

# LONDON REVIEW PANEL

Director  
DP9

07 August 2023

Dear

## London Review Panel: Bury House

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of Bury House on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer ongoing Mayor's Design Advocate support as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,

Panel Chair)

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Philip Graham, Executive Director of Good Growth, GLA

Louise Duggan, Head of Regeneration, GLA

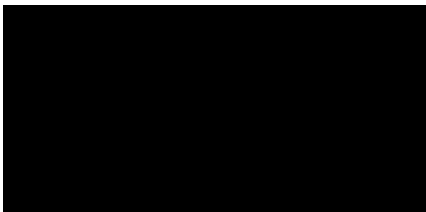
Lucinda Turner, Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration, GLA & Director Spatial Planning, TfL

# LONDON REVIEW PANEL

## Report of London Review Panel meeting for Bury House

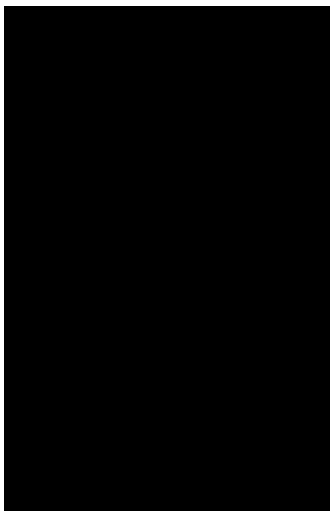
19<sup>th</sup> July 2023 - Review held in person.

### London Review Panel




Mayors Design Advocate  
Mayors Design Advocate (Chair)  
Mayors Design Advocate  
Mayors Design Advocate  
Mayors Design Advocate

### Attendees



BentallGreenOak  
Bowles and Wyer Landscape  
City of London  
DP9  
Greater London Authority Planning (Urban Design)  
Greater London Authority Planning (Conservation)  
Greater London Authority Planning (DM)  
Greater London Authority Regeneration  
Greater London Authority Regeneration  
KM Heritage  
Stiff + Trevillion  
Stiff + Trevillion  
The Townscape Company

### Report copied to

Jules Pipe  
Philip Graham  
Louise Duggan  


Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills  
GLA Executive Director of Good Growth  
GLA Head of Regeneration  
GLA Regeneration

### Confidentiality and publication

Please note that while schemes not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review. Review reports will target publication to the London Review Panel webpage six months following the review unless otherwise agreed.

## London Review Panel's Views

### Summary

The panel thank the team for the clear and detailed presentation. The panel are positive about the team's concept for the three buildings as a family cluster, balancing their relationship with, and difference from, each other. The panel are generally supportive of the massing however agree it is too tall. The height should clearly be a response to a design concept, not the result of viewing corridors and site constraint alone. The height should respond appropriately to the eastern edge of the City Cluster and more immediately in terms of subservience to 30 St Mary Axe and other adjacent tall buildings.

The panel support the high-level sustainability strategy presented and the team now need to define what these mean in terms of commitments and then to deliver on these ambitions. The panel appreciate the social value offer back to the city in the proposed community uses and encourage the team to express the mix of uses architecturally, and to find a suitable anchor operator to work up the proposals with.

The panel are supportive of the direction of the elevational composition, but this needs to be developed and articulated in all orientations, highlighting elements such as lift cores to provide variation in the punched grid elevation. The material palette chosen for this new building is interesting but needs to be developed to consider how being applied on such a large building will look in the local context and wider cluster colour palette. The panel were less concerned with the proposals' impact on the external synagogue context but agree that continuing detailed studies of the internal quality of the space is key in evidencing the acceptability of the proposals' impact on the synagogue.

It should be noted that the panel have reviewed the scheme from an architectural and design perspective and not as heritage specialists.

### **1. Impact of the proposals' height and massing on the Tower of London World Heritage Site (WHS) and in townscape terms within the Eastern City Cluster.**

#### *Relationship to the Eastern City Cluster*

- The panel advised an accurate 'jelly mould' and masterplan diagram of the City Cluster was needed to properly assess the acceptability of emerging and proposed tall buildings. This is to ensure that proposed tall buildings support the long-term vision for the city and that they contribute to a coherent cluster.
- The panel suggest the City Cluster will never be a perfect curving ellipse of heights and masses, and it needn't be. It is and will continue to be a sculpted mass with different characters, some buildings a bit taller and some a bit smaller.
- The panel note that there is not much space left to the east of the site for development to continue the cluster curve down from this site, and so may result in a cliff edge rather than stepping down. It was suggested that a reduction in height would reduce the impact of the cliff edge on the shape of the cluster.

