

VCR: Tom O'Dwyer
Date: Monday, 18 January 2016
Location: Chamber, City Hall
Hearing: Representation Hearing

Start time: 2.14pm
Finish time: 5.04pm

Speakers:

Boris Johnson MP, Mayor of London
Sir Edward Lister, Deputy Mayor of London
Steen Smedegaard, Solicitor, Transport for London (Legal Adviser)

Stewart Murray, Assistant Director – Planning, Greater London Authority
Colin Wilson, Senior Manager - Planning Decisions, Greater London Authority

James Keogh, Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority (Case Officer)
Justin Carr, Strategic Planning Manager, Greater London Authority
Alex Williams, Director of Borough Planning, Transport for London
Paul Buckenham, Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council

Michael Wiseman, Development Director, British Land (Applicant)
Nigel Webb, Head of Development, British Land
Paul Monaghan, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris Architects

Oliver Leigh-Wood, Spitalfields Trust (Objector)
Blanche Girouard, local resident (Objector)
John Nicolson, local resident (Objector)
Paul Johnston, Spitalfields Community Group (Objector)

Paul Finch, former Chair, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (Supporter)
Charlie Green, Chief Executive Officer, The Office Group (Supporter)
Alex Gordon Shute, local resident (Supporter)
Gemma Saffhill, Partner, DS2

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Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Good afternoon and welcome to this Representation Hearing in the matter of the application for the land at Blossom Street, Spitalfields. I am delighted to see such a huge turnout. If anybody wants to shout various things during the course of the meeting like, "Shame", or, "Hooray", or whatever you want to shout, can you do it now rather than during proceedings? It will probably save us all time. No? OK. Thank you. Can we get on with the procedural things that need to be addressed, Steen?

Steen Smedegaard (Solicitor, Transport for London): My name is Steen Smedegaard. I am the Legal Adviser to the Mayor today. I would like to begin by setting out some formalities. This is a meeting held in public and is open to anyone to attend. We are following an agenda this afternoon and I hope you all have a copy of this. If not, you will find copies of the agenda, together with copies of the report and the addendum report to the Mayor on the planning applications on the desk near the entrance to the Chamber.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thanks very much, Steen. Sorry, you have not finished.

Steen Smedegaard (Solicitor, Transport for London): Site visit: The Mayor made a site visit to the application site on 14 January this year. The Mayor was accompanied by officers, representatives from Tower Hamlets Council and the applicant. The visit was conducted in accordance with the Greater London Authority's (GLA) procedure for Representation Hearings and no representations were made to the Mayor during the visit.

Speakers: All speakers today have been given an allotted time to speak as set out in the agenda. When it is your turn to speak, you will be asked to come forward to the table. A transcript of the proceedings today is being produced and so it would be helpful, when you come forward, if you could clearly introduce yourself before you begin to speak. Speakers should confine their comments to material planning consideration and ensure that their comments do not conflict with the GLA's diversity and equality statement. All speakers will be notified 30 seconds before their time is due to run out. When speakers have finished addressing the Mayor, there will be no further opportunity to speak unless the Mayor asks a direct question. If a member of the public interrupts the hearing at any point, the Mayor will warn them and may order their removal from the Chamber.

Decision: Having heard all the representations, the Mayor may decide he is able to make a decision today. However, if the Mayor decides he needs more time to consider the applications, he will make his decision within five working days of today and the decision

will be posted on the GLA website. The GLA will notify Tower Hamlets Council, the applicant, anyone previously consulted, anyone else who made comments on the applications anyone who has spoken here today of the decision by email or in writing.

Evacuation procedure: Finally, we are not expecting an evacuation alarm this afternoon and, in the event of the alarm sounding during the hearing, you will be directed to walk to the nearest evacuation route. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Great. Thank you so much. We should crack on because we were a little slow starting and that was entirely my fault. Can we get going with James, who is the great expert on this application at the GLA?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): OK. Thank you, Mayor. For the purpose of the record, my name is James Keogh. I am a Strategic Planner at the GLA.

The content of the presentation will set out the application site, its surroundings and the spatial policy context and then I will run through the description of the site, its existing buildings, the relevant case history, the proposed development itself, the response to public consultations, Tower Hamlets Council's reasons for refusal, the key issues which the Mayor must consider and, finally, the recommendation to the Mayor.

Starting with the site, its surroundings and the spatial policy context, the site is highlighted in red. It is located on the western edge of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and also sits on the boundaries of the London Borough of Hackney and the City of London. The site is very well served by public transport and records an excellent rating in terms of accessibility to the public transport network.

This view shows the site outlined in red at the bottom right in the context of a large-scale office development stretching along Bishopsgate to the south and towards the City. The low-rise scale of the Elder Street Conservation Area can be seen both from within the site itself and further to the east towards Spitalfields Market at the bottom left.

This just gives an overview of the existing building height both within the site and in its immediate context. The buildings in yellow and orange are four and five storeys, which, as you can see, is the predominant building height in the area. The buildings in red, which include the Broadgate Estates to the west, are 20 storeys and over in height.

This is a zoomed-in view of the site looking west. You can see the railway cutting serving Liverpool Street Station running along the site's northern boundary and the existing warehouse frontages running through the centre of the site along the length of Blossom Street.

Looking at the plan view, we can see that the application site, outlined in red, is bounded to the north by the railway cuttings, to the east by Commercial Street and Elder Street, to the south by Folgate Street and to the west by Norton Folgate and Shoreditch High Street. In addition, Blossom Street runs north-to-south through the centre of the site and Fleur De Lis Street runs east-to-west across the site with Fleur De Lis Passage at its western end.

The application is accompanied by an application for listed building consent for the works to the grade II-listed carriageway of Fleur de Lis Street in red. These works would involve a strategy for temporarily remove stone setts during the construction phase, cleaning them, storing them and then reinstating them to the existing positions. Officers are supportive of this approach and are satisfied that no harm would occur to the setting of the listed carriageways as a result.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sorry. That is the cobbles, is it?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes, just the cobbles themselves. The site is divided into a number of subplots, as shown on this plan, and I will take you through each one in some more detail starting with S1. Subplot S1 is made up of the former Nicholls and Clarke offices and showrooms at numbers 3 to 9 Shoreditch High Street in the top left of that image. A portion of this block was purpose-built as office space in the 1930s with the remaining late 19th-century premises re-fronted in yellow *faïence* tiling to form a continuous and architecturally distinctive frontage. The building was vacated in 2003 and has since been either vacant or in use for photography and exhibition space. The Blossom Street warehouses, which have been vacant for a number of decades, also formed part of the Nicholls and Clarke business operation and they form the eastern edge of plot S1 at the top and bottom right of the image. They are good examples of late 19th-century industrial buildings and have a robust character. Number 2 Shoreditch High Street and number 20 Norton Folgate at the bottom left date from the 1950s and are both occupied as commercial uses at ground floor. Their upper floors consist of partially vacant office spaces.

Moving to subplots S1a and S1b, which are on the application site's southern frontage onto Folgate Street, plot S1a is made up of numbers 16 to 19 Folgate Street at the top middle. This is a terrace built in a single phase in the late 19th century as a purpose-built shopping parade with residential units above. It has a characterful and well-proportioned frontage of red brick and includes original washhouses to its rear. Adjoining the southern end of this terrace is no 15 Norton Folgate at the top left, which dates from the 18th century. It is a Georgian townhouse of the 18th century, which is typical of a small London house of this period, which is at the top left of this slide. It has been rebuilt over time and includes remnants of a 19th-century shopfront at ground floor. Numbers 13 and 14 Norton Folgate, at the bottom left, form the southwest corner of the site. Number 13 is a four-storey brick-clad building, purpose-built for office space in the 1930s, with commercial space at the ground floor. Number 14 was built in the Georgian style as a townhouse and has a white stucco frontage. It has been altered significantly and includes a number of 20th-century additions.

Moving to plot S1b to the right-hand side of the slide, it is made up of numbers 5 to 10 Folgate Street at the bottom right. This is a purpose-built residential terrace in the Arts and Crafts style dating from 1904. The interiors of the upper floors have been largely removed and a 1970s extension has been added to its rear. Finally, numbers 16 and 17 Blossom Street at the top right, which adjoins the Blossom Street warehouses, is a 1950s three-storey office building with a rendered frontage and steel-framed windows in use as office space.

Moving on to subplots S1c and S2 at the northern edge of the site, S1c is occupied by a four-storey brick-built warehousing dating from 1887, at the bottom left of the image. It is aligned with the Blossom Street warehouses at plot S1 and includes a number of original features such as timber loading doors and sash windows. A 1970s lean-to structure is adjoined to its rear. Plot S2 consists of another warehouse which also formed part of the Nicholls and Clarke business. It is built on the foundations of an earlier structure and has been subject to a number of alterations but the majority of the current building dates from 1927. The most architecturally significant part of the building is its western *façade* at the top left. The eastern frontage of plot S2 is made up of numbers 4 to 8 Elder Street, at the bottom middle, a three-storey terrace which was purpose-built in the late 19th century. It is locally listed and in use as office space. Its upper levels contain cotton, wool and dye packing warehouses and the ground floors were designed as retail units. Adjoining the end of this terrace are number 2 Elder Street and number 161 Commercial Street at the bottom right. Little of number 2 remains and there is evidence of a historic route running beneath it at ground level. Number 161 was built in the late 19th century and is in a derelict state.

Finally, moving to subplot S3, in red, this is occupied by a 1950s part one/part two-storey depot building to the left-hand side and a mock Georgian office building dating from the 1980s, which is currently occupied. Neither of these buildings are recognised as having any architectural or heritage merits.

We will now look briefly at the relevant spatial policy context. The site falls within the eastern portion of the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) as identified by the London Plan and recognised by the Tower Hamlets Core Strategy. The CAZ represents the globally iconic core of London and has a rich mix of local and strategic uses and is one of the world's most attractive and competitive business locations.

The site also falls within the City Fringe Opportunity Area as identified by the London Plan. This diagram shows the Opportunity Area in its wider context, straddling the boroughs of Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and the City of London, with its core growth area in brown and its wider hinterland shaded in yellow. The London Plan states that the Opportunity Area provides particular scope to support London's critical mass of financial and business services and clusters of other economic activity. Here is the site, which is located in the centre of the Opportunity Area at the convergence of the borough boundaries of Hackney and the City.

At the local level, the site falls within the Elder Street Conservation Area, in green, and the site is also adjacent to Hackney's South Shoreditch Conservation Area to the northwest, in brown, and the Brick Lane and Fournier Conservation Area immediately to the east, in blue.

The site is also surrounded by a number of grade II-listed buildings, as highlighted in blue on the plan. They include the majority of Georgian townhouses along Elder Street and a number of townhouses along Folgate Street. The carriageways of Folgate Street, Elder Street and Fleur de Lis Street are also listed. Numbers 5 to 11A Folgate Street and numbers 4 to 8 Elder Street, in yellow, are locally listed buildings within the application site boundary.

This view is taken from the east of the site looking north along Elder Street, which gives an idea of the character and scale of the listed buildings, which originate from the 18th century and were built to house Huguenot silk weavers.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Who are the couple? Was it posed by models?

Male Speaker: Who cares?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): All right.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Then this is a historic map from 1890. It is clear from this that the present-day street pattern is still in existence. It is also evident that the urban plots were better defined at this time, particularly along Fleur de Lis Street. Much of the historic plot works along the western edge of the site are also still in evidence today along Norton Folgate. The map also illustrates the ad hoc growth of the Nicholls and Clarke business, which meets the rear of the Blossom Street warehouses in the centre of the map. There is also evidence of open courtyard-type spaces within the urban blocks.

The majority of the site lies upon the scheduled ancient monuments of the Priory of St Mary Spital, which is shaded in red on the plan and this dates from the 12th century. In parallel with the current planning application, Historic England on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport granted conditional scheduled ancient monument consent on 15 June 2015. This concerned archaeological excavation in regards to the new foundations and the installation of foundations in selected areas of the monuments.

I will now take you through the planning history of the application site. The application site has a significant planning history and includes an application dismissed on appeal in 2007 and subsequent permission granted by Tower Hamlets Council in 2011. The 2007 application site was for planning and conservation area consent for the redevelopment of the site through a mix of demolition and retention and renewal to provide buildings of between four and ten storeys plus plant, nine residential units, 1,300 square metres of small-and-medium enterprise (SME) floor space and ground-floor retail and restaurant uses. Here is the proposed ground-floor plan for the 2007 scheme and you will see that the proposal involved the full demolition of the entire Norton Folgate and Shoreditch High Street frontage along the bottom of the plan. Here is a view of the 2007 scheme proposal, looking towards Spitalfields to the north along Norton Folgate.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Wait. If I understood that correctly, that was given consent by Tower Hamlets?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): This was refused by Tower Hamlets.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That would mean the total demolition of the ...

