

EXAMINATION OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS LOCAL PLAN

MATTER 8: HERITAGE, DESIGN AND TALL BUILDINGS

ISSUE 8 – DOES THE LP TAKE A JUSTIFIED AND SUITABLE EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH TO HERITAGE, DESIGN AND TALL BUILDINGS? IS THE LP CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY IN RELATION TO THESE MATTERS AND WILL IT BE EFFECTIVE IN IMPLEMENTATION?

Representations on behalf of Ashbourne Beech Property Limited (ABPL)

1. These further representations are submitted to address the matter of heritage, design and tall buildings, and particularly the following issue identified by the Inspector:

8.7 Is policy D.DH6 sufficiently clear, capable of effective implementation and consistent with national policy and guidance? Is the policy supported by a robust evidence base?

2. The representations submitted on behalf of ABPL to Policy D.DH6 (Comment ID LP106) sought some amendments to the detailed wording of the policy and provided some questions regarding the Tall Buildings Study 2017. These further representations expand on the points previously made with specific reference to Issue 8 and paragraph 8.7. Regard has been had to the Schedule of Proposed Changes prepared by the Council.
3. The Council proposes changes to Policy D.DH6. The following comments are made on behalf of ABPL in respect of:
 - MM63 proposes to alter the opening line of the policy to read “Development with tall buildings must be of exceptional architectural quality. To achieve this, proposals must:” The change is not supported. ABPL submitted representations seeking the deletion of the reference to “exceptional architectural quality” (contained at Policy D.DH6, 1.b) and this still stands. How / who is to define “exceptional”? The originally published CABE/EH guidance on tall buildings (2007) identifies several criteria to be considered in the assessment of applications for planning permission for tall buildings. One criterion is the “quality of the architectural building”. It is suggested that the policy be amended to reflect this advice and remove the reference to “exceptional architectural quality”.
 - MM65 proposes to amend the wording of D.DH6 1.b to read as follows “use robust and durable materials throughout the building”. The proposed amendment is supported.
 - MM70 amends the second bullet of Policy D.DH6, 2 Millwall Inner Dock (Isle of Dogs), by deleting the words “Building heights should step down away from the centre of the cluster and” inserting the words “Proposals must ensure that the integrity of...” This proposed change is supported and responds to one of the comments made on behalf of ABPL in the original representation.
4. As noted above at paragraph 3 some of the proposed changes are welcomed and will assist in providing clarity. Other changes, however, do not and will, if carried forward to the adopted Plan, introduce uncertainty as to the assessment of tall building proposals. It is also considered that there is a need for clarification as to the definition of “established valued townscapes” (Policy D.DH6, 1.c.)

5. For the avoidance of doubt the comments submitted on behalf of ABPL set out in the original representations still stand unless addressed above at paragraph 3.
6. The evidence base for the policy is the Tall Buildings Study 2017. The comments regarding this document that are set out in the original representation remain. The following further points are made which it is considered should be taken into account in an assessment of the draft policy and its evidence base.
7. Crossharbour is one of eight District Centres in the borough (figure 3.7, p35 Tall Buildings Study). As figure 3.23, p50 identifies it is well removed from any conservation area or statutory listed buildings. Crossharbour sits to the south of Canary Wharf and the defined "skyline of strategic importance" (Figure 3.21, p48). Development proposals at Crossharbour that include tall buildings will be viewed in the backdrop of the Canary Wharf cluster and the skyline of strategic importance.
8. As section 4, p53 and figure 4.1 identify, the Isle of Dogs forms an Opportunity Area to where growth is to be focused. Whilst much of the growth and development in the Opportunity Area has been to the north in and around Canary Wharf there are a number of other sites to the south of Marsh Wall that also have been developed or are proposed to be brought forward for new proposals, including tall buildings.
9. Page 59, notes that *"A 21 storey residential tower is also approved as part of an outline consent on the ASDA store at Crossharbour although it is understood that this is unlikely to be implemented as an alternative proposal is being developed for the area."*
10. As the initial representations note the scheme approved in 2014 (PA/11/03670) was for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Crossharbour site including a new superstore alongside residential, additional retail and commercial, community space, bus layover facilities, and public open space. Several buildings of a range of sizes were approved; the tallest building was proposed at 23 storeys. Crossharbour has long been identified by the Council (and GLA in London Plan) for redevelopment.
11. Revised proposals for the District Centre at Crossharbour are being prepared through the pre-application process with the Council and GLA. These include for a tall building that is proposed to be in the north-western corner of the District Centre, as the 2014 approved scheme.
12. The grant of planning permission (PA/11/03670), dated 10th November 2014, was considered by officers to provide a scheme that achieves a transition in scale from the high rise at Canary Wharf to the more domestic scale of the residential area around Crossharbour. In assessing the proposals, which included the 23-storey building, officers in their committee report (27th September 2012) referenced the 43 storey Baltimore Wharf building located to the north of Crossharbour (though outside of the District Centre). Long and local views were assessed and it was concluded that the proposals would be acceptable. Current discussions with officers confirm this approach i.e. that tall buildings are appropriate for the site with the greatest height to be in the north-western corner.
13. It was not just the Council who agreed with this approach to development of the site. The GLA Stage One and Two reports (7th February 2012 and 9th April 2014) conclude that the scale of the tall building does not raise strategic concerns, particularly bearing in mind the context of the current and proposed development in the vicinity. The GLA also noted that

the London Plan confirms that tall building proposals at the site are acceptable in policy terms. Copies of the Council committee report and GLA Stage One and Two reports are included as an appendix to this statement.

14. Section 6.2 of the Tall Buildings Study defines the character of those areas that have been identified as forming part of the borough tall building zones.
15. It is suggested that at the first paragraph, p92, the reference to Policy 7.7 of the London Plan is expanded to acknowledge that it is a criterion based policy and that the quote only reflects part (b) which is one of nine criteria. For example, Part (a) states tall buildings will generally be limited to the CAZ, Opportunity Areas, towns centres.
16. Pages 160-165 provide the characterisation of place for Cubitt Town. There is reference at p160 to Crossharbour district centre which is described as "a large supermarket and bus station." The 2014 grant of planning permission and the proposals currently the subject of discussion with the Council will deliver a modern multi use district centre serving the Isle of Dogs.
17. At p165, three potential areas of change are identified for Cubitt Town; these are the three site allocations one of which is that for Crossharbour at East Ferry Road. The 2014 grant of planning permission is further referenced. The summary to the characterisation of Cubitt Town notes as follows:

"Whilst tall buildings are considered appropriate in the northern portion of the area the location and scale needs to be carefully mediated to ensure that the views to, and the identity of the Canary Wharf cluster is not irreparably altered and that a wall of development is not perceived from distant locations."
18. The summary at p165 should also reference the district centre and its suitability for tall buildings. Figure 7.1, p196 identifies that Crossharbour forms part of the Millwall Inner Dock cluster and this is set out at Policy D.DH6, 2 which describes the Millwall Inner Dock cluster. The Council has agreed the appropriateness of the District Centre for a tall building through the 2014 grant of planning permission and this is confirmed in the discussion that is set out in the committee report and GLA Stage One and Two reports. It is also evidenced by current pre-application discussions.
19. Crossharbour District Centre is an appropriate location for tall buildings. On redevelopment, Crossharbour will provide an enhanced and much improved centre providing residential, retail, transport, community, public realm and enhanced connectivity for this part of the Isle of Dogs. It is appropriate that tall buildings serve to mark the location of this centre.
20. ABPL looks forward to attending the Hearing session to further discuss this matter.

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