### *Views of the City Cluster*

- The panel advise the team to consider how the proposal performs in kinetic views of the City Cluster, which change as you move around the city rather than just in static views. As such, all key sensitive views should be explored as a series or in video format to demonstrate the proposals impact. They also questioned whether views from the west had been considered.
- There is the risk of assuming all the emerging schemes are fully implemented when developing this proposal in views of a future context, rather than the reality as it currently exists. The panel question whether the proposed height and massing are only justified to consolidate the cluster of consented schemes which may never be built.

### *Respecting the White Tower*

- The panel acknowledge that there are several emerging schemes being built that have been shaped to retain a visual gap between the Tower of London's White Tower and themselves when viewed from the river.  
The panel can see that the proposal has looked at respecting this gap. Whether this is fully successful will require more detailed consideration.

### *Relationship to the local cluster of buildings*

- The panel advise the team to not only consider the proposed tall building's relationship with the Eastern City Cluster, which is generally acceptable, subject to the comments elsewhere in this letter on height, but also as a tall building in its own right in relation to buildings in its immediate vicinity, such as 30 St Mary Axe.
- The panel agree the proposed tall building should be subservient to 30 St Mary Axe in terms of height, massing and material, and generally lower within this local part of the cluster.

## **2. Quality and character of public realm (including of the proposed internal arcade), experience of height, massing and building footprint at street level (including microclimate), and opportunities for planting/greening around the site.**

### *A 24-hour city*

- The panel understand that the current proposal would make the ground floor public realm inaccessible after 11pm, and that all other activities and their opening times would be managed by the operators as required. In this regard the panel questioned what the scheme would provide to support the 24-hour city that was set out in the presentation as an ambition.

### *Henage Arcade*

- The panel suggest that existing routes and current footfall in this area would make it unlikely that the new arcade would be well used, as it doesn't sit along a current desire line.
- The current proposals feel like a back alley as the arcade would terminate with the parking entrance and it lacks continuity with surrounding streets.

- The panel agreed that the idea of retail within the arcade has potential, but the current design of the retail units is quite narrow, and there is no clear frontage or indication of where the access or servicing access points would be.
- The panel agree the proposed arcade as shown looks cold, dark and uninviting, feeling more like a corporate lobby with a shop than a public street. The panel referenced examples in New York where lanes have publicly accessible private spaces where people do not have to pay to use facilities (including toilets).
- Should the team wish to retain the arcade, the panel would advise a break in the elevation to bring people into the space. This could include reviewing the colour palette and internal and external relationships to better signify a public route.
- The panel suggest pushing the retail away from the street and considering a colonnade rather than an arcade arrangement. This could create a more usable internal and external space for the retail units and making a clear front and back to the retail for servicing.

#### *Public realm and colonnade*

- The panel encourage the team to develop the architectural idea of how the building meets the ground and how it creates new public realm, as well as its relationship to existing public realm. The panel suggested less classical ideas (for instance other than a colonnade) could be explored at ground level.
- The panel agreed that the design of the south-eastern corner (Bury Street) is currently the least well resolved, and that it is an important interface to get right.
- The panel commented that the spacing of the columns and the location of planters does not invite people to use the colonnade.
- The panel suggested a retail colonnade wrapping around the southern corner rather than the arcade could provide a more usable, active and welcoming street condition in this location. Additionally, this could be a permanently open 24-hour piece of publicly accessible city.
- The panel recommended that level access and continuous materiality between the carriageway and footway around the building would provide more generous public space and make the commercial offer more attractive to potential vendors.

#### *Community and creative uses*

- The panel commend the team on the community and creative uses proposed as part of the project, giving back to the city. There is a risk however that when a commercial office-led development seeks to host these vibrant community uses, the spirit of this is not expressed in the building and the overall feel is too corporate.
- The panel said that it is important that the variety of uses is legible to users from the street. Entrances to community spaces, sports halls and theatres should be specific, welcoming, and clearly indicate who is welcome and what is happening inside. If the team are serious about this offer then they will need to develop how these uses are expressed.
- The panel strongly advise the team to identify at least one or two of the key anchor operators for the community and creative uses early on to be involved in the design process. It would be great to see in the planning application an agreed anchor tenant for one of these key spaces to demonstrate this commitment.

- The panel caution the team designing spaces for community uses that are too flexible and to try to be all things to all people, risking that they are unable to accommodate the specific needs of community and creative uses.
- The panel agree the urban farm is a great idea and would encourage this to be delivered in a meaningful and accessible way to deliver on the ambition presented.
- The panel noted that the current strategy of single tenanted floors may not encourage collaboration between organisations or support smaller businesses to occupy and enrich the city. It would be interesting to see how the building can better support this opportunity.

### **3. Impact of the proposals on the significance of the Grade I listed Synagogue and its amenities (including the potential overshadowing of the courtyard).**

- The panel acknowledged that the existing condition of tall buildings immediately adjacent to the Synagogue means that impact from the new proposals would be externally relatively insignificant.
- The panel agree that given the number of consented buildings in the vicinity already the view from the courtyard is less sensitive than the impact of the proposals on the daylight/sunlight internally within the Synagogue.
- The panel advise the team that the sensitivity related to the quality of light which characterises the internal spaces of the Synagogue and continuing detailed internal light studies should be demonstrated as evidence as part of this application.

