

Andrew Boff AM  
Chair of the London Assembly  
City Hall  
Kamal Chunchie Way  
London  
E16 1ZE

**7 March 2025**

**William Blake Fellowship: 17 South Molton Street**

Dear Mr Boff,

Thank you for your letter to Mark Preston regarding the William Blake Fellowship (WBF) and their proposals for a visitor centre at 17 South Molton Street.

As Chief Executive of Grosvenor's UK property business, I am responding to you as I am familiar with the WBF's proposals and the wider context.

We have engaged and been supportive of the WBF's ambitions for a visitor centre for a number of years. As yet, they have not presented a business plan that explains the funding, deliverability and future operation of the proposed centre. Consequently our discussions have not advanced.

As you will be aware, the former home of William Blake at 17 South Molton Street sits within the site of South Molton, our major redevelopment that will bring significant economic and social benefits to Westminster. We have been on site delivering this project since November 2023.

On completion, the development will create 960 permanent jobs and generate £6.5m for the local economy annually, including the employment and apprenticeships in construction it is already supporting.

Additionally, it will deliver 11 new affordable homes (to be managed by Soho Housing Association), a new medical / community space, £7.5m of investment in greener more attractive streetscapes, public art commemorating William Blake as well as over £5m in Community Infrastructure Levy contributions to Westminster City Council.

Our Section 106 agreement with Westminster City Council requires us to deliver the open market and affordable housing on South Molton Street before wider elements of the scheme can be occupied. Since 17 South Molton Street forms part of the market housing, the William Blake proposal would require redrafting of the section 106, impacting the deliverability of the economic and social value associated with the wider scheme. It would, most likely, lead to delay in bringing forward the new social and private housing to Westminster.

Extensive public consultation on our proposals began in 2018 and has run continuously ever since. Our initial consultation included engagement with the William Blake Society regarding 17 South Molton Street (which they occupied as an office in the upper parts).

No objections to the repair and restoration of the original residential use of 17 South Molton Street were made by Historic England, the Georgian Group, the William Blake Society or WBF.

In 2022, Grosvenor was first approached by the WBF about their proposal for a visitor centre. As I say, we are supportive of the principles behind the Fellowship's vision and ambitions for the visitor centre, and are open to their occupation of the property.

In response to the GLA resolutions, we are aware of the historic significance of 17 South Molton Street and have had regular interactions with the WBF over the last few years. We have provided guidance on how to develop their proposals and facilitated introductions to external consultants who could help them progress their vision. We have shared our thoughts on the viability of the concept raising questions about the size of the building and its adaptability as a visitor centre given its listed status.

Furthermore, we advised WBF on the terms of a lease for the building, and at the start of last year offered them 'first refusal' on 17 South Molton Street, allowing them to initially fundraise and underwrite their business plan, and have kept them fully apprised of our development timeline. Despite this and widespread expressions of support, we still do not have a detailed proposal to consider.

I confirm that we are open to further discussions with you and/or other stakeholders on this matter at their convenience.

Yours sincerely,



James Raynor

Chief Executive, Grosvenor Property UK