public realm and highways improvements, provision for a new access to the Borough High Street entrance to the Underground Station, cycling parking, car parking, service, refuse and plant areas, and all ancillary or associated works. (Associated listed</p> |

| | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|--|--|
| | | | <p>building consent application ref. 18/AP/4040).</p> <p>RECONSULTATION as additional environmental information has been submitted, a revised servicing strategy, energy strategy, ventilation strategy and travel plan and associated revised drawings previously submitted.</p> <p>The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement submitted pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, which can be viewed on the council website southwark.gov.uk using the reference number. A hard copy of the application documents is available for inspection by prior appointment at New City Court, St Thomas Street, SE1 9RS (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) by contacting david.shiels@dp9.co.uk. Copies of the Non-Technical Summary are available free of charge, CD copies of the full ES are available for purchase for £125 and printed copies of the ES can be provided on request for sale at a cost of £600 by contacting Waterman Group (ie@watermangroup.com)</p> |
| 18/AP/4040 | Pending consideration | | <p>Restoration, rebuilding and refurbishment of the listed terrace (nos. 4-16 St Thomas Street) including:</p> <p>Demolition of 1980s fabric across the rear elevation and demolition of the attached 1980s office building, and reinstatement of the rear elevation of the terrace and provision of shopfronts.</p> <p>Rebuild the second floor, roof and chimneys of no. 16, reskin the side facade and creation of ground floor entrances.</p> <p>Rebuild the roof and chimneys of no. 14.</p> <p>Removal and replacement of roof slates with natural slate to nos. 4-12.</p> <p>Opening up the ground floor passageway between nos. 8 and 10 by removing 1930s door, and reinstate two adjacent door openings on front elevation.</p> <p>Replacement of two second floor windows on front elevation.</p> <p>Replacement of secondary glazing to front elevation.</p> <p>Alterations to the front elevation of the lower ground level and vaults beneath the pavement.</p> <p>Internal alterations within the terrace to rearrange the ground and lower ground levels for retail units (with new stairs between) and upper levels for office units, reinstate the plan form, internal features and providing a staircase in no.12.</p> <p>Cleaning the brickwork, works to repair</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | | | sash windows, restore the railings and first floor balconettes. (Listed building consent application. Associated planning application ref. 18/AP/4039) |
|--|--|--|---|