

Written Statement by The National Trust submitted to the public inquiry regarding the proposed New City Court development, 4-26 St Thomas Street, London, references:

APP/A5840/W/22/3290473

APP/A5840/Y/22/3290477

APP/A5840/W/22/3290483

APP/A5840/Y/22/3290490

22 July 2022

1.1 The National Trust is the freehold owner and custodian of The George Inn, 77 Borough High Street which is located about 60m from the New City Court site. The George Inn is leased to Greene King who run it as a public house.

The George Inn

2.1 The George Inn, built in 1676-7, is the only surviving galleried inn in London. It is Grade I listed (List Entry Number 1378357). The Historic England details are given as follows:

2.2 SOUTHWARK

TQ3280SE BOROUGH HIGH STREET 636-1/17/89 (East side) 02/03/50 No.77
The George Inn

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Inn. C17. Timber-frame and brick. Tiled roof. Present structure formed the south range of a coaching inn ranged around a quadrangle. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys with dormers. The west half has 2 tiers of galleries at the 1st and 2nd floors, the lower supported on cantilevered beams and the upper on wooden Doric columns. The wall behind is partly brick and partly timber. There are windows overlooking the gallery and a staircase at the eastern end. The eastern section, with a 9-window range, is chiefly of limewashed bricks with storey bands. A variety of glazing patterns, including flush C18 sashes, sliding sashes, casements and windows with mullions and transoms. Boxed eaves to

the brick range; the galleried section terminates in a 4-part fascia. The rear or south is reported to be brick faced and features a large projecting stack. The windows here appear to be the remnants of an earlier phase of construction. INTERIOR: early C18 staircase, reset as dogleg staircase c1730, has barleytwist-on-vase and column-on-vase balusters on closed string with moulded handrail and heavy barleysugar newel post. Ground-floor room to front right with fielded panelling, moulded dado and cornice and bolection-moulded overmantel over fire-place; simpler panelled room with straight-cut panelling and moulded cornice to rear right; similar panelled room with cupboard adjoining early C19 marble fireplace to front left; similar panelling to three 1st-floor rooms, with early C19 fireplace to front left. Attic has C18 common-rafter roof, with halved collars; C17 plank door to cellar, which has reused medieval beams and squared stonework of possible medieval origins to left side wall. HISTORICAL NOTE: the original inn dates back at least to the C16. In addition to its functions as a coaching inn, part of it came to be used as offices for the Great Eastern Railway Company, which eventually acquired the entire site from Guy's Hospital. The north range was pulled down by the Company in 1874. In 1937 it was given to its present owner, the National Trust. (The Buildings of England: Cherry B: London 2: South: England: 1983-1984: 588; The National Trust: The George Inn: An Illustrated Souvenir: 1989-; Survey of London: Darlington I: London: 1955-: 16-21).¹

Significance of The George Inn

3.1 The George Inn is a place of exceptional significance, which is reflected in its Grade I listing. It was built in 1676-7 after the Fire of London and is the last remaining galleried inn in London.

3.2 The inn has been in existence since at least the mid-16th century, and likely earlier, appearing on a map of c. 1542 where it is identified by name.

Historically, Southwark was characterised by its many coaching inns. The George Inn is the only one to survive, and moreover the building has maintained its continuity of purpose, still a popular public house today.

3.3 The site has a well-documented history. It is purported that William Shakespeare performed in the original inn courtyard. Inns of this type staged performances within the courtyard, with the galleries providing observation

¹ [THE GEORGE INN, Non Civil Parish - 1378357 | Historic England](#) retrieved 18/07/2022.

points for onlookers. The inn's upstairs galleries offer historic views of the courtyard below, George Inn Yard, and the wider setting.

3.4 Charles Dickens often visited The George Inn, and it features in his novels *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) and *Little Dorrit* (1857): *'If he goes into the George and writes a letter and if he gives it me and says, "Take that one to the same place, and if the answer's a good 'un I'll give you a shilling," it ain't my fault, mother!'* (*Little Dorrit*, Book 1, Chapter 22).

3.5 In recognition of its significance, and owing to the need for repairs, in 1937 it was given to the National Trust to look after permanently for the benefit of the nation.

3.6 The George Inn was first listed on the 2nd of March 1950, a relatively early date which reiterates the longstanding appreciation of its significance.

Impact of the proposed development of The George Inn

4.1 The development would cause substantial harm to The George Inn, and in particular it would have a clear and material adverse impact on its setting. The views from the inn's historic upstairs galleries towards the courtyard and beyond would be radically altered in an undesirable way. These views, and the relationship between the galleries and courtyard, are an important element of The George Inn's special heritage interest, as the only surviving galleried inn in London and where onlookers in the past and present use the galleries to look out on the courtyard and wider setting. The George Inn requires proper protection, its special interest preserved and enhanced, and this overbearing and distracting development would intrude on this sensitive space.

4.2 The proposed building would harm the experience of The George Inn, whether in the galleries or courtyard, making the setting more stifling and oppressive. Patrons who visit The George Inn enjoy a unique heritage experience which will be compromised by the development, especially due to its height, appearance, and proximity; the development is only some 60m away. The development would be visually dominant, particularly when viewed from ground level at The George Inn, or from the historic galleries.

4.3.1 The supposedly mitigating factors put forward are unconvincing. For example, on the development's appearance, it is stated (S.472) that *'the building's core is expressed using deep recessing in its solid textured panels to*

vary the way they catch the light during the day. This should provide visual relief across this long elevation.’ However, the development, and in particular this elevation, acknowledged as being ‘long’, would tower over The George Inn.

4.3.2 On the development’s planting, it is stated (S.472) that ‘*the public gardens at the top of the Development are just noticeable from here, their greenery softening the building’s silhouette.*’ From The George Inn, the planting will be very far away and so small that it would, in fact, have virtually no effect on the appearance of the building, which it is implicitly acknowledged would benefit from softening.

4.4 The two images below, of a photo of the site and a visualisation of the development, demonstrate the harm to the setting of The George Inn:

Image 1: Photograph taken from George Inn Yard



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Image 2: Visualisation of the development



Conclusion

5.1 The proposed development would give rise to substantial harm to the setting and significance of The George Inn. As such The National Trust considers that planning permission should be refused for all the schemes under consideration at the public inquiry.