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): It was not the total. They retained the Blossom Street warehouses, but the frontage on this plan here, along the bottom there, all of that was demolished and replaced with this new building.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thanks.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): The 2007 application was recommended for approval by Tower Hamlets officers, but the Tower Hamlets Planning Committee resolved to refuse permission in June 2007 due to the harm caused to the conservation area by the bulk, scale and height of the proposals. An appeal was lodged and was later dismissed by the Inspector, who set out the following neutral and positive aspects of the proposals: the appropriateness of the ten-storey element, the retention of the historic kink in the Norton Folgate frontage, the quality and permeability of the improved public realm and the benefits of the proposed repair work to the Blossom Street warehouses and the locally listed buildings.

A subsequent application was approved by the Tower Hamlets Planning Committee on 5 October 2011 and subsequently supported by GLA officers and the Mayor in strategic planning terms. The involved the redevelopment of the former Nicholls and Clarke site and adjoining depot site for mixed-use purposes, including buildings ranging between four and nine storeys, to provide just under 19,000 square metres of office space, retail and restaurant uses at the ground floor, and a new public space at the heart of the scheme. It should be noted that the consented scheme did not include any residential floor space.

The conservation area consent, which accompanied the application, authorised the loss of numbers 13 and 20 Norton Folgate, which is the corner building on the far right and the white building in the middle, numbers 14 and 15 Norton Folgate behind retained *façades* and numbers 2 to 10 Shoreditch High Street, which includes the former Nicholls and Clarke showrooms and offices on the left-hand side of the elevation. With regards to the Blossom Street warehouses, the *façade* retention of numbers 14 and 15 was consented and numbers 12 and 13 were retained and repaired as necessary for office use. The extent of retention of numbers 12 and 13 Blossom Street for the consented scheme does not go as far as that of the current proposals.

In terms of the design approach of the consented scheme, the scope of the consented scheme's approach included the retention of pitched roofs of number 12 Blossom Street, the reinstatement of a missing part of the *façade* to number 13 at third-floor level, the replacement of loading doors to a new design, a new fourth-floor plant and enclosure, and a new external core to the rear of the warehouses. The Mayor should note that the consented scheme offered no protection to the interiors of numbers 12 and 13 and implemented a soft-strip approach that would offer little protection to the existing internal fabric.

The planning permission for the 2011 scheme has been implemented and Tower Hamlets has issued a certificate of lawfulness to this effect. The applicant has stated that should the current proposals not be consented, then the 2011 scheme would be built out.

Having provided some background and context to the applications, I will now move on to the current proposal itself. The proposal involves the redevelopment of the site involving the demolition, part retention and full retention of buildings onsite to provide a commercially-led, mixed-use development ranging in height between four and 14 storeys, with almost 35,000 square metres of office space, 1,500 square metres of retail and 3,300 square metres of restaurant space. The proposals also include 40 residential units, of which 11 will be affordable - which is 30% based on habitable rooms - and seven basement residential car-parking spaces, cycle spaces and associated servicing and public realm works.

This slide provides an indicative view of the proposed ground-floor uses and new public routes and public realm running through the site. You can see that the scheme will follow the existing street layouts and will introduce a significant amount of commercially active frontages, which are highlighted in yellow.

We will now look at a summary of the response to the consultation process. The full details of the consultation responses and representations are included within the hearing report and the addendum report.

We will begin with the Deputy Mayor Sir Edward Lister's initial representations of 18 March 2015 in respect of the applications including the listed building consent. This concluded that the principle of a high density, mixed use commercially led development at a location of excellent public transport accessibility is strongly supported and the proposals are consistent with the site's location within the CAZ and the City Fringe Opportunity Area. A number of strategic planning issues were identified as needing to be addressed before the application could be recognised as being compliant with London Plan policies.

Following the representations, the application was referred back to the Mayor on 10 September 2015 following the Tower Hamlets Planning Committee meeting which resolved to refuse planning permission and listed building consent against their officers' recommendation. You will recall, Mayor, that as set out in the stage 2 report of 23 September 2015, you indicated that the strategic issues raised at the initial consultation had been satisfactorily resolved. Further to your direction that you would act as the Local Planning Authority to determine the applications, you will recall that you visited the site with GLA officers, which included an internal inspection of the Blossom Street warehouses, and based on those findings of the visit the applicant was subsequently advised to explore means of retaining numbers 12 and 13 Blossom Street warehouses in full. An amended scheme was submitted to the GLA and Tower Hamlets in November 2015 to accommodate this.

Here are the responses from statutory consultees. In response to the initial planning submission, Historic England commented that, when considered cumulatively, the changes will, on balance, enhance rather than detract from the character of the Elder Street Conservation Area and, where harm to the conservation area is identified, this harm is minor and is far outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. In response to the November 2015 amendments, they commented that the amended proposals go much further, retaining the cellular interiors of the undesignated warehouse buildings and their fabric. They

also commented that they support the amended proposals, which, like the previous proposals, enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Historic England (Archaeology) raised no objection but requested a condition be included to address any archaeological impacts as well as a staged programme of investigation into buried deposits. As I mentioned earlier, there is a condition on consent for scheduled ancient monument consent, which was granted by Historic England in June 2015.

The Georgian Group objected to the proposals on the grounds that the scheme does not respect the scale or materials of the conservation area and fails to demonstrate appropriate enhancement. They have not provided any comments on the amended November 2015 scheme for the retention of the warehouses.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings objected and advised that the historic buildings on the site should be treated in a more sensitive manner; they should be treated as assets that form a valuable part of the local streetscape and add to the distinctive character of the local area. They asked for a full review of the scheme in order to deliver a fully heritage-led scheme that protects the area's special character. They also did not comment on the latest amendment.

In response to the initial consultation, the Spitalfields Trust objected to the proposals as they would conflict with Tower Hamlets' core strategy objectives relating to the protection and conservation of heritage assets. They would also conflict with the Elder Street Conservation Area Appraisal and the land use is a poor balance between large-scale floorplate office uses and smaller-scale uses, which currently define the area's character. The proposals would cause substantial harm to the heritage assets and would result in a loss of historic fabric and plan-form of the existing area. They also commented that the proposed employment uses would be mostly grade-A office space and high construction costs would result in insufficient space for SMEs. They also stated that the proposal would be more damaging than the 2011 consented scheme and should be considered on its own merits. In response to the amended scheme of November 2015, the Trust welcomed the full retention of 12 and 13 Blossom Street but stated that this would not alter the damage caused to the conservation area. They also restated Tower Hamlets' reasons for refusal and provided an independent report, which provides further details of objections and restates the Trust's ongoing objections. The details of the report are set out in the hearing report and the addendum.

The Spitalfields Community Group objected to the proposals for the following reasons. The development would result in 72% of the existing buildings onsite being demolished and would cause substantial harm to the Elder Street Conservation Area as a result. The bulk and massing of development would be out of scale with the conservation area. The proportion of housing is too low, including an insufficient amount of affordable housing, and retail units are outweighed by offices not aimed at local people. In response to the amended scheme, the Spitalfields Community Group restated their original objection and stated that Tower Hamlets Council's reasons for refusal still stand. The retention of numbers 12 and 13 Blossom Street is encouraging. However, it does not go far enough and a high level of demolition is still

proposed. Numbers 12 and 13 are still not defined as a separate building with no rear elevation or open space behind it.

The Huguenot Society objected as the site is one of the few remaining places where Huguenot ancestry and culture is preserved. The proposals threaten to change and destroy this heritage forever and they note that the expansion of the City has already resulted in the destruction of most historic Huguenot sites.

Save Britain's Heritage objected as the proposals would devastate Spitalfields, which is itself an urban success story. The scheme would result in the loss of one-third of the Elder Street Conservation Area, with a loss of affordable business accommodation. The proposals are out of scale and there is insufficient housing and affordable housing proposed.

The East End Preservation Society also commented and raised concern that the proposals would cause substantial damage to the heritage assets within the conservation area.

As set out in the hearing report, a number of other bodies were also consulted, including the City of London, the London Borough of Hackney, the Twentieth Century Society and the Elder Street Residents' Association, but no comments were provided.

The Ministry of Startups support the proposals and are acutely aware of the lack of business space in the area. They support the proposed office floorplate sizes and note that 60% of the development would provide commercial space under 325 square metres. Their preference would be to see additional commercial floor space on the site.

The Metropolitan Police [Service], London Underground, Crossrail, Network Rail, the Spitalfields Society and Natural England were also consulted and raised no specific objections. Their full responses are set out in the hearing report.

In response to the initial consultation and as reported in your stage 2 report of 23 September 2015, Tower Hamlets received 550 objections and seven representations of support. In addition, the Mayor received 137 objections to the proposals, including a letter from the Spitalfields Trust requesting him not to intervene and providing details of an alternative scheme for the site. This proposal is to retain the majority of buildings onsite and includes proposed buildings of a more modest scale to those under consideration. The Trust has submitted a document describing the scheme. However, no pre-application advice has been sought and no planning application submitted to date. It should also be noted that the document is not accompanied by any viability information and it is therefore not clear whether the alternative scheme will enable existing buildings to be brought back into use.

In response to the November 2015 amendments, the GLA and Tower Hamlets Council received 144 letters of objection with 14 in support. This included a letter with 18 signatures in support from local business owners and residents. An additional 155 objections were received by the Mayor with one letter in support. Following the publishing of the hearing report and addendum, two further objections have been sent to the Mayor and they are set out in the addendum report.

A summary of the key points of objection from both stages of the consultation process are listed here and further details are provided in the hearing report. They include: Tower Hamlets' reasons for refusal still stand, the alternative scheme should be considered, the proposals would impact on the area's cultural heritage, the scale of the proposals is out of character with the area, demolition within a conservation area should not be permitted, and large-scale office footprints would create a monoculture, which would detract from the existing character of the area.

The key points raised in support were: the proposals would be a significant improvement on the consented 2011 scheme, they would enhance the public realm and bring the area back into use, the proposals would restore buildings to residential uses with a 30% proportion of affordable housing, the proposals would provide opportunities for SMEs, and the reuse of the existing warehouses is welcomed.

Now moving on to Tower Hamlets' reasons for refusal, on 21 July 2015 Tower Hamlets Council resolved to refuse planning permission and this decision was reiterated at a follow-up committee meeting on 27 August 2015. This is a summary of the Council's reasons for refusal and the full reasons are set out in the hearing report. Firstly, the development would result in the total and partial loss of and unsympathetic alteration to a significant number of heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The replacements by reason of the scale, mass and design would be harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the Elder Street Conservation Area and the resulting public benefits would not overcome the identified harm caused. Secondly, the proposals by reason of the low proportion of housing compared to employment floor space fails to address the borough's housing needs and, combined with the low percentage of affordable housing, would fail to ensure the development contributes to the creation of socially balanced and inclusive communities. The application for listed building consent accompanying the application was also refused.

In light of the consultation comments and the Tower Hamlets Planning Committee's reasons for refusing the applications, the Mayor should consider the following key issues: an insufficient amount of housing or affordable housing on the site, the loss of undesignated heritage assets and buildings on the site, the design response in terms of scale, height, massing and architecture, and the impact of the proposal on the Elder Street Conservation Area and neighbouring listed buildings.

As a starting point, both local policy and the London Plan would seek the provision of housing onsite as part of an office-led redevelopment that would contribute towards the establishment and mix of uses. In this case, the applicant has worked within the site constraints to deliver a substantial proportion of residential floor space in the context of the London Plan's mixed use policy and the need to prioritise employment floor space within the CAZ. It should also be noted that the proposals have been independently assessed by Tower Hamlets' viability consultants, who concluded that the original proposition of 27% affordable housing could be increased and the currently proposed 30.4% based on habitable rooms is

therefore recognised as being the maximum reasonable amount that the development can viably deliver. In this instance, given the potential for this development to sustain an important cluster of business activity, GLA officers are content that the proportion of housing onsite is appropriate.

