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Mr Thomas Weaver
Southwark Council
Planning Department
Southwark Council
PO Box 64529
London
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Sent by Email

20th April 2022

Dear Mr Weaver

Re: Update on Live Planning Application at Avonmouth House, SE1 6NX (Ref: 21/AP/4297)

On behalf of Tribe Student Housing Ltd, we are writing to update you on our client's latest discussions with London South Bank University ("LSBU") in relation to the subject planning application that is currently under consideration.

We provided you with a letter of comfort from LSBU dated 2nd February 2022 which confirmed the University's support for Tribe's proposed redevelopment plans for Avonmouth House. Since then, Tribe has actively advanced their discussions with LSBU. Subject to the University's Board approval at the end of this month, a Nominations Agreement will be secured for the 233 purpose-built student accommodation ("PBSA") rooms proposed in this development, albeit such an agreement is not required, in planning policy terms, to be in place until the point of occupation¹. LSBU's Chancellor, David Phoenix, has also been in dialogue with the Council Leader, Cllr Keiron Williams, to voice his support for the scheme and to reiterate the significant shortfall in good quality student housing in Southwark.

Secondly, in recognition of the application site's excellent accessibility and proximity to the University's main campus (as illustrated on the diagram overleaf), and the University's requirements for additional space to deliver their growth aspirations, LSBU are also interested in a lease for the entire 1,733sqm of commercial floorspace proposed.

This is a significant and material step forward in the progress of the planning application and will meaningfully and directly contribute towards Southwark's "vision"² for the Elephant and Castle Opportunity Area by enhancing the provision of higher education facilities as well as contributing employment generating floorspace and the economic benefits that flow from it.

Although the exact layout and specification of the space has not yet been decided, it is envisaged that the space would incorporate a lecture hall and flexible workspace for science and technology. The submitted floor layouts have been designed flexibly in an open plan format to accommodate a variety of education and business-related functions.

¹ London Plan Policy H15

² "London South Bank University and London University of the Arts will develop further as important centres of learning", Elephant and Castle SPD and OAPF, paragraph 3.1.4



LSBU Southwark Campus (shaded red) and Avonmouth House (marked with a red star)

LSBU's vision is to transform lives, communities, businesses and society through applied education and insight. They are recognised as a leading organisation for outstanding practice-led learning, fostering the development of able graduates, ready to address business and societal challenges.

They have research and innovation capabilities that are directed towards enhancing teaching and tackling global and civic challenges, generating critical insights and sustainable solutions that transform the lives of individuals, communities, businesses and society. Through local and global partnerships, they create opportunities for individuals, businesses and society, and remove barriers to success.

LSBU follow a range of initiatives to achieve and maintain these values:

Equality and diversity: Their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy sets out their aims to ensure that everyone who studies and works there does so free of discrimination.

Customer service: They work in partnership with the Institute of Customer Service to improve their services to customers.

Health and wellbeing: LSBU have been acknowledged for their work to make their campuses a safe place for all and for developing a culture of wellbeing.

Armed forces: They have been recognised for supporting the needs of the military community.

Workplace: They're dedicated to being an inclusive workplace that supports their colleagues to be the best they can be at work.

Safeguarding at LSBU: They are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students, colleagues and visitors.

LSBU consider financial sustainability absolutely fundamental to delivering their mission of supporting students to achieve professional success.

As well as an efficiency programme, which has saved £6m, they have also developed plans to deliver a prudent sustainable annual operating surplus, which has enabled them to manage uncertainty as they invest for the future and continue to strengthen the quality of support given to students.

The University is constantly looking to develop and extend the benefits of its location and the features of its varied landscape. This leads them to create innovative new buildings, redevelop listed properties (which has its planning, financial and political challenges) and carry out a programme of changes and improvements that constantly further enhance their student offer.

In May 2021, LSBU published a report, co-written with Aston University, looking at the role that Universities of Technology can play in supporting the Government's levelling-up agenda, as well as making a series of policy recommendations about how Central Government can further unlock their potential.

LSBU Group, working in partnership with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Health Education England has created a new Southwark Health Skills Centre. The Centre provides the people of Southwark and surrounding boroughs with access to career pathways in health and social care, whatever their age or educational starting point. Its aim is both to educate and train new recruits and to upskill existing staff. It has a central role in supporting the Trust's strategy to develop local talent and build a workforce pipeline that reflects the diversity of the population that it serves.

As noted within the Planning Statement, there are no sites allocated or earmarked for student housing within the Southwark Plan 2022. However, the London Plan is clear that Boroughs should ensure that local and strategic needs for purpose-built student accommodation are addressed. Accordingly, the Mayor has identified a requirement for 3,500 bed spaces to be provided annually across the Capital over the plan period. Since the application was submitted, the annual Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) report has been published (Source: HESA (25th January 2022) - <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/25-01-2022/he-student-statistics-202021>).

The headlines include:

- The total number of Higher Education students across the UK stands at 2,751,865
- UK PBSA demand has grown by 9%
- There are 485,020 students spread across London
- London PBSA demand has grown 13%
- First year degree entrants rose by 8% across the UK

It is clear that there is an identified need for student housing in Southwark, and this is an obvious location at which to meet it - not least because it is within a 4 minute walk of LSBU's campus and directly opposite a large amenity space, but also because it is located within a Major Town Centre (and therefore close to many amenities); an Opportunity Area (and specifically within the Enterprise Quarter of the OA – discussed below); the CAZ; and has a PTAL score of 6b (highest).

Indeed, the suitability of the Elephant and Castle Opportunity Area generally for student housing and higher education-related facilities is recognised expressly in the Elephant and Castle SPD and OAPF, which confirms that “proposals for provision of space used for higher education will be supported” and “proposals for student housing will be supported...”. In addition, and arguably more significantly, the Elephant and Castle SPD and OAPF supports the provision of student housing within the Enterprise Quarter part of the Opportunity Area in particular (i.e., where the site is located).



The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the behaviour patterns of students and whilst the long-term effects are not yet known, it is likely that a lot of learning will remain virtual-based, and thus students are expected to continue to spend more time in their halls of residence than was the case prior to the pandemic. Therefore, it is high quality schemes like this, with dedicated on-site amenities, enabling collaborative working in a social setting, that will help to deliver the quality student housing that is needed.

The matters outlined in this letter are intended to supplement the submitted Planning Statement, which concludes that student housing is appropriate on this site - taking into account planning policy in the round and all other material considerations.

We trust that the information provided herein is useful and we look forward to engaging with you at the earliest opportunity. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Elizabeth Woodall' in a cursive script.

Elizabeth Woodall
Associate