

Pre-Application Planning Sub-Committee – 19/10/2022

ADDRESS: Technico House - 4 Christopher Street, Hackney, London, EC2A 2BS	
WARD:	Hoxton East and Shoreditch
REFERENCE NUMBER:	2022/0002/PA
APPLICANT:	EDGE and Mitsui Fudosan
ARCHITECT:	AHMM
PROPOSAL: Demolition of the existing buildings on site and erection of a building of up to 20 storeys (with three basement levels) for use as offices (Use Class Egi) including two retail units at ground floor, servicing and cycle storage and end of trip facilities	

ANALYSIS INFORMATION

ZONING DESIGNATION	YES	NO
CPZ	X	
CAZ	X	
City Fringe Opportunity Area	X	
Conservation Area		X - Sun Street is to the south
Listed Building (Statutory)		X - adjacent to 15-23 Christopher St (Grade II) and Flying Horse pub to the south (Grade II)
Listed Building (Local)		X - adjacent to 8-16 Earl St
Priority Office Area	X - Shoreditch POA	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1. The proposals seek to demolish the existing buildings on site, excluding the front façade of 56 Wilson Street, and redevelopment of the site with a mixed use development ranging in height from 5 to 21 storeys with 3 basement floors.
- 1.2. Basement floors comprise plant and machinery space. Cycle parking space, cycle hub, locker and shower rooms are also located in the basement levels. Affordable office workspace is located at ground floor, mezzanine and level -1.
- 1.3. The ground floor plan includes main office entrances from Clifton Street on the east elevation of the building, and Wilson Street from the west. The lobby which runs through the centre of the building will be publicly accessible. Affordable office workspace at ground floor level also has separate dedicated entrances direct from Christopher Street to the north. Retail /cafe units are located at the south-east, and south west corners of the building. A dedicated cycle entrance is located between the main entrance and retail unit on the western elevation off Wilson Street. A loading bay is proposed on the south side building, to facilitate servicing, accessed from Earl Street.

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- 1.4. Upper floors comprise market rate office space with some affordable workspace at first floor level. The building layout steps back from the sixth floor with small terraces at each level, for use by occupiers of the building.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The proposals are currently at pre-application stage and have not been subject to formal public consultation through the planning process. However, due to the character of the proposed development, some public consultation has been undertaken by the applicants with key stakeholders including the Greater London Authority, and there is general local awareness of the forthcoming proposal. Residents of nearby buildings participated in the planning process when the previous application on site was submitted. This consultation process is progressing in tandem with the formal pre-application process.
- 2.2. The development being presented to Members was subject to a Design Review Panel (DRP) on 24 May 2022. The Panel welcomed the presentation and considered that it is an improvement over the extant consent, and that while the Panel has some concerns regarding the design, the proposal is one that should be supportable in the future, providing additional detail and revisions are made. There are some areas surrounding the bulk and massing, as well as the architectural language that could benefit from additional refinement. Whilst the general approach and quality of the internal spaces is generally considered to be of a high quality, further attention should be given to how the building meets its surrounding context. In addition, more work is required in relation to the affordable workspace. The application is expected to go back to DRP later in the year.
- 2.3. The applicant currently hopes to be in a position to submit an application for planning permission soon aiming for determination by the end of 2022.
- 2.4. The proposed development is being reported to the Planning Sub-Committee on a pre-application basis to enable members to view it at an early stage.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1. The site comprises a group of buildings with 3 storey basement and 5-6 stories above ground, forming a perimeter block bounded to the north by Christopher Street, Wilson Street to the west, Clifton Street to the east and Earl Street to the south. The existing buildings were developed incrementally in the 1960s and the 1980s but include retained building facades facing Wilson Street dating from circa 1930 and at the corner of Wilson Street and Earl Street, which dates from the late 19th century. The existing buildings on site are in use as offices.
- 3.2. The surrounding context is dense and urban in character, with surrounding buildings predominantly in office and commercial uses. The site is within the

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Central Activities Zone and on the fringe of the City of London. The borough boundary with the City of London to South, and the London Borough of Islington to the west are a short distance from the site. Liverpool Street station is also situated a short distance to the east, and as such the site benefits from excellent public transport accessibility (PTAL6B).