Before we move on to consider the loss of undesignated heritage assets and the impact of the proposal on the conservation area and the other heritage assets, it is important to acknowledge the following substantial public benefits of the scheme.

Firstly, the scheme would deliver economic benefits including the support of the CAZ function, the driving force behind London's economic wellbeing, an uplift of approximately 2,400 job opportunities at the site, numerous short- and longer-term local employment and training opportunities and housing provision, which are secured through the legal agreements and discussed in detail within the hearing report. Secondly, the social benefits include the promotion of new opportunities through employment and training obligations to respond to local skills gaps, and the removal of barriers to access and inclusion at the site to enhance local employment opportunities for disabled people. Thirdly, the environmental benefits include the delivery of more energy-efficient and sustainable buildings; improvements to permeability, public access and public realm; the reinstating of lost building frontages particularly along Fleur De Lis Street; the reuse and repair of existing warehouses, the bringing back into use of this long-neglected area of land, and the introduction of commercially active frontages, which would encourage and increase activity and vibrancy, and improved levels of passive surveillance.

I will now address the loss of undesignated heritage assets on the site. It is important to note that none of these buildings are listed or locally listed. The proposals involve a mixed strategy of demolition, part retention and full retention of buildings on the site. This plan shows the buildings to be demolished highlighted in red and the building elements to be retained in green. While this will result in a significant level of demolition within the conservation area, the buildings to be demolished are generally of limited heritage or architectural value and therefore provide a neutral contribution to the character of the Elder Street Conservation Area. Notwithstanding this, the former Nicholls and Clarke showrooms and offices at numbers 3 to 9 Shoreditch High Street - where the red arrow is - are recognised by GLA officers as having the most heritage and architectural value of the buildings to be demolished due to its characterful 1930s *faïence* tiled frontage and its association with the historic significance of the former Nicholls and Clarke business operations on the site. The Mayor should, however, be aware that its demolition was consented as part of the 2011 scheme.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is the whole chunk where the red arrow is, basically?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes, everything highlighted in red.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Is everything highlighted in red consented for demolition under the 2011 scheme?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): No, the only building consented for demolition is the one with the arrow. Also, the --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry. It is, as it were, just that chunk there. The arrow is pointing to a section that is enclosed by a black line. That is the only bit that is consented for demolition under the 2011 scheme. Is that right?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): No. The 2011 scheme did not take in the complete size of the site. There were other buildings, such as the depot building on the other side of Blossom Street that was also consented, but it has a lesser value.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It was also consented in 2011?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): All right. What about the building on the corner there where number 3 is?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): The 1930s building was consented but the one next to it was retained as part of the 2011 scheme. The small adjoining frontage, number 14, was retained. It was just the frontage itself and the rest was demolished behind.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The point I am trying to get at is what is substantively different between what is proposed to be demolished today and what was consented for demolition in 2011.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): It is very similar in terms of what is being demolished in relation to the 2011 scheme. The extent of the demolition is very similar.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): All right. Thank you. The intention, as you said earlier, is to build out the 2011 scheme failing success today?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): That is right, yes. The building that we were just talking about with the red arrow is at the bottom left of this image, which has the *faïence* frontage. Here are all the buildings to be demolished as part of the current proposals. From the top left is the 1950s number 2 Shoreditch High Street and number 20 Norton Folgate; number 14 Norton Folgate, the former Georgian townhouse, which is currently in a poor state of repair and includes a number of 20th-century additions; the adjoining number 13 Norton Folgate, a brick-faced four-storey 1930s corner building; the majority of the 1927 warehouse, which has limited architectural value apart from its western *façade*, which is to be retained; the 1980s mock-Georgian office building at subplot S3;

numbers 16 and 17 Blossom Street, a three-storey 1950s office building; the derelict remains of number 2 Elder Street; and, lastly, the 1950s utilitarian depot building, which is directly opposite the Blossom Street warehouses.

In terms of the buildings to be retained, including *façade* retention, it should be noted that the most important undesignated heritage assets, including locally listed buildings on the site, are to be retained in full or part-retained. They are as follows: from top left, numbers 16 to 19 Norton Folgate, a distinctive red brick 19th-century terrace; a locally listed early 20th-century Arts and Crafts building at numbers 5 to 11 Folgate Street; the 1887 warehouse; the locally listed Elder Street warehouses --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry. For number 5, is that the entire *façade* that is going to be retained? Is it the entire warehouse or just the *façade*?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): The whole building, yes. Numbers 12 & 13 Blossom Street warehouses on the bottom row and the adjoining --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is, as it were, number 4 in this?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes, that is number 4.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That was the amendment to the application?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes, that is right. Then the adjoining *façade* of numbers 14 and 15; the western *façade* of the 1927 warehouse; and finally, at the bottom right, the *façade* of number 161 Commercial Street.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is in a pretty poor state of repair, is it not?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes, that is a derelict state at the moment.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There is a plan to build up and (Overspeaking) restoration?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes. To summarise the issue of the loss of buildings within the conservation area, having had regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and weighing in the substantial public benefits of the scheme discussed earlier, GLA officers conclude that the loss of the Nicholls and Clarke offices and showrooms would result in less than substantial harm to the Elder Street Conservation Area but no further harm would be caused by the loss of other undesignated heritage assets. Furthermore, the proposed replacement buildings, which I will describe in more detail shortly, will collectively enhance the setting of the conservation area.

I now intend to address the remaining key issues in terms of the proposed design response to the site and its surroundings and the impact on the conservation area and neighbouring listed

buildings with the following description of the development proposals. Here is the indicative proposed block plan of the whole site with the retained elements highlighted in brown, new-build office elements are in grey and the proposed residential elements in blue. You can also see that the new buildings are aligned to reinstate the historic building line along Fleur de Lis Street running east-to-west through the site, while also providing new public routes and spaces, highlighted in green.

The proposals have been informed through a thorough heritage-led design process including consultation with local residents throughout the design process. In order to address the varying character areas across the site and provide a variation of architectural responses to provide character and visual interest, a number of renowned and award-winning architectural practices have been responsible for each subplot on the site. They include AHMM, who are the lead masterplan architects for the scheme, Duggan Morris Architects, DSDHA, Stanton Williams and East Architects.

Here is a typical mid-level floorplan showing the extent of office floor space proposed in blue, which totals 34,880 square metres across the scheme. This is a typical mid-level floorplan. It indicates the varying sizes of office floor space proposed and the flexibility to provide a range of small, medium and larger floorplate office space. Moving up again, here is a plan of the typical upper-level office spaces within plots S1 and S2, which you will see are largely contained towards the western and northern edges of the site.

This image provides an overview of the proposed massing arrangement looking north towards Shoreditch, with block S1 ranging in height between four and 11 storeys, block S1c behind it, the tallest building at 14 storeys, and block S2 at the northeast corner ranging between four and nine stories in height. You can also see that the remaining new-build elements, including the residential block of S3, are mainly four storeys in height, which is consistent with the predominant scale of the wider conservation area.

I will now take you through the proposals in some more detail looking at each plot, starting with S1a on the bottom left-hand, highlighted in red, which forms the corner of Folgate Street and Norton Folgate. This is the proposed view looking south along Norton Folgate. You can see the new openings into the proposed courtyard space behind the retained red brick terrace at numbers 16 and 19, the retained number 15 next to it and the proposed red brick corner building marking the end of the terrace.

From here you are looking in the opposite direction, toward Spitalfields to the north. The proposed corner building has been designed to respond to the four-storey scale and historic window proportions of the retained Norton Folgate buildings and forms a refined but visually problematic border to the site as a result. You can also see the proposed larger scale of the block S1 behind it, which I will come on to shortly.

This is an image of the view from within the proposed Blossom Yard courtyard, a public courtyard space within the block. You can see the retained rear walls of the existing washhouses in the middle of the image, to the rear of the red brick terrace and Norton Folgate. You can also see the existing Broadgate Tower behind that.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The retained wash houses, did you say?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes. The rear wall of the retained wash houses is kept as part of the proposals.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I see, yes.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Here is a zoomed-in view of the proposed Folgate Street elevation at the southern end of the site. This gives a clear indication of the successful contrast achieved between the simple form of the proposed corner building and the adjoining and characterful Arts and Crafts building which it neighbours.

I will just quickly give you an idea of the proposed office floorplate of this section of the scheme, which, as you can see, is small-scale and isolated from the rest of the scheme and served by a core access from Norton Folgate from the left-hand side.

Moving to plot S1b, highlighted in red at the corner of Folgate and Blossom Street, here is the proposed number 16 and 17 Blossom Street adjoining the eastern end of the retained Arts and Crafts terrace. This building is designed to emulate the scale, materials and character of the adjoining Blossom Street warehouses and is recognised by officers as an enhancement in relation to the existing 1950s building, which it replaces. Here is a view of the courtyard at the rear of that proposed building, just to give an idea of the scale of the floor space, which is small in scale, and the fact that it has its own isolated core.

We are now moving to plots S1 and S1c, which include the tallest buildings proposed, on the western and northern areas of the site. This image is looking south along Blossom Street with the 1887 warehouse in the foreground, which is being retained and used as office space. As detailed earlier, following the Mayor's direction that he would act as the local planning authority GLA officers negotiated with the applicant to retain numbers 12 and 13, where the red arrow is, in full, including their interior fabric and floor levels. Here are some existing views of the interiors of numbers 12 and 13, which you will be familiar with following the recent site visit.

As detailed in the November 2015 amendments, the applicant had redesigned the scheme to enable these warehouses to be retained as they are found, to protect their distinct and evocative patina of age, which is integral to the collective character and the character of the wider conservation area. The images give an idea of the quality of these interiors, which include original cast iron columns, timber floor joists and timber-framed sash windows. A condition would be included within any planning consent that would require a detailed schedule of works to be provided that will identify the important elements to be retained and the later additions to be removed.

This slide shows the top floor of numbers 12 and 13, which includes large timber roof trusses that are to be retained. This is just to give an idea of how those spaces might look when used as office space in the future. The original planning submission included the reconfiguring of

the floor levels in numbers 12 and 13 Blossom Street to align with those of the new-build element fronting onto Shoreditch High Street.

The addition of the retention of the historic materials is a key benefit of the recent amendments, with the full retention of the existing timber floors, which are not aligned with the new-build floorplates of block S1. This provides the opportunity to isolate the retained warehouse with its own dedicated entrance and core from the rest of the new-build element, which, along with its small-scale cellular room layouts, enables it to be used for smaller-scale office uses or flexible co-working office space.

Here is a before-and-after view of the retained warehouse with the proposed rear *façade* of block S1 immediately behind it. The recent amendments also reserve the existing roof form of the warehouses, which was highlighted by Historic England as a positive contributor to the character of the conservation area.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is 12 and 13, is it, there on the screen?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): That is right, yes.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That was going to come down under the --

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): It was being retained before. The main change is they were going to alter the internal floor levels and you would lose the internal character.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, I see.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): The roof form was changed previously as well and that is being kept as it is.

The interior of the adjoining warehouse, numbers 14 and 15, highlighted in red, was largely destroyed in a historic fire and has concrete floorplates as a result that do not align with the windows onto Blossom Street, as you can see here. The concrete floors will be removed as part of the current proposals and replaced with timber flooring to align with the new-build floorplates of block S1.

This slide gives a before-and-after view of how the warehouses would look. Here is a view of the retained Blossom View frontage of numbers 14 and 15, with the timber floor joists evident in the view from street level.

We are moving on to the proposed 11-storey block that would sit immediately to the rear of the Blossom Street warehouses and the 14-storey building to the left of it. This is a future view taken from within the public space of the emerging Principal Place development outside of the site and on the other side of Shoreditch High Street. You can see that the S1 block to the right has been designed with a varied massing approach with the tall elements gradually stepping and away from the back and away from the four to six-storey Shoreditch High Street

frontage. The building's frontage is also designed to acknowledge the historic plot widths along Norton Folgate, the regimented rhythm of brick piers and regular distribution of windows. Officers are supportive of this architectural approach, which also demonstrates simple detailing and high-quality facing materials, including varying tones of brickwork. Careful consideration has also been given to the depth of the window reveals and inset brick panels to provide a sense of depth and articulation to the building frontages.