### **4. Impact of the proposals on the significance of the Grade II\* listed Holland House, both in terms of setting and in terms of direct alterations.**

#### *Roof extension*

- The panel agree that the proposed 3 tier order of roof extension may be overcomplicating the built form. The current proposal's repetitive horizontal and square layers are visually overbearing.
- The panel questions whether the proposed additional storeys are an extension too far, with the original building having already had a roof extension. The panel discussed what the right approach to additions from the original building would be, and concluded that the right approach may already have been built.
- The panel suggest that if another roof extension of the existing is to be introduced, then a new element in a contrasting style and materiality might help. This could break up this heavy tiered approach, providing some relief and a different flavour to the existing white ordered layers.

### **5. Proposed architectural treatment of the new tall building.**

#### *Visualisations and verified views*

- The panel questioned the reality of the light and colour of the views shown of the existing and emerging City Cluster context from the river. These images looked as if

they had been adjusted to give a false impression of the colour palette of the cluster's buildings being very blue. The panel encourage the team to ensure their images demonstrate the existing and emerging context, including their proposals, accurately reflect the reality of the materials. This will ensure their material choice for the new tall building is well considered in the wider palette of the City Cluster.

#### *Concept, height and massing of the tall building*

- While the panel were generally supportive of a tall building in this location, the panel questioned whether there was a clear architectural concept in this case or whether it was the result of site parameters and view corridors alone.
- The tower height should be dictated by its architectural concept in the context of its surroundings rather than shaped purely by City Cluster views. The panel challenge the team to develop a more specific architectural proposition that can be justified both in terms of design in relation to the local context as well as in wider views.
- This rationale should also test the financial viability of the top floors. If the upper floors are deemed unprofitable, this may be one further reason for reducing the height.
- The panel acknowledge this is a very tight site, requiring a delicate, elegant and slender solution with a strong vertical emphasis.
- The panel encourage the team to demonstrate a rationale for how the form responds 3-dimensionally at the upper levels, not only because it needs to step back for the view to the Tower of London.
- Holland House has a clear concept as a 'ship in the ground' but does not rely on this to also create a powerful elevation. This new building needs an equally powerful concept and architectural approach to address how it hits the ground, as well as how the upper levels are defined in the skyline.

#### *Elevation design*

- The panel agree that the horizontal banding is promising. There is also an interesting approach to the grid and punched windows. These strategies need to be emphasised and developed to give the building more presence.
- Different window types and apertures to the southern and northern elevations should be designed to regulate light and reduce risk of overheating as required by aspect.
- Where the lift core meets the facade could be another opportunity to create visual interest to avoid a monotonous modular building.
- The panel believe the design team have good precedent of delivering this type of quality detailed façade using ceramic cladding and, on a building this tall, would be quite positively different to the rest of the City.
- The tactility of the proposed material and proposed colour is interesting, but the team should test this in the palette of the street and wider cluster.
- The panel agree that not every building in the City Cluster should be a crystal glass type building but where glass is used, its colour and minimal detailing can prevent it feeling heavy (see 22 Bishopsgate).
- The panel agree that there are multiple materials and colours competing on the new building where it hits the ground and turns the corner e.g. the south west corner in particular, and this seems the least resolved element.

#### **6. Sustainability performance of the new tall building.**

- The panel support the team's proposed sustainability strategy but noted that these are set out only as broad ambitions at the moment and not specific measurable outcomes. It includes a lot of positive concepts, but these need to be evidenced with metrics and reported on throughout the design development, planning submission and delivery stages of the project. The panel were unable to assess the performance of the proposal based on the information presented.

#### **7. Impact of the proposals on the significance of Renown House.**

- The panel agree that the consolidation of the buildings and connected floorplates at lower level is a successful approach. However, the panel think the three buildings look too homogenous at upper level with Renown House being squeezed between Holland House and the new tall building and losing its distinct identity at upper levels.
- The panel understand the team have undertaken conversations with Historic England and taken heritage advice to reach a compromised position on the roof extensions and cornice, however, they concluded that the proposed rooftop extension is not working well for Renown House. The panel agree the material should be different, possibly reading more as a lantern or another form of distinct or articulated element that does not just blend into the whole at roof level. A revised approach would help hold the corner which is currently a weaker element.
- The panel encourage the team to take the opportunity to celebrate the clash of differences that exists in the city with a more distinct expression for the Renown House extension.

#### **Future Reviews**

The panel thanks the applicant for its clear presentation of the scheme and is available to review the scheme again if requested to do so by the GLA.