- 3.3. A pair of 29 and 33 storey residential towers upon a podium of mixed hotel, office and commercial uses comprising the Crown Place development is situated on the opposite side of Earl Street to the south. This includes The Flying Horse Public House (grade II listed) and the Wilson Street Chapel (locally listed) facing Wilson Street, and Payne House (locally listed) facing Earl Street.
- 3.4. Further to the south of the Crown Place development a number of office buildings 7-14 stories in height are situated on the south side of Sun Street, within the City of London. There is also a resolution from the City of London planning committee to grant planning permission for an office led 37 storey development at the corner of Sun Street and Wilson Street / Finsbury Avenue (see history section).
- 3.5. Office buildings up to 9 stories in height are situated on the opposite side of Wilson Street to the west, within the London Borough of Islington. A range of building types ranging in height from 3-5 stories (including a terrace of grade II listed buildings) are situated on the opposite side of Christopher Street within office use. A UK Power Networks infrastructure building, and a 20 storey office building are situated on the opposite side of Clifton Street to the east.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1. In October 2021 a scheme was granted for development of the site.
- 4.2. Planning reference: 2021/0116
Development Description: Demolition of the existing buildings, excluding the front façade of 1 Earl Street, and redevelopment of the site with a mixed use development ranging in height from 4-20 stories above ground level, and 3 basement floors, to accommodate office (Class E), flexible retail, café/restaurant space (Class E), ancillary space, back of house areas, cycle storage, plant, landscaping and all associated works.
Decision level: Planning committee on 02/06/2021
Decision date: 20/10/2021

5. KEY MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. The current scheme raises the following material considerations in particular which will need to be addressed. Not all policies are outlined below as the scheme is still being developed.

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Land use

- 5.2. The application site is located within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and City Fringe Opportunity Area (OAPF) as designated by the London Plan. The site is also within a Priority Office Area (POA) as designated by policy LP27.
- 5.3. London Plan Policy E1 and Hackney Local Plan policy LP26 supports development of office development in the CAZ and Hackney with policy LP26 setting a target for delivery of 118,000sqm of new office floorspace by 2033 and states that office led development in priority office areas is supported, with employment floorspace maximised.
- 5.4. The OAPF and Future Shoreditch Draft AAP support the provision of mixed developments in the area. The draft AAP states that 100% office schemes will generally not be permitted and office space should comprise a minimum of 75% of floorspace in all development within the Shoreditch Priority Office Area.
- 5.5. While it is noted that the site does not provide any residential uses as set out in the draft AAP, the provision of high-quality office space only has been established through the extant scheme.

Affordable workspace

- 5.6. London Plan policy E3 and Hackney LP33 policy LP29 support provision of affordable workspace as part of office and industrial development. Policy LP29 states that for development within the Shoreditch POA “at least 10% of the new employment floorspace (gross) should be affordable at no more than 40% of the locality’s market rent in perpetuity, subject to viability”.
- 5.7. The proposals comprise 3,832sqm (GIA) of affordable workspace at ground, mezzanine and first basement levels. This would amount to 9.6% of the total proposed office floorspace NIA. Policy LP29 sets out that this would need to be let at less than 40% of market rates for offices in this area. The previous scheme provided 8% of the total proposed floorspace (NIA) or 4,213sqm. As such the proposed affordable workspace provision is lower than the level sought by policy LP29. It is noted that a shortfall was accepted in the extant scheme due to the large amount of floorspace proposed, which is in excess of nearly all other employment developments. The extant scheme provided workspace at 25% of market rent to make up for the shortfall and discussions will continue with the applicant to determine if a similar discount is suitable for this scheme.

Design

- 5.8. Policies D1 to D4 of The London Plan 2021 require architecture to make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape,

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incorporating the highest quality materials and design appropriate to the surrounding context. LP33 policy LP1 states that all new development must be of the highest architectural and urban design quality. Development must respond to local character and context having regard to the boroughwide Characterisation Study, and be compatible with the existing townscape and local views.

- 5.9. Policy HC1 of The London Plan 2021 requires development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, to conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. LP33 policies LP3 Designated heritage assets, LP4 Non-designated heritage assets, LP5 Strategic and local views and LP6 Archaeology require the Council to conserve designated and non-designated heritage assets (including their settings), protect the LVMF and identified local views and make appropriate arrangements for archaeology.