Here is a view of the building's south-facing elevation with the office entrance foyer at its base from the proposed public courtyard. Once again, the taller elements are set back away from the courtyard so as not to appear overbearing in a public realm. The proportion of windows is also reduced to respond to the relatively small scale of the courtyard.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Is that alley between the two new buildings the one that we went down by the bus stop?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Yes, it is next door to the bus stop.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Next to the bus stop, yes.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Fleur de Lis Passage, yes. The 14-storey building at the northern end of plot S1c, next to the railway cutting, has a contrasting appearance to plot S1 resulting from a pale stone frame, which gives a vertical emphasis with large glazed openings and glazed ceramic tile panels provide simple articulation and a more lightweight appearance.

The building sits directly to the rear of the retained 1887 warehouse on a triangular piece of land, which results in a flat iron building form and an angled frontage onto Shoreditch High Street. To the left of this image you can see the principal frontage is angled away from the high street, which enables the predominant four-storey shoulder height of existing buildings to remain prominent in the immediate streetscape. The location of the proposed 14-storey building also has potential to act as a local marker noting the transition point between Shoreditch in the north and the City further to the south of the site along Bishopsgate.

The building will only be visible from a limited number of vantage points from within the Elder Street Conservation Area, as I will demonstrate in the assessment of local views to follow. You will also note the scale of the emerging Principal Place development, a ghost on the right hand side of the image.

Moving on to the proposals for plot S2 on the north eastern corner of the site, in red, here is the proposed ground floor layout for plot S2 with the retained elements highlighted in red. You can also see that the street frontage will be reinstated along Fleur de Lis Street with a public route introduced through the centre of the block connecting Commercial Street with the northern end of Blossom Street. An alternative entry point is included along this route to the rear of the locally listed Elder Street warehouses to provide access for wheelchair users, as the existing entrances off Elder Street are currently stepped.

This is the proposed second floor layout of block S2, which shows the contrast in the scale and nature of office floor space between the larger-scale new build elements in blue and the smaller scale and self-contained floorplates of the retained numbers 4 to 8 Elder Street. You can also see that the floorplate of the new build element is set back away from the rear of the retained building to provide a courtyard space at ground floor along the public route and a light well to the office spaces above.

Moving up to the upper levels, this is the fourth level. You can see that it is set back and angled away from the parapet lines of the lower floors while also forming a defined building edge along the railway to the northern side of the site.

Stepping up to roof level, there are two accessible roof terraces provided for office workers, shaded in blue. You can also see that the upper levels of the new building are set back from the retained warehouse *façade* on the left hand side, highlighted by the red dotted line, to provide a roof light to bring daylight into the entrance area and to also give visual separation between new build and retained elements.

This is a proposed view of the courtyard behind the retained local listed warehouses on the right hand side and the new build frontage to the nine-storey element to the left. Here is the retained western *façade* of the 1927 warehouse fronting on to the proposed Nicholls and Clarke yard, taken from the other side of the railway cuttings. You can see that the new build elements are designed to accentuate the retained *façade* through the use of brick recesses and contrasting tones of brickwork.

This is a before and after view taken at the corner of Blossom Street, which you may recall from the recent site visit, and Fleur de Lis Street, and demonstrates how the proposed building would reinstate the historic block, providing closure to the proposed public space. This view also indicates how the setting-back of the taller elements above allows the four-storey element to appear prominent from a street-level perspective.

This view shows the retained Elder Street warehouses in the context of the new build elements behind. You can see once again that the proposed street frontage is scaled to acknowledge the height of the Elder Street and Blossom Street warehouses.

This view is taken at the north eastern corner of plot S2, at the junction of Blossom Street and Commercial Street. You can see the retained *façade* of number 161 forming the corner of the site on the far right hand side, with the three new storeys proposed above it. To the left of this is the eastern entrance to the new public route and the proposed replacement glass and metal element for the derelict number 2 Elder Street above. The modern and clean-lined form of this element would help to complement and accentuate the setting of the neighbouring Elder Street warehouses through a clear delineation between old and new elements, while also defining the entrance to the public route. It is understood that a historic access point previously existed in this location and the proposals would reinstate this.

This gives an overview of the proposed materials palette for plot S2, which includes a mix of reclaimed brickwork, light brickwork, fair-faced concrete and dark-coloured metalwork and glazing. Officers are supportive of the simple architectural approach underpinning the proposed buildings across the site and the high quality of facing materials would respond successfully to the character and context of the conservation area.

We are moving on to the proposals for plot S3, the residential elements of the scheme. The housing element would provide 40 residential units, 11 of which would be affordable, with seven social rent units and four intermediate tenure units. Twenty-two per cent of the units would be three-bed or more and a private residential courtyard is included which would also accommodate up to 120 square metres of children's play space.

This is a proposed ground floor layout of the residential block, which includes a good distribution of entrances both to the three cores and through to the residential courtyard. Officers are supportive of the design approach to this block in general, which has resulted in a high quality of residential design in the context of this urban location.

Here is a visual from within the residential part that shows the contrasting architectural approach of timber cladding and simple openings to inset balconies to provide a warm and human-scaled appearance.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Where is the play space?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): The play space is just out of shot within the courtyard. It is just out of that view but it is contained within the courtyard space.

Here is a view of the proposed Elder Street elevation and the adjoining grade III-listed housing. This elevation in particular has been subject to extensive design development and consultation with local residents to ensure that the brickwork and detailing of windows, doors and their proportions are consistent with the original Georgian architecture of the neighbouring listed townhouses. This has resulted in a sensitively designed, high-quality addition to the conservation area that is recognised by officers as an improvement on the relatively bland architecture of the existing office building, which be seen here through a before and after view.

This is an indicative view of the Fleur de Lis Street frontage --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Indicative?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Sorry. It is an elevation, a drawing elevation giving an idea of the scale and form of this frontage, which shows the fifth and sixth-storey set-back elements, which have a clean-lined and modern appearance to allow the principal *façades* to appear dominant from street level. The tallest element is positioned furthest away from the heritage-sensitive Elder Street edge and will not appear in the setting of any listed buildings as a result.

Here is a view of the Blossom Street frontage with the warehouses on the left hand side, which provides a four-storey shoulder height. You can see the residential block in the middle on the right hand side. This aligns with the scale of the Blossom Street warehouses opposite to provide a consistent scale along the length of Blossom Street that is also consistent with the scale of the wider conservation area.

I will now take you through some of the key townscape views. A full assessment of views is set out in more detail in the hearing report.

Starting with the view looking north along Norton Folgate, here the characterful red brick frontages of numbers 16 to 19 appear prominent and the buildings along this edge of the site form a consistent four-storey frontage. Here is the proposal, which would retain the southern portion of that frontage and would include the red brick corner building, which has a sympathetic and successful relationship with the proportions of the neighbouring retained buildings. Officers recognise that the proposed 11-storey block will significantly alter this particular view. However, it will not harm the Elder Street Conservation Area as a result of its high quality and simple, clean-lined architecture.

In this view looking east from outside the site towards the Elder Street Conservation Area from Worship Street, the proposals would once again result in a significant change in scale in comparison with the existing condition. Officers are, however, in support of the varied massing arrangement of block S1 and the contrasting architectural style of the 14-storey building to the left. It should also be noted that in this particular view the majority of this view will also be obscured by the emerging Principal Place development. There is a faint orange line that runs up the centre of the image and half the proposal is obscured by that in this view.

It should also be noted that the proposed commercial ground floor frontage of these buildings will reactivate this particular stretch of Shoreditch High Street. Here is an existing view looking south along Shoreditch High Street. The proposed massing would mediate in scale between the high-rise development of Broadgate Tower and the emerging Principal Place development to the right of the image. The lower-rise character of the conservation area is beyond.

This view is taken from further to the north of the site within the neighbouring South Shoreditch Conservation Area in Hackney. You can see --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry, James, to interrupt you there. You see that shot there? Under the 2011 consent, are those goners, those buildings on the corner?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): This is outside the site, looking from Hackney to the south of the site.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Outside of the site, sorry. I am confused.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): We are further along --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am with you.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): We are standing in Shoreditch looking to the south. That was the existing view. This is the proposed. You can see that most of the proposed development is hidden and the proposed elements that are visible are consistent with established scale of the development along Commercial Street to the left of the image and Shoreditch High Street to the right. The proposals would not result in any harm to the setting of the neighbouring conservation area.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): This view is taken from within the Brick Lane and Fournier Street Conservation Area and looks westwards into the site from the junction of Commercial Street and Fleur de Lis Street. The red brick building in the foreground is grade II listed and that is also outside of the site boundary. Here is the proposed view. The new build elements of block S1 and sections of block S2 are visible but the new elements remain largely recessive in the streetscape and the retained number 12 Blossom Street warehouse remains prominent and framed by the proposed building frontages along Fleur de Lis Street. The proposals do not harm the setting of the conservation area or the listed building in this view.

This view is taken further to the west along Fleur de Lis Street and just outside the site boundary with the retained locally listed Elder Street warehouses in the foreground, which are inside the application site. Here is the proposed view. The collective massing of proposed blocks S1 and S2 would significantly alter the scale of the conservation area from this viewpoint and while the reinstatement of building frontages and framing of the view of the Blossom Street warehouses at the end of the street is beneficial, officers conclude that the scale of the development would result in less than substantial harm to the conservation area in this particular view.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Tower Hamlets officers?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): No, sorry, GLA officers. This would, however, be outweighed by the high architectural quality and wider public benefits of the scheme highlighted earlier.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What are the materials in the big chunk in the middle that is plonked there? What are those panels made of, the grey panels?

James Keogh (Strategic Planner, Greater London Authority): Grey metal panels. They would be grey metal with brickwork either side of that.

This view is taken from further north along Commercial Street, again outside of the site, looking to the south towards the site. In the proposed view you can see that the full northern

elevation of block S2 is visible. GLA officers are of the view that the irregular rhythm of windows, tonal brickwork and simple massing arrangement provide a clean-lined frontage on the railway cuttings and, in conjunction with the 14-storey building to the right, help to frame the extent of Blossom Street further to the south. This view would therefore not harm the significance of the conservation area.

Finally, here are some further views that demonstrate an enhancement to the Elder Street Conservation Area in terms of repairing the historic urban block and forming a consistent scale of development that aligns with that of the existing conservation area.

This first view is looking south along Blossom Street with the warehouses on the right hand side. Here is the proposed view. This is looking south down Elder Street from outside of the site, and the proposed view with the retained frontage of number 161 Commercial Street on the right hand side and the entrance to the new public route beyond that.

This view is taken from the southern end of Blossom Street looking west towards the Broadgate Tower, with the locally listed Arts and Crafts buildings in the foreground. This is the proposed. Here you can see the proposals would not alter this portion of the conservation area in terms of scale and would enhance the setting of the locally listed building through the sympathetic and high-quality design approach implemented to the corner building at the end of the street and the modern interpretation of the Blossom Street warehouse to the right of the image.

We have now reviewed the impact of the proposal on the key local views and neighbouring heritage assets. We have noted that the development resulted in a number of benefits for the character of the conservation area and the settings of a number of neighbouring heritage assets. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would result in change to the Elder Street Conservation Area and to the settings of various neighbouring heritage assets, we as officers are of the view that these changes would result in less than substantial harm and this would be outweighed by wider public benefits and the overall high-quality design principles underpinning the scheme.

The Mayor is also advised that the statutory duties in respect of buildings in conservation areas are set out and considered in more detail in the hearing report and addendum.

In conclusion to the design response and as detailed earlier, the architects have engaged in a thorough process of site analysis and community consultation that has led to a number of positive design iterations throughout the planning process, particularly in relation to the red brick corner building of plot S1a and the detailing of the residential building. This has resulted in a well-resolved and sensitively designed scheme that includes the retention and repair of a number of undesignated heritage assets, most notably the Blossom Street warehouses. In doing so, the architects have responded positively to the challenges and constraints of the site and its heritage-sensitive context.

Just to cover some other planning issues relating to employment, retail, inclusive access, sustainable development, environmental issues and transport, they have all been detailed at length and addressed in the relevant sections of the representation hearing report.

In summary and for the Mayor's reference, the agreed section 106 heads of terms, which are detailed in the hearing report and addendum, are as follows: the required Crossrail payments of almost £4.4 million, just over £1 million towards establishing onsite employment and skills training for local people, £90,000 towards increasing local cycle hire provision, £20,000 towards the Commercial Street cycle lane scheme and £3,000 towards Legible London signage.

Other obligations include a section 278 agreement for public realm and highway works, a commitment to providing at least 20% of jobs from the local area, a commitment to provide 30.4% affordable housing, a commitment to secure the new public routes as being publically accessible, and the submission and monitoring of a travel plan.

