

## CONSERVATION AREAS ADVISORY GROUP FOR SOUTHWARK

Minutes of a meeting of the Conservation Areas Advisory Group held on **Monday 21st January 2019** at 7:00 pm at Tooley Street, London, SE1 2TZ.

### Present

Benedict O’Looney (Chair)	The Victorian & Peckham Societies
Michael Tsoukaris	London Borough of Southwark
Simon Goldman	Shad Thames
Robert Holden	Landscape Institute, London Branch
David Stephens	Bankside

### 1) Apologies for absence were received from:

Mary Sutherland, Bill Morris, Elizabeth Borowiecka, Anna Ludwig, Diana Cochrane, Jeremy Leach.

### 2) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### 3) Previous Cases update:

[cut]

### 4) New cases

#### **18-AP-4040 NEW CITY COURT, 4-26 ST THOMAS ST LONDON SE1 9RS**

Restoration, rebuilding and refurbishment of the listed terrace (nos. 4-16 St Thomas Street) including: 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.

Rebuild the second floor, roof and chimneys of no. 16, re-skin the side façade and creation of ground floor entrances. Rebuild the roof and chimneys of no. 14.

Removal and replacement of roof slates with natural slate to nos. 4-12. Opening up the ground floor passageway between nos. 8 and 10 by removing 1930s door, and reinstate two adjacent door openings on front elevation. Replacement of two second floor windows on front elevation. Replacement of secondary glazing to front elevation. Alterations to the front elevation of the lower ground level and vaults beneath the pavement.

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. Cleaning the brickwork, works to repair sash windows, restore the railings and first floor balconettes. (Listed building consent application. Associated planning application ref. 18/AP/4039) Scheme architects AHMM, Case officer - Victoria Crosby

The panel was concerned by this scheme which lies within an important historic conservation area and outside the area for tall buildings designated by Southwark Council. Particular concern arose from its proximity to and the affect of its height and visual impact on the Grade 1 listed Southwark Cathedral to the west and on Guy's Hospital Courtyard to the east. It would also impact heavily on the Georgian terraces in St Thomas Street, St Thomas's church, views down Borough High Street from around the war memorial and on views from the west, including those of the Shard, now a London icon. All these would be damaged by the intrusion of the proposed 135m high tower. In particular, the nearby cathedral, the oldest medieval gothic church in London and a national treasure would be dwarfed by the planned high building. The panel thought all this unacceptable. It was reported that the Council's officers had advised the applicant that the scheme could not be recommended for approval primarily on these grounds. The panel expressed surprise that, in the circumstances, the applicant had persisted in developing the scheme to its present advanced stage. They also noted that, when CAAG members attended the public consultation it was being carried out with the part of the tower above the 7<sup>th</sup> floor "public" garden absent from the displayed model, thus rendering public feedback on the scheme of limited significance.

There was some discussion as to why the Shard was acceptable and welcome and the planned tower not. The group noted the elegance and dramatic form of the Shard in contrast to the crude lumpiness of the proposed tower and particularly its greater distance from the Cathedral and the High Street.

The panel was also concerned by the proposals for the King's Head Yard frontage. This yard is human in scale and one of a series of old inn yards that are a key element of Southwark's history from medieval times. It provides a very largely pedestrian route from the High Street to Guy's Hospital. It was noted that the proposed scheme removes the north side of the space entirely, thus destroying the narrow yard character that is its essential historic form. The panel was strongly opposed to this and unconvinced by the argument that it opened up a view of the frontage of the Old King's Head pub as a kind of compensation.

If a scheme is to proceed on the applicant's site it was suggested that the gently curving two-storey structure of the present Italianate frontage to the yard might be retained as an elegant open screen, thus defining the narrow yard whilst giving transparency and allowing movement through it to the applicant's site where required.

Whilst the case for the planned opening up of the rear wall of the Borough High Street underground station entrance in front of the proposed office tower block was clear, concern was expressed that this could create a wind tunnel effect.

The gap created on the St Thomas Street frontage was thought to be uncomfortable. Landscape proposals were criticized as nominal and inadequate. It was thought that they could be greatly improved. In particular it was suggested more planting should be introduced to soften the new backland plaza and to obscure blank rear walls by

the new tube exit and the adjoining Grapes Pub garden. There was scope for creation of much more interest in the large paved area of the piazza perhaps using pattern, and texture changes.

The attraction of a pedestrian route from the rear of the station to St Thomas Street was appreciated but it was noted that much of the retail area on it would be in permanent shade, obscured by the planned tower.

The group was unconvinced by the “public” garden proposed for one of the lower intermediate floors. A garden not open to the sky and so not naturally lit or maintained was not an obviously attractive idea and not somewhere that many would regard as a garden or a great benefit to the public.

## **5) Any Other Business**

None raised.

## **6) Date of next meeting:**

Monday **18th February 2019** at 7:00pm at 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2TZ.