Form, height and massing

- 5.10. The proposed building takes up a single urban block defined by Wilson Street, Clifton Street, Earl Street and Christopher Street. The massing is divided into a 6 storey base on Wilson St and 7 storey base on Crown Place. 10 storeys are set back above with a series of terraces to the west, which are stated to respond to the geometry and scale of surrounding streets. The angled facades are said to relate to the geometry of nearby buildings which themselves have been influenced by St Paul's linear view from Westminster. The tallest element of the proposal rises to 21 storeys in the south-east corner of the urban block on the corner of Earl St and Crown Place. Part of this tower element is set back at a 45 degree angle from a 7 storey base which is stated to hold the corner of Earl Street and Clifton Street. The tallest elements of the proposal sit in the shadow of the St Paul's Cathedral viewing corridor from Embankment Pier. Material produced by the applicant shows that a small section of balustrade and parapet is visible in the protected view.
- 5.11. The Wilson Street frontage and the stepped frontage above is compatible with the height of newer buildings on Wilson Street and will sit comfortably opposite the recently constructed 8-9 storey building. The stepped frontage which sits closest to Wilson Street has been pushed out further from the consented massing and will have a significant impact in long views towards the site from the north and south. From the north, this massing will have a significant impact, rising behind the roofscape of the eastern side of Wilson Street. However, it will sit in the foreground of a permitted 20 storey building at 2 Finsbury Avenue. The massing reflects the presence of existing and permitted tall buildings in the backdrop of these long views and will not add new development to a view which is not already affected by a taller backdrop.
- 5.12. From Pitfield Street looking south towards Tabernacle Square, the proposal will be a prominent addition to the skyline with its terraced elevation appearing in the

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foreground of The Shard and One Crown Place. In some views the lowest visible areas of sky will be obscured creating a more solid built up view. However, 2 Finsbury Avenue will also obscure the view if that scheme is built. Seen from Tabernacle Square, the massing would be visible above lower buildings and in an area of sky without towers currently in the backdrop. Again this view will soon be filled by the massing of the 20 storey west tower of 2 Finsbury Avenue.

- 5.13. The proposal will add to the layering of tall buildings at the end of the southern view. It could be argued that its stepped massing mediates between the very different scales and defines a limit to the progress of tall buildings northwards. The permitted scheme's glazed northern facades would have contrasted with the masonry buildings in the foreground allowing them to be seen against a 'neutral backdrop'. The proposed scheme will create less of a contrast. As landscaping matures there is the potential for the terraced gardens of the development to contribute an interesting green element to these views.
- 5.14. Looking north along Wilson Street from south of the proposal site, the 5 storey frontage will appear compatible with the more recent development on the street. The terraced massing will be visible with more setbacks than the consented scheme. Storeys 6 to 8 are set back 3 metres with 9 to 10 set back an additional 2.5 metres. Views above buildings looking east from the southern part of Wilson Street do include tall buildings. As such it is considered that while the proposed massing will have an impact on views, this change is compatible with the character of the city fringe area of the borough.
- 5.15. Along Christopher Street a 5 storey frontage addresses listed buildings on the north side of the street. The proposed street frontage here is slightly taller but is intended to give a comfortable street enclosure and good frontage proportions. The proposed 5 floor massing may help to draw attention away from the higher massing which is stepped back by 3.5m behind it. This is a reduction on the approved 4.5m. In views from the east ends of Christopher Street, An increased setback at top of the building is intended to compensate for the reduced setback by increasing visibility of the sky.
- 5.16. Looking south along Clifton Street from the Shoreditch Conservation Area, tall buildings are prominent at the end of the street. The recently permitted 39 storey development at 2 Finsbury Avenue in the City of London will terminate the view along the street blocking views of the sky. The proposed building will be seen in the foreground of other recently completed towers.
- 5.17. The corner of Earl Street and Clifton Street has a 7 storey massing which holds the street corner and aligns with the podium massing of One Crown Place. The massing here will help to create continuity of street frontage and low-level enclosure as well as lessening the visual and microclimatic impact of the 21 storey tower.

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- 5.18. Earl Street, between the proposal site and Crown Place, will feel the impact of cumulative height from existing and proposed tall buildings on both sides. The consented scheme had upper levels angled away from the street to lessen the sense of enclosure. This upper level setback has been removed in the current proposal. The retained facade of the previous scheme and the setback have also been removed from this proposed scheme. This is discussed in more detail below.
- 5.19. In views from Finsbury Square, the upper massing of the proposal is visible. The massing is related to neighbouring buildings in terms of geometry and distance from the square. The massing of the proposal creates a step down from the height of Crown Place to the lower buildings further north. As such the proposed massing creates a transition between scales, implying the end of northward encroachment of height into Shoreditch. The building is much wider in these views than the consented scheme. Officers have been asking for reductions in the width of the building at upper floors to ensure the building relates more closely to the scale of the new buildings to the south at One Crown Place.

Heritage considerations

Facades

- 5.20. The main heritage considerations relate to the demolition of the two retained facades on Worship Street, including the 19th Century facade at 56 Worship Street which is considered a non-designated heritage asset.
- 5.21. The revised scheme proposes to demolish both facades including the 19th Century facade at 56 Worship Street which was retained in the consented scheme. The justification given for the demolition is that the proposed floorplates do not match with the windows on the retained facade.