Having now covered the key issues associated with the case, all that remains is to make our recommendation: that the Mayor agrees with the recommendation as set out in the officers' representation hearing report and grants planning permission and listed building consent for the application at the Land at Blossom Street site, subject to the conditions and reasons set out within the appended draft decision notices, and subject to the prior completion of a section 106 agreement. Thank you, Mayor. That concludes my presentation.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, James. Thank you very much. Well done. Great. A lot of stuff there. Can we now please hear from Tower Hamlets Council's Paul Buckenham? Good afternoon.

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): Good afternoon, Mr Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Policy and Planning and colleagues from the GLA. My name is Paul Buckenham. I am the Development Manager at Tower Hamlets Council and I am here to represent the views of the Council as articulated by its Strategic Development Committee when it considered the applications.

The Committee considered carefully the public benefit that would arise from this development alongside its heritage impacts and balanced them, as the NPPF requires it to do. The Committee determined that the heritage impacts would be so harmful that they would not be outweighed by the public benefits of this development. The Committee therefore resolved that permission should be refused, and I will take you through those reasons.

First, I must say that the Council welcomes the principle of redevelopment at this site. It will rejuvenate a site that currently comprises a number of vacant or underused buildings. A well-designed scheme has the potential to deliver new homes and jobs and contribute to the objectives of the City Fringe Opportunity Area and Tower Hamlets' local plan.

However, the site lies in a highly sensitive location in terms of townscape and built heritage. The Elder Street conservation is one of the oldest and most historically rich conservation

areas within Tower Hamlets. It has 30 listed buildings, six locally listed buildings, eight other listed structures and the remaining archaeology of the St Mary Spital scheduled ancient monument. The character is defined by a close-knit network of cobbled streets, Georgian townhouses and 19th and early 20th-century warehouses. It has a cohesive, fine-grained pattern of development and so the character has a greater degree of sensitivity to new development.

As you have heard, there is a statutory duty for local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. This application covers over one quarter of the conservation area in question and the proposals are wide-ranging and dramatic in their scale and impact.

The problem that the Committee identified lies largely with the height, scale, design and appearance of the new buildings, particularly on blocks S1, S1c and S2, and their failure to integrate successfully into this area of rich built heritage. The height of the buildings that form the western boundary of the site on Norton Folgate - that is S1 and S1c - would rise up to 11 and 14 storeys respectively. They would be tall, bulky buildings that would not acknowledge the character and appearance of their surroundings.

Despite the set-backs at upper levels and the changes in the building line that have been described to you, these blocks would completely dominate their neighbours at 14 to 19 Norton Folgate, the warehouses on Blossom Street and the Arts and Crafts buildings on Folgate Street. These buildings are also of a monotonous and relentless form of architecture that would dominate their surroundings and diminish the significance of the heritage assets that define the character of this area.

On the north-eastern part of the site, the Elder Street warehouses are distinct features within the street scene when viewed from Commercial Street and Fleur de Lis Street. They do contribute to the industrial heritage of the area and whilst there would be improvements to the buildings themselves, which are welcome, the development on block S2 would rise up directly behind them to nine storeys and would literally loom over them, reducing their prominence and harming their setting within the conservation area.

The architecture would be bland and uninspiring and not fitting to this important location and the design would not succeed in breaking down the perceived mass of the development.

On the other side of block S2, the *façade* retention of the 1927 warehouse would be little more than tokenistic. The *façade* would become subsumed within the larger nine-storey block that surrounds it on all sides and above. Its prominence within the street scene as an important part of the group of warehouses along Blossom Street would be completely lost.

The development would be an inappropriate encroachment of city-scale blocks into the conservation area. This site deserves a sensitive and carefully considered solution that brings forward regeneration and enhances the special character of the area, but it is evident that this application does not achieve this. The development would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area in its entirety.

In addition to the serious objections regarding the treatment of important heritage assets, the Council also objects to the low level of housing that has been included in the proposals. Your London Plan requires Tower Hamlets to deliver almost 4,000 new homes each year. As it is proposed, the residential floor space in this application is just 14% of the total in the development and yields just 40 new homes in a 0.9 hectare site. If the application were permitted this would be a missed opportunity for more housing provision and would be in direct contravention of the London Plan policies for the CAZ. If more housing were to have been included in the proposal this may also have altered the scheme viability and possibly helped to deliver a greater proportion of affordable housing.

You are urged not to ignore the weight of public opposition to the scheme. Objections have come not just from local residents and amenity groups but from those who visit Spitalfields from across London, the United Kingdom (UK) and further afield.

In conclusion, the Council is committed to regeneration, creating new jobs and delivering new homes and places do have to evolve and change. We do not see the conservation area is about preserving buildings or townscapes in aspic. However, the Strategic Development Committee has decided that this area is so rich in history and the harm caused to heritage assets would be so severe that this is not the right development for the site. It would not comply with the London Plan or local policies. There must be scope to redesign, improve and enhance the proposals and reduce their harmful impacts.

Hence Tower Hamlets Council respectfully requests that you uphold the views of the local authority, which is that this application should not be allowed to proceed and that planning permission to the building consent should be refused. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank very much. I note that it was the officers' recommendation that the scheme should proceed. I am most grateful to you. If I may, I will put my questions generally to the various witnesses at the end, Paul [Buckenham]. What I will do now, if you do not mind, is to get the applicants. Thank you very much indeed. We will first of all hear from the applicants for a total of five minutes, then the objectors for a total of 15 minutes and the supporters for a total of five, and then I will ask the questions.

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am Nigel Webb, Head of Developments at British Land. British Land is a long-term investor and an experienced developer. We have a strong track record of developing projects in the capital and we pride ourselves on our careful stewardship of buildings that we develop and own and the environments in which they sit, and working with local communities. Should planning consent be granted, our intention would be to develop the scheme out as soon as we are able to unlock the significant benefits the project can deliver. We have a full team to answer your questions but I will hand over to my colleague, Mike Wiseman, to explain briefly our approach to the project.

Michael Wiseman, Development Director, British Land: Our vision for Blossom Street is to create something unique, to respect and build on the rich historic fabric and to deliver a

commercial-led scheme with the type of office and retail space needed in the northern city fringe. This means improving on the principles established in the 2011 planning consent and creating a mix of buildings with a range of floorplates catering for small and growing businesses, which are the lifeblood of this area.

To achieve this and ensure the sort of architectural diversity befitting this area, we have appointed a best in class architectural team comprising Allford Hall Monaghan Morris Architects (AHMM), Stanton Williams, Duggan Morris and DSDHA. In developing our vision, we have undertaken significant consultation. We have spent considerable time with the local community. We have secured the support of Tower Hamlets officers, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), English Heritage, the Tower Hamlets Design Review Panel and now your own GLA officers. We have talked to the community, not just the Spitalfields Trust, and have made meaningful changes in response to this. These are changes that we believe make the scheme better and will help ensure its success over the long term.

Paul Monaghan (Allford Hall Monaghan Morris Architects): Could you please turn to page 8 in that document? I am Paul Monaghan from AHMM. We propose to bring back into use three disjointed and rundown sites and a series of historic buildings that have lain empty and decaying for far too many years. From the beginning, we have set out eight key step-stones for the project. To begin with, we are retaining all buildings - which you have already seen - that make a positive contribution to the conservation area, including all locally listed buildings. You can see all the buildings that are retained on page 8 and you will know that this is fully supported by Historic England, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, CABE and Tower Hamlets' own design review panel, the Conservation and Design Advisory Panel (CADAP).

On the next page you can see that we have proposed to remove existing buildings that have a negative or neutral impact on the conservation area and replace them with high-quality new architecture which retains the historic character of each street. We are restoring the historic street pattern and adding new smaller-scale buildings to finely grained parts of the site on Folgate and Elder Street.

You will see on the following pages that a key part of the scheme is opening up the site and creating high-quality, publically accessible yards and passageways which are resonant of the spaces elsewhere in Spitalfields. Blossom Yard will be reinstated. A new space, Nicholls and Clarke Yard, provides a positive termination to Blossom Street, and we are recreating the historic route of Elder Passage to connect the site to Shoreditch.

On page 13 you will see that Nicholls and Clarke's legacy, which are historic warehouses on Blossom and Elder Streets, are retained. This is not a 'one size fits all' but a building by building approach that will include straight restoration, remodelling and *façade* retention. We believe this retrofitting fits well into the character of these buildings and indeed this inventive approach to new and old should attract tech and creative businesses.

Blossom Street has been home to hundreds of businesses over the last century, which is what we are trying to recreate. We are providing a variety of office floorplate sizes to suit small and medium-sized businesses, plus space for companies as they grow. Over 60% of the spaces are less than 4,000 square feet and there are no corporate floorplates. The diagram on page 15 shows comparative sizes of other buildings in the area to illustrate this point.

On the next page, you will see that great care has been taken to reinforce the dominant four-storey street scale on Elder and Folgate Streets. Page 17 shows that taller elements are located on the periphery of the site, where a principal of greater height was established through the 2011 consent and placed in views where height already exists. There new buildings address the new public square of Principal Place and mediate between our site and the large scale emerging context.

At the heart of the conservation area, we propose to reinstate residential use and grain of Elder Street. They have been designed to incorporate traditional Georgian detailing and there are 40 homes, of which 30% are affordable.

You can see on page 19 the scheme rejects the corporatist architecture of the City and uses brick as its primary material, reinforcing the character and grain of the conservation area. This is a magnificent opportunity to take a historic part of London and mix it with a new part.

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): To conclude, these are viable, deliverable proposals that breathe life into largely disused buildings and sites. They respect the heritage and bring much-needed employment growth focused on the tech and creative sectors. It is supported by a comprehensive education, employment and training strategy to ensure local people have the opportunity to benefit from the scheme during construction and in the long term. Finally, as you may be aware, other parties have been interested in acquiring the site but I want to be clear that British Land has an exclusive contractual arrangement to develop out the site from the Corporation of London and should planning consent be granted it is our intention to build out the site as soon as we are able. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much indeed, applicants. Can we have the objectors, please? Thank you so much, applicants. Well done for keeping to time.

The objectors have 15 minutes in total. You can divide it however you like. I understand Paul Johnson from the Spitalfields Community Group is not with us. We have Oliver Leigh-Wood, Blanche Girouard and John Nicolson. Who is going to go first?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): My name is Oliver Leigh-Wood and I speak on behalf of Spitalfields Trust. This long-established group has for some 40 years been fighting to preserve and enhance the character of the Spitalfields area. You will have read the Trust's letter requesting you not to intervene in the Norton Folgate case but, having done so, I ask you to consider your decision carefully. There are powerful planning and consultation reasons set out in the NPPF and Tower Hamlets' policies for refusing the British Land scheme, as you so eloquently just heard.

Whilst you might quite understandably be expected to follow the advice of Historic England on heritage matters, this is, I suggest, another case, just like Smithfield and the Strand, where that advice is inadequate. We appreciate that the scheme has been revised to retain a couple of small warehouses on Blossom Street. We welcome this but that is simply not enough to allay our objections.

The Trust considers that the scheme will cause very serious harm to the conservation area, as you have heard, and this harm far outweighs any public benefit. The British Land scheme is ambitious but costly to build, so expensive, according to its own viability assessments, that it can only afford to provide 11 affordable housing units. We assume that the revisions are cost neutral.

Nor is the amount of new grade A office space a reason for you to grant approval. In terms of meeting targets for employment provision within the City Fringe area, the gain is modest. However the loss elsewhere in London of office space to residential, which has been a great concern to you, has been concentrated in the cheap, low-rent end of the market, for which there is now a great demand and which new build does not replace. While British Land may offer short term subsidies to a few small businesses, the rent in new grade A offices is high. That is the nature of the beast.

London's economic vibrancy is closely linked to the technology, media and telecommunications (TMT) sector. Starter businesses need cheap rents. New ideas need old buildings. Setting aside any conservation arguments, the existing Norton Folgate buildings, which are mostly in sound condition, should be kept and refurbished.

You are aware - you have been constantly told - of the 2011 consented scheme. You have also been sent a copy of the Trust's alternative scheme, a matter not considered by Historic England. This scheme shows the greater benefits that can be achieved with much less harm than the British Land proposal by retaining the majority of the existing buildings. In particular, the Trust's scheme provides affordable accommodation for start-up businesses, 42 affordable housing units and preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area by retaining existing buildings and inserting new ones that are sympathetic in scale. The Trust scheme, as you know, is fully funded.

We urge you therefore to support Tower Hamlets' refusal of the British Land scheme. The correct form of a debate on the comparative merits would be a public inquiry, which would no doubt rapidly follow your refusal. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you so much. Thank you.

Blanche Girouard (local resident): Blanche Girouard. No one ever regrets the buildings that have been saved. Think of Covent Garden. Think of Smithfield. Think of St Pancras Station. Think of the Foreign Office. They only regret the ones that get knocked down.

Thirty-nine years ago members of the Spitalfields Trust squatted in those buildings to save them from British Land, and they won. Find me one person who regrets that. Now,

amazingly, 39 years later, British Land is back, trying to demolish a big chunk of Spitalfields, but we are back too. I was there then. I did not have an option because I was in a carry cot. Now I am back of my own free will and I am fighting to preserve this beautiful bit of London, but I am not alone. It is not just because I was a child and a bit of ceiling fell in my eye. I am not alone in this. Five hundred people surrounded Norton Folgate to try to protect it. Seven hundred people wrote in. You hear 550. That is because the others did not put a postal address. Seven hundred people wrote in. Only seven people wrote to support British Land's scheme.

Tower Hamlets Council saw the merit in what we are saying and rejected the application, which begs the question, "Why are we here today?" I understand that there is a London Plan and that it claims that by 2031 we will need 3 billion square metres of office space. I understand that Tower Hamlets and the Isle of Dogs have to supply a fair share. I cannot comment on the merit of the Plan but I do know that this towering complex of office blocks does not have to be built here, on this particular site, in this conservation area.

The other side talk about retention and restoration. They make it sound like they are keeping all the nice bits and that it will not matter in the slightest because all the lovely bits will still be there, but keeping the odd wall and *façade* is not the same thing at all. You would not keep the front of St Paul's Cathedral and add a few stories for office space, and then add a 13-storey office block behind it and say, "Oh, but we are setting it back. You will still focus on the front". It is not the same thing. You cannot replace a historic area of courtyards, alleyways, handsome 19th-century warehouses and beautiful Georgian buildings with one whacking great monstrous complex that is 13 storeys high.

This is not a conservation area for nothing. You cannot just think, "We will add a few bits around the edges to be safe". They choose to keep this as a conservation area. There are other places in Tower Hamlets and the Isle of Dogs where faceless, soulless, 13-storey office blocks would go, could go and, to be frank, might fit in, but if you allow these buildings to be knocked down it would be the detriment of the architecture of London, the people of London and, I believe, your legacy as Mayor. Augustus found Rome brick. He left it marble. Do not reduce marble London to rubble. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. Thank you.

John Nicolson (local resident): Mayor Johnson, my name is John Nicolson and I have been asked by many of the residents of Spitalfields to speak on their behalf. I am a Member of Parliament for a Scottish Constituency but I love London, its buildings and heritage. For me that means protecting them, not destroying them.

The Labour Party gave the Mayor of London the power to call in great planning decisions. It was intended to allow *grands projets* in which perhaps nimby councils stood in the way of the national interest. It was not intended to help greedy developers ride roughshod over local communities and their councils. The power given to the Mayor's office was intended to be used judiciously and yet in looking at your record, Mr Johnson, you have called in 13

planning decisions and in all 13 you have sided with the developers over the wishes of the local authority and local residents. It makes for uncomfortable reading.

Two hundred and fifty metres away from the Norton Folgate site lies the Fruit and Wool Exchange, an Art Deco building. In a basement lay the largest bomb shelter from the Second World War. There was an Art Deco pub next to it and Dorset Street, laid out in the 17th century. The locals mounted a vigorous campaign to redevelop the building sympathetically and Tower Hamlets, unusually, agreed with them. You called in the planning decision and I happened to see you on the day sitting on your bike with the map upside down, trying to work out where the Fruit and Wool Exchange was. You were actually outside it. I have the feeling that perhaps you were not overly familiar with the area.

After a cursory tour - spent mostly on the roof, I noticed, admiring the view - off you went, and after the hearing you ordered the demolition of the whole site. The Fruit and Wool had no great strategic significance, it blocked no great infrastructure project and it was full of small businesses but a big developer wanted it and alas, you seemed to want to help the big developer.

Here we are looking at the liberty of Norton Folgate, almost next door. It was first recorded in 1110. It is a tiny area. Most of the current street pattern has stood since at least the 18th century, although of course Bishopsgate dates from Roman times. It contains fine Victorian warehouses, untouched and Dickensian. It has cobbled streets, narrow alleyways and winds. On Bishopsgate, intact Georgian townhouses have lain boarded for decades. Their owners, British Land, have been planning mischief on this site for some time.

As we have heard, British Land has form in this neighbourhood. These were the streets where a group of tenacious students in the 1970s said, "Enough", and halted British Land's bulldozers mid-demolition during an earlier spate of destruction. Huguenot weavers' houses in Folgate Street were saved and the Spitalfields Trust was formed. Who now says that they wish British Land had won that battle, apart, of course, from British Land?

Norton Folgate lies within a conservation zone and yet the British Land demolition project now on the table would see 75% of the conservation zone demolished. What on earth is the point of a conservation zone if the buildings within it are not conserved? What British Land want to produce are yet more bland, lifeless offices out of scale with the surrounding buildings. Indeed we could all hear the audible groans from the audience here as the Planning Officer flashed up each new image. By contrast, the buildings British Land tried but failed to demolish will soon approach their 300th birthday.

As for the Spitalfields Trust, do not be misled by their academic air and tweedyness. These guys have saved scores of supposedly hopeless sites. They have bought and sold property worth now in the hundreds of millions. They do not pocket any cash profit for themselves. They invest in the future of London by saving its past.

Now for the first time the Trust have in their sights someone who can help them fight the big corporations in the courts. As you will know, Troels Holch Povlsen [businessman], like me

an outsider - in his case, a Dane - but also a lover of this city and its heritage, has offered if need be to fight this planning decision through the courts but, like the Trust, he does not want to fight. He has offered to buy the site from the vendor, matching British Land's price. The Spitalfields Trust would then develop it and I promise you the result would be an area of outstanding beauty. In 20 years' time, no one would believe that philistines ever pushed for its destruction.

Several big conservation decisions lie before you, Mayor Johnson, in the closing months of your time in office. It would be good if you recovered your former reputation as a lover of history and architecture, rather than going out in a bang in an orgy of building destruction. As for the site, I would be happy to walk you round in person. If you come with me you will not need a map.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you to the honourable Member from Scotland for introducing a much-needed note of acrimony to the proceedings.

John Nicolson (local resident): I am a Spitalfields resident in London.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Of course. Thank you so much to the objectors and also to you for keeping so much to time. Thank you very much indeed.

Could we go now to the supporters, if there are any supporters? There are some supporters? A hardy and hunted band: Paul Finch, Charlie Green and Alex Gordon Shute.

Paul Finch OBE (former Chair, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment): I am going to go first. I am Paul Finch, former Chair of CABE, not a politician. I have six points and a conclusion.

One, the post-1945 redevelopment of inner east London has until quite recently been characterised first by its absence and secondly - with some honourable exceptions - by a low level of architectural ambition, not least on the part of public authorities including Tower Hamlets, relentless monotony being their stock in trade.

Two, the ambition evident in the team commissioned by British Land and led by the Stirling Prize-winning practice AHMM is welcome further evidence of changed attitudes to combining old and new on the City Fringe. This is no longer the 1970s when brave new world modernism was the order of the day, often designed by second-rate architects.

Three, the Tea Building development nearby in Shoreditch, completed in 2003 to designs by AHMM, marks an important moment for commercial development on the City Fringe because it acknowledged the possibilities of creative commercial reuse without the dead hand of preservation. It is that spirit, I would suggest, which is being continued at Blossom Street, albeit in a far more complex urban context.

Four, the Blossom Street proposal passes the reversibility test with flying colours. If what is now proposed existed and somebody suggested replacing it with what is in fact there now,

this would rightly be rejected on architectural, urbanistic grounds and in respect of the mixture of uses.

Five, models of genuine mixed-use development in this part of London are quite rare. Instead of attacking this developer and its architectural team, what we should be doing is welcoming its approach and taking it as useful precedent for similar developments in the future.

Six, this proposal is not an alien invader mega-tower, which is how it is being characterised by some opponents, but is a piece of careful and considered European urbanism, modestly scaled and appropriately respectful of its context.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind that the existing buildings on the site are quite different in use and scale to what had previously been there. Change is the lifeblood of healthy cities, sometimes in the context of new buildings and new architecture, sometimes in brand-new space and sometimes, as is proposed for Blossom Street, in a hybrid that offers more connectivity, that reinstates lost urbanism as a result of accretional buildings of the 20th century, and that provides a proper urban grain. In short, this proposal has much to admire and just as important - perhaps more so - there is nothing to be frightened of. Thank you.

Charlie Green (Chief Executive Officer, The Office Group): Mr Mayor, my name is Charlie Green. I am the co-founder of a company called The Office Group. We are a design-led flexible office provider and it is our intention to take a lease on 52,000 square feet of the office space in this development.

I will tell you a bit about us, The Office Group, to give you some context. I will talk a bit about the changing ways of working and then talk about our plans for S2, the building there. In essence, we have 31 locations across London. We have just under a million square feet and so I would like to think that we know what we are talking about because the majority of our market is targeting the start-ups and smaller businesses that employ one to 50 people. We provide private offices, meeting and conferencing rooms and co-working spaces in those 31 buildings. We do that and our core market is the one-to-50 people because 97% of all businesses in central London employ fewer than 50 people. Our average size company in the portfolio is 12 people but we have three buildings in the Shoreditch area already and within those three buildings the average size is actually smaller, it is six people across those buildings. We did a poll before coming here today of the people in those buildings and where they live and 68% of them live in the boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Tower Hamlets.

We provide flexible space - that is from one month to 12 months - and this is the fundamental point of what we offer: it is the premise of our business model is offering flexibility. As I mentioned, the core market for us, the creative media and tech industries, make up the bulk of our occupiers. The way that we are all working is changing and it is affecting everybody and this is a technology driven shift that we are seeing that is driving behavioural changes in the workplace. It is our role, as a building owner and operator, to adjust the workplace and meet those changes and react to the demands of the occupiers with the knowledge economy, the sharing economy and the cloud allowing us to be connected wherever we are.

Those behaviours are manifesting themselves in the workplace principally through flexibility and so the occupiers must have the ability. Where you have a business plan where you cannot forecast 12 months ahead, then you cannot possibly forecast your space needs 12 months ahead and so you have to have an environment where those companies can change their space needs. That is about growth. That is hugely important. That is about growing fast as well but it is also about staying the same size, it is also about downsizing as well and about managing the risk. It is in our environment where we offer that flexibility so that those companies can do that.

What we are really seeing as the biggest shift in recent years is this need for community and the people in our buildings want to be part of something bigger and part of a community and so they are coming to us. We used to think our buildings were all about design and location; if we built them beautifully and in great positions people would come and that is true and they still do. Collaboration is sometimes an overused term but actually that is because it is a very real benefit of being in a business environment where you can work with other businesses and generate business for your company. What we are seeing is that the small companies want to be near the bigger businesses. We are also seeing that the bigger businesses want to be near the small businesses.

In terms of S2 and our intentions for that space, 52,000 square feet, we believe that we will have 600 people working in that building. We believe that that will come from 50 to 60 different businesses. We will also dedicate, in the Elder Street warehouse building, space for 100 people for co-working and, for us, the co-working is the clearest expression of affordable business space that you could possibly have. One of the things that we are very good at doing is providing space for companies that would not otherwise be able to access that space. It is a beautiful warehouse building and, if we can create an environment where people can have that accessibility, then we are achieving something quite special.

We have referred to the City Fringe Opportunity Area Planning Framework (OAPF) which does focus on enabling the business cluster to continue to grow. There is a mix of large corporations, SMEs, microbusinesses and start-ups. We believe that one of the ways that you address doing that in that planning framework is by ensuring that the space for continued business growth is there. It is actually not just about ensuring the space is there; it has to be the right space at the right price. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Alex Gordon Shute (local resident): Mr Mayor and colleagues, I am Alex Gordon Shute. I am a current resident in Spitalfields and have lived there for over half of the last 20 years. My stepfather has been there for more than 45 years. I am a committee member of the Spitalfields Society but I am here in my individual capacity.

I am here to make one important point and that is that the community in Spitalfields, particularly in Elder Street, which is most directly affected by this development, is not united in opposition against this scheme. In fact, four individual residents of Elder Street and a large number of others in the community, including me, are in favour of the scheme.

The scheme gets our vote based on three things. One: there is existing permission in place for a much worse scheme so we would rather have this one if we can. Some of the objections to the scheme are based on the possibility that British Land would give up its rights to this site and a wealthy backer would fund an alternative that would be better. I have spoken to British Land itself and also to a large number of local residents. None of us believe that British Land is going to give up its right to this site; it is much more likely just to build the worst scheme.

Two: British Land has consulted widely and openly on this scheme. The community has had a lot of input and British Land has changed its plans significantly as a result of that consultation. The recent change, which keeps the Victorian warehouses intact, answers a large number of community objections and is a great result.

Three: it is important that you understand that the community in Spitalfields, including the Bangladeshi community, is not opposed to development *per se*. We all know that it is a foregone conclusion that when you live in an area that is right on the edge of the city there will be a lot of development. Where development is sympathetic in scale and style and where it has a diverse range of uses, a good level of affordable housing and retains a lot of the historic fabric of the area, such as the Blossom Street proposals, we will give our support. However, where the development is over-scaled, hideous and bland and offers almost no local employment and minimal affordable housing, such as the Bishopsgate goods yard proposals that you are due to review in March, we will resist them with as much vigour as we can. The goods yard scheme I know is a separate subject, but Blossom Street should be approved partly because it showcases how developments can be proposed and created well.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much indeed for all your testimonials, witnesses. Thank you, everybody, for your contributions. I am just going to fire some questions, if I may, quickly and then I am going to go out and see if I can come up with a decision and if I cannot do it now I will come up with it very shortly.

Can I begin by asking the Council, Paul? Do not move; just stay where you are. We have heard a passionate description from Blanche Girouard about what it was like in the 1970s defending this site. Blanche, you meant that this particular site was being protected, you had a conservation order and the whole thing was being protected. What has happened really to that site since it was consecrated in that way? What has been the history of this site? Has it been of great economic value to London?

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): Thank you. The application site itself has had a bit of a chequered planning history, as you have heard, and there have been attempts to bring it forward and to bring it back into viable use.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): How many years is it now?

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): The buildings have had different uses at different times and so it is hard to say, but certainly I would say at least over the last 10 to 15 years there has not been anything that substantial in a number of the

buildings. That said, there are challenges about bringing buildings with heritage value back into viability, as we know, but, as I said in my presentation, the Council and the committee understand the need for the conservation area to evolve and change and for new uses to be brought in.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand that.

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): It is simply the merits of this particular scheme --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I completely understand that. I am just trying to get a feeling for how long in your memory or the institutional memory. I went around quite a lot of the buildings - the Nicholls Clarke site - and it felt to me as though nothing much had really been going on there for quite a while. I just wanted to check exactly how long that was.

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): Certainly I have been at the Council for ten years and there has been no intensive use of any of the buildings on the site during that time. There may have been some temporary uses in some of them but they have not been in intensive use in that sense. That might explain the challenges of finding the right scheme.

Paul Finch OBE (former Chair, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment): The simple answer to the question is that the City Corporation set out, some now 15 years ago, a secret programme called Operation Glasgow to deliberately buy up areas around the city fringe; in other words, outside the city boundary. One of the proposals was to make sure those developments eventually ended up with you and so they kept on buying a bit more and a bit more --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The mayoralty did not exist 15 years ago.

Paul Finch OBE (former Chair, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment): -- and what happened was that they deliberately left those sites with minimum use and minimum maintenance.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK. I am sure I will have some questions for you. I just want to try and press the Council, if I may, on a couple of things. Has Troels [Holch Povlsen], the Danish billionaire, made an application? Sorry, could I just ask the Council? Are you aware of a planning application from the Danish billionaire that has been cited?

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): No, there is no planning application; there have been no pre-application discussions. My take on it is that we can give that very little planning weight at all. It is a way, though, of articulating alternatives.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is a what?

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): It is a way that those who are objecting to the scheme are articulating that there may be alternatives, but there is no planning application.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have to try to evaluate whether these alternatives are substantive or not. Suppose we throw out this thing this afternoon. Is this really going to materialise? You have seen no planning application?

Paul Buckenham (Development Manager, Tower Hamlets Council): We have seen no planning application and there have been no pre-application discussions.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. Thank you for that from the Council.

I want to ask the developers really about just some of the assertions that were made about them. If I had a feeling of where the protestors were coming from or where the objectors were coming from, it was pretty much - and the objections of the Council were well articulated - to do with the bulk and the massing and the scale of the thing and the feeling that this is really going up quite a long way and it is going to be lowering over these lovely old Victorian industrial buildings and other buildings.

Can you explain why that is necessary and the economics of the project? Is there some way of doing it without going up quite so high?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): As you heard earlier, Mr Mayor, the proposals have gone through a very extensive consultation process. We have spent the last 15 months talking to the Council and talking to local community groups. We have gone through over 150 hours of meetings and have developed the proposals through that process and, as you have heard, we made a number of changes to the application scheme, not least retaining 12 and 13 Blossom Street and redesigning the building on the corner of Norton Folgate. We have also reduced the massing of the scheme through the process as well. Slightly strangely, actually, the Spitalfields Trust scheme in certain areas is higher than our own proposals, particularly on Elder Street.

The scheme does take regard of the fact that there is an extant consent on this site that actually sets a significant part of the massing already. The proposals, far from being excessive, fit within what is already consented on the site but, as you can see on the model, the higher element of the project is actually below the level of the low-rise buildings towards the west of the site. To call it a 'high-rise building' is rather pushing the argument a little bit.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is higher than the extant consent, is it not?

Michael Wiseman (Applicant, British Land): The building we refer to as S1 is one storey higher. The triangular building --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is S2. No, it is S1C.

Michael Wiseman (Applicant, British Land): That is S1C, yes, good, and is 14 storeys. The building Nigel [Webb] was referring to is the Amazon Building, the long building opposite, which is over 16 storeys, I believe, a much bigger floor to ceiling. Of course, the Tower --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is at the end of Elder Street? You mean this one here?

Michael Wiseman (Applicant, British Land): No, sorry, the new development on the other side of the street with which we are trying to provide, I suppose, a gap between that development and the conservation area. The tower is over 50 storeys and the Amazon Building, which is just behind and which is one end of the square, is about 16 big floorplate storeys. From our point of view --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is the big blocky building you can see at the end of the street?

Michael Wiseman (Applicant, British Land): It is being built at the moment; it is the one that is under construction.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sorry. I am thinking of a different building, then.

Michael Wiseman (Applicant, British Land): Yes. I suppose our --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What is the building you can see right down in that first view when you stand --

Michael Wiseman (Applicant, British Land): You are referring to 1 Bishopsgate, immediately on the other side of the road, which is another curved *façade*.

Male Speaker: You mean the one that looks south down Elder Street?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, the big thing when you are standing in Elder Street. Do I mean Elder Street? The Fosters Building. Yes, that is the one. Who lives there? What is that thing?

Michael Wiseman (Applicant, British Land): It is an office block.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is an office block, yes, but that is massive. OK. If you can build out the 2011 consent, why do you not?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): We can do that. We have a binding contractual agreement with the City Corporation that allows us to develop the site for the extant consent. We think the proposals that we have brought forward here are a better

solution for the site and that is evidenced by the support of CAGE, the support of Historic England and the support of Tower Hamlet's officers themselves. We think we have actually come up with a far better solution for the site. Yes, Mr Mayor, that option is available to us to build out the extant consent.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What did you take of the point that was made by the gentleman, Oliver [Leigh-Wood] from the Spitalfields Trust, about the rents? The argument was that it would not add much to office space in London because the rents would be so high. It was a slightly difficult argument to follow, but what was your view of that?

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): It is important, as Charlie Green talked about, that it is not just about rent but it is about flexibility. There is a lack of office space in the northern city fringe, currently around 1% office vacancy and a need to deliver more. There is about 800,000 square feet of unlet space coming forward and only 2% or 3% of that is space under 5,000 square feet. What is more important about rent is about actually delivering the product and delivering the right product into the market, which is what we are trying to do.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Just on this whole thing about size versus affordable housing and all the rest of it, I heard a criticism that there was not enough affordable housing from somebody. I cannot remember exactly who it was; one of the objectors. If you were to build more affordable housing, how could you do that? How could you build more affordable housing?

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): Ours is an office-led scheme and, as it was mentioned, we are delivering the maximum amount of affordable housing we can onsite. I have Gemma from our viability consultant, who can go into a bit more detail on that if you would like.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, sure. My question really is, in order to build more affordable housing, what would you have to do to the design of the scheme?

Gemma Saffhill (Partner, DS2): The affordable housing that is currently designed and included in the scheme is the optimal amount of affordable housing in the way that it is designed. The residential sits as an entire building, as you have seen, and the affordable housing sits as one element of that building. The long-term deliverability of it by a RP is the configuration and the spatial planning that it would prefer. It can manage service charges. It can deliver a product - both in intermediate housing and affordable rent housing - that it thinks fits the needs of the future occupiers.

It is not possible to include more affordable housing within that element of the scheme at the moment because you would then be into a core or an area of the building that is shared with market housing, and then the RP loses the ability to manage the service charges and create an environment that is affordable in the long term for users of the housing.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Could you put housing on any other parts of the site; on S1 or S1C?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): I guess that is the choice. If you want more affordable housing it is either at the expense of the office space - and policy is trying to push towards an office led scheme, which is much needed, as you heard, in this location - or the other option is to go higher, provide more residential and put bigger buildings on the site or put cheaper buildings on the site and then allow that to somehow subsidise affordable housing.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If you want more affordable, it is either less office space or a higher building.

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): Correct.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Then that is it. Can I ask? Has Troels [Holch Povlsen], the Danish billionaire, approached you with a bid to take this thing off your hands?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): Via the Trust, he has written to the Corporation of London, which has responded to say that it is in a contractual arrangement with British Land and not in a position to enter into discussions. Mr Troels [Holch Povlsen] has made a verbal offer at a meeting that I have had with him and we told him that the site is not for sale because, as a long-term investor, we do intend to build out the project and so it is not for sale. We see it really as a red herring, the whole argument. The proposals put forward --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): A rollmop. Sorry.

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): As you like, but the proposals that the trust have come forward with, as you have heard, are nothing more than watercolour sketches at the moment. They have not gone through any consultation process, there has been no rigorous assessment of them, we do not know whether they are viable and really we have to concentrate on the scheme that we want to build out, which we think is very robust.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The offer that - sorry, I do not know his surname - Troels, the Danish billionaire made to you --

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): Povlsen.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- was not sufficiently handsome for you to think it worked?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): There has been no firm offer; he has simply made the suggestion that he would buy the site from us. There has been no discussion of numbers other than a letter to the City earlier this week. That is the only contact.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You have not seen the colour of his money?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): There have been no figures and no firm offer, no.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK. How can we take it that you really are committed to the 2011 scheme? How can we be sure that if we, say, know this afternoon, you are really going to push on with the old scheme?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): We have spent a lot of time investing in this application. We think we have come forward with some very robust proposals that are significantly better than the 2011 proposal. We do not really want to build out the 2011 scheme; we think this is the right --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You do not want to build it out?

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): We do not, but we will if we have to do. We would hope that this application would get consent and, really, our focus is to try to develop this project.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): All right. Can I just go back to the Council? Paul, sorry. Can I just ask you, in your view, aesthetically, and given some of the criticisms the Council has made of the 2015 proposal we have before us today, if you had to choose, if the Council had to choose about which it wanted to go ahead, would it be the 2011 or the 2015 scheme?

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): Mr Mayor, all I can say to you is that the 2011 scheme has planning permission and my committee did not agree with the officers' recommendation and felt that permission should be refused for this scheme. I would not sit here and pretend that everything about this application is bad. Indeed, I have spoken to the chair of the committee about the recent amendments to retain the warehouses on Blossom Street. There are elements of the scheme that are positive. However, the application has to be considered in its entirety and the committee felt that, on balance, the scheme would cause more harm than it would do good.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): It is very difficult for me to pick and choose.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, I am sorry. No, I understand completely your position.

Nigel Webb (Head of Development, British Land): Sorry, Mr Mayor. The 2011 scheme covered only part of the site. It covered the S1 site and part of S2, whereas obviously the

application before you is a more comprehensive proposal including the rest of S2 and S3, and so we have taken a more cohesive look at the site.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely. Thank you. Thanks to the applicants. Can I go now to the objectors and really, I suppose, to begin with the same question, which is about the respective merits, as far as you are concerned, of the 2011 and the 2015 schemes. If you had a choice, you would presumably rather have the 2011 scheme, would you?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): Certainly. The scheme that British Land has consistently told us from the very first meeting it would never build.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You would have it in on the understanding that it would be built or that it would not be built?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): They constantly told us it would never be built, “We are not going to build that”.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You would be happy to see that built, would you?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): Yes.

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): Excuse me.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): Go ahead.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry.

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): Sorry, if I can answer that, we have not said that we would never build this. What we have always said is that we wanted to come forward with a cohesive masterplan for the whole three sites and that is what we have tried to do. Clearly this was always a fall-back; hence we implemented the consent and we could now deliver that.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not want to accuse the objectors of any kind of inconsistency, but a large part of the objections that I heard just now were against any demolition at all of the fabric of the site.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): No, not at all.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I hesitate, but it seems to me peculiar that you should be rejoicing, therefore, in the progress of the 2011 scheme, which, as I understood from what my officer has had to say, involved the demolition of very substantially the same buildings.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): No, you have to understand what happened. The City Corporation ended up with part of the site and got a planning permission in 2011. It then

extended the site, bought up the other bits around the edge and then went out to competitive tendering. British Land won the competitive tendering to try to get a planning permission for the whole site that you now have before you. As I understand it - and I may be wrong - the City Corporation still owns the site.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry, let me just clarify. You have no objection at all to the demolition of the buildings that are comprehended by the 2011 scheme?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): The 2011 scheme retains the warehouses.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Could I just bring that one down? Someone spoke about the damage to the Huguenot fabric of London and I was not --

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): The Huguenot fabric is all over the East End. I noticed you picked up on that very early on but --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There is no specifically Huguenot building you are talking about, is there? I do not know.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): In Bishopsgate?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, in this site.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): I cannot be absolutely certain one way or the other. Sorry, 14 Norton Folgate, I am told. One building in there has some immediate connection, but of course the whole site would have had a connection before the Victorians started knocking the Georgian buildings down.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Does 14 Norton Folgate go or stay?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): It stays in 2011 and goes in this application.

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): To be clear, the difference is the *façade*, which is mostly rebuilt.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I remember. Thank you.

Male Speaker: Yes, it is the *façade* retention in the 2011 scheme and so, for number 14, only the *façade* is retained and the rest of the building gets demolished.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you. Can I just ask the objectors? In the balance between housing and rental and office space, what is your preference there? I was not quite sure what you wanted. Do you want more affordable housing or cheaper office space or which of the two?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): If you build a new building at the current costs of building, you have to get a rental return. That is what happens: they borrow the money, they go out to the banks and they get it ready. What happens here - or what we believe should happen - is that they should simply be repaired and renovated. Some of the existing buildings, we suggest, could be dramatically improved by demolishing them, if you care to put it that way, or *re-façading* them, and there are other sites that are vacant on this whole development that could be redesigned or have new buildings on them. You would end up with, exactly as there is now, a vast mix of small buildings with quite a lot of trendy - using the existing word - of live/work units. That is what Spitalfields and this conservation area is all about, and amongst that is and are a considerable number of Bangladeshi families living in Princelet Street. We believe it should be mixed use by retaining the existing buildings and putting in new buildings where required.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand, although there is obviously still the question of who is the applicant to do this great scheme and where is it? It must be 15 years since the problem was posed. Where is the application to do this?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): Where is what application?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): For the Elysium that you are proposing.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): The Trust's scheme is in the process of being put together. It is being verified at the moment and we know that Troels [Holch Povlsen], without the flick of a finger, would buy the entire site from the City Corporation, which I still understand is the owner.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): He has had 15 years to flick his finger.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): No, he has not. He has not been around for that length of time.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sorry. OK.

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): He did not make his millions 15 years ago.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK. Anyway, can I take it, though, that you confirm that no application has been made and no plan has been submitted by the Spitalfields Trust or anybody else, yes?

Oliver Leigh-Wood (Spitalfields Trust): Correct. Give us another 12 months and we will. Put it to a public inquiry and there will be one.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. Can I go now finally to the supporters of the scheme and ask you about your take about that office space and the cost of the rents? The point that the gentleman from the Spitalfields Trust was making was - well, the argument seemed to be - that, yes, you might get more office space, which London needs,

but it will be the wrong kind of office space because it will be so expensive. What you needed is more grungy, cheaper office space that would be more in keeping with the neighbourhood and that kind of thing. I think that was the gist of what I was hearing.

Charlie Green (Chief Executive Officer, The Office Group): Yes, I got that gist as well. The assumption seems to be that just because you are building new build office space, it has to generate a top-end rent to justify the build cost. Actually what we are trying to create with the space, hopefully when we take the space, is a level of affordability for small businesses by how we address the buildings and how we run the buildings, and that is trying to react to the changing way in which people are working. This is very much focused on the sharing economy and people being part of something bigger so that they can actually get value from the space. It is not about looking at the rents that are being asked by British Land; that is not British Land's approach to this scheme. By giving us 52,000 square feet, we are going to be bringing the same people who would have taken cheap and grungy space. We are going to be bringing them into beautiful space and they are going to be part of something bigger. Not only that, but they come in and they can grow from one person taking a shared co-working space as they grow into and throughout our space and then hopefully through into the remainder of the office space.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you. Yes, back to you.

Paul Johnston (Spitalfields Community Group): Sorry, can I add to that? What is important in what we have been talking about consistently here is this ecosystem. It is from the start-up in Charlie [Green's] space, moving into a studio there, and then beyond that it is the number of small floorplates under 4,000 square foot that we have for those people to grow into. That is what is lacking in Shoreditch Spitalfields at the moment and that is why those people are having to leave this part of town.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you. Can I ask Alex Gordon Shute about that? You said that you thought that the 2011 scheme was worse than that before us today. I think I am correct in saying you said that, did you?

Alex Gordon Shute (local resident): Yes.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Can you explain why you think it is worse and is it aesthetically, architecturally; in what way?

Alex Gordon Shute (local resident): It is not as cohesive. One of the things that the 2015 scheme does is it addresses the residential block on the end of Elder Street and Blossom Street, which was not addressed in the previous scheme. The building that is currently on that site is a pretty grotty, not very inspiring 1930s office block. The real architectural gem of this whole area is the Georgian nature of the townhouses in Elder Street. It is a very important priority for the whole scheme to make sure that the *façades* and the proportions on Elder Street are maintained. Without that element of the scheme it could be a lot worse.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry, does the 2011 scheme not do that?

Alex Gordon Shute (local resident): It does not do that; it leaves the site as commercial office space in the existing building.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Then do you understand quite why the protestors are so enthusiastic about the 2011 scheme?

Female Speaker: Because they will not build it.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I see. You mean --

Alex Gordon Shute (local resident): That is because they will not get built.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I see. Hang on. Their motives are not exactly unmixed in this. What they imagine is that the 2011 scheme is a dead end and they would rather have nothing --

Alex Gordon Shute (local resident): Yes, I am afraid that is not a universal view. There are quite a number of us who do not believe that the 2011 scheme is a dead end and that it will get built.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I see. On the whole stuff about affordable housing and all that, do you feel happy about the mix? Do you think it is all right?

Alex Gordon Shute (local resident): The affordable housing level and the residential element of this is just over 30%, which has increased from where it was originally as a result of consultation, which is good. It is not brilliant but it is good; it is perfectly good. Again, I am afraid to hark back to the goods yard scheme, but it is certainly an awful lot better than that and so it is not too bad. The key thing is that there is only one block as part of this development that is residential. The rest, I gather, is being driven more by the London Plan and where this area is for more jobs and more as a commercial development opportunity. Given how much residential there is, 30% affordable within the residential scheme is perfectly good.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Good. Thank you very much, everybody. That is probably enough from me. I am going to go off and see if I can reach a conclusion.

Male Speaker: Just before you do, Mayor, can I just ask if you can say that, following your earlier briefing, you have acknowledged that?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, I am grateful and I should. Just for the record, I have taken account of the addendum that has been submitted to me about this application and will be taking it into account in the course of my deliberations, which will take place now.

(Adjournment)

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is good. Can you hear now? OK, good. That is OK. I am fine. Thank you. Thanks very much, everybody. I have been able to come to a determination decision.

The London economy is growing very fast and so there is a huge requirement, as everybody knows, for housing, for affordable housing, for office space and for good construction schemes of all kinds and sensitive schemes in particular. This project takes forward a series of buildings that are plainly in need of modernisation but have lain either derelict, in the case of part of it, or abandoned for well over a decade. Certainly large chunks of the site have not been as useful as they should have been to the people of this city for an unacceptably long period and they plainly need a solution and they need to be taken forward.

I am, of course, very conscious of the great work that has been done by the Spitalfields Trust and the conservationists in the area, who are extremely active. I am conscious of the great restraint that the Council has wanted to show in all such cases and with such developments. It is only with the very greatest hesitation and reluctance - in spite of what my friend, the honourable Member for the Scottish National Party (SNP), who no longer seems to be with us, has said - that I do take over these cases and when I do it is simply because it is in the strategic interests of the city.

I was very interested to hear as much as I possibly could about the strength of the alternative vision, whether there really was somebody who was going to come forward and produce a plan that was more popular, shall we say, with the conservationist spirit, and I have to say that after listening pretty carefully this afternoon I see no sign of the mysterious Danish philanthropist in the sense that he has made no application nor, as I understand it, a serious offer to take the site off the hands of the current owner. There being no real alternative in view, the only options before us are the 2011 scheme, which the applicants say they would like to proceed with, failing this scheme, or this scheme.

I heard some support earlier on this afternoon from some of the objectors for the 2011 scheme though it later emerged that there was a certain element of disingenuousness there in the sense that the support for the 2011 scheme really rested upon the belief that it would not proceed and that seemed to me to be not a very satisfying basis on which to be allowing development to go ahead in this city.

I heard interesting testimony also from neighbours of the project who think that the scheme is better than the 2011 scheme because it will deliver high quality and affordable office space for a multitude of firms as well as 40 new homes, 30% of which will be affordable.

Having listened to the points that the Council and the objectors have made, the Council's objection to the bulk and massing and the objectors' problems with the bulk and massing of the scheme must really be seen in the context of the very substantial developments that have already taken place in that neighbourhood and are going to happen anyway. You will be familiar with the colossal building that has already been consented just opposite; very large

structures in the immediate vicinity. When you look at the bulk and massing of this particular structure, it is modest by comparison.

The other argument that I heard about new building within this clutch of old buildings was that you should not build new office space because it will be so expensive that you would have to recoup the investment with high rents and so on. I have to say that I thought that argument was most peculiar because, in the end, if you took that argument in London, yes, of course it is true that it is expensive to build new office space anywhere in the city. If you took that argument, we would not build any offices anywhere and that would be absolutely disastrous for the economic health of London and indeed of the UK. We would end up building nothing.

This scheme, far from frustrating the work of the conservationists in the 1970s and the people who stood around those buildings and tried to protect them, actually vindicates their work because it preserves a huge amount of the fascinating Victorian commercial buildings that are so evocative of the past and the history of this city and yet it gives new life and new hope to those buildings and fantastic opportunities to people and to firms that may occupy them either as businesses or as residents.

If it had been down to me - I will be honest with you - I would have kept the *faïence façade* there on Shoreditch High Street. That was a shame. However, that was not my decision and it went in 2011. That apart, it is my view that there are no buildings of real historical or architectural merit that are being lost under this scheme, not really. I went around and I looked very carefully and had great regard to the points that were made to me by the Council and by my officers throughout the site visits I did.

I just repeat my point: the project we have before us today does not frustrate, does not contradict and does not negate the huge efforts by conservationists over decades to preserve the fabric of this part of our city. In the sheer scale of the architecture and the fabric that is being preserved, this vindicates the actions of those conservationists.

Therefore, I agree with the recommendations set out in my officers' report and I grant planning permission and listed building consent for the application at the land at Blossom Street subject to the conditions and reasons set out within the appended draft decision notices and subject to the prior completion of earlier section 106 agreement, which we have already heard described. Thank you very much.