Strategic views

- 5.22. The impacts on views protected in the London Plan LVMF SPD and views of the Tower of London World Heritage Site are assessed within the THVIA at Views 1 to 3. These show that a small section of balustrade and parapet would be visible in the linear view of the cathedral from Westminster Pier.

Listed buildings

- 5.23. The most serious impact on the setting of a listed building is to 15 to 23 Christopher Street. These Grade II listed Georgian former houses (in office use) run along the north side of Christopher Street. The proposed building is immediately to the south across the street. The listed buildings are four residential storeys in height. The existing Technico House building is about six storeys in total and so has a comfortable relationship with the listed buildings in terms of height, and the regularity and plainness of the elevation.

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- 5.24. The proposed frontage to Christopher Street has a reduced setback of 3.5m compared to the consented 4.5m which will increase the presence of the development on the street. It is noted that while the proposed and extant schemes are both 5 storeys on this elevation the greater floor to ceiling heights of the proposed scheme means the building appears taller than the extant scheme. The architects have increased the setback at upper levels to allow for slightly increased views of the sky over the consented. The ground floor elevation repeats the facade used across the rest of the scheme where previously a slightly different facade was proposed with a specific relationship to the listed buildings opposite.

Daylight and sunlight impacts

- 5.25. Daylight and sunlight impacts on residents of Crown Place were carefully considered with the extant scheme. It was found that the use of mirror image results were appropriate to assess the loss of daylight and sunlight to these residents. North facing Crown Place units are located with a minimal set back from Earl Street.
- 5.26. The proposed scheme has moved the location of the stair and lift core which has resulted in an increased length to the southern facade of the tallest element of the scheme. The setbacks at lower floors are also reduced from the extant scheme.
- 5.27. The applicant has said that when compared to the extant scheme there are some additional impacts where windows which serve bedrooms and living rooms between the 14th and 23rd floors of One Crown Place experiencing an additional loss of VSC of between 4 and 6.8%. Full details of the changes in daylight impacts will need to be provided so that an assessment can be made about whether the additional impacts would be considered acceptable.

Sustainability

- 5.28. The proposed development is expected to achieve the highest levels of sustainability due to the credentials of the developer and their history of building highly sustainable buildings.
- 5.29. In order to minimise carbon emissions and embodied carbon the applicant is intending to utilise the existing basement extents and retaining walls. The extant permission sought to extend the existing basement so it would be three full levels below the whole extent of the site. The proposed scheme would only have the two and a half existing basements which are set in from the red line boundary of the site. However, this means the applicants are unable to provide policy compliant affordable workspace and short and long-stay cycle parking (as discussed further below).

Transport impacts

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- 5.30. There are some alterations to the proposed scheme from the extant scheme. These include a smaller loading bay off Earl Street as the applicants are to provide consolidation of deliveries off site. Details will need to be arranged with Council's transport officers.
- 5.31. As mentioned above, the current scheme does not provide Hackney Local Plan policy compliant long or short-stay cycle spaces. The visitor parking in particular is significantly below the required provision for a scheme of this size. The scheme proposes 80 visitor spaces whereas policy LP42 requires the provision of 147 spaces for the retail and office uses. It is noted that if the same figures as the extant scheme are provided which worked out as the lower London Plan standards +6% then only 59 visitor spaces would be provided.
- 5.32. In terms of long-stay spaces the scheme would provide about 1,134 which works out at about 80% of the figure required by the Local Plan. The applicant has advised that using the same figures as the extant scheme, taking into account the additional floorspace, a total of 995 spaces would need to be provided.
- 5.33. The number of cycle spaces is below the figures set out in Local Plan but above those as approved under the extant scheme. More detail is required on the type of stands to ensure that the maximum number of Sheffield style stands are provided. Similar to the extant scheme it is likely that contributions will be required to fund cycle infrastructure in the area.

6.3 Summary

- 5.34. There are some key issues which need to be considered in this revised scheme including the. loss of the retained facade at 58 Wilson St The applicant would need to demonstrate whether there are other benefits, above those of the extant scheme, which would justify its complete demolition.
- 5.35. The daylight and sunlight impacts were carefully considered during the discussions for the extant scheme. The applicant should clearly demonstrate what the differences are between the two schemes in order for the Council to determine whether the scheme can be supported in relation to amenity impacts on neighbouring residents.
- 5.36. The sustainability aspirations of the applicants are also laudable and their desire to not build further basement space is acceptable in sustainability terms. However, this means that alternative space above ground will need to be found to provide policy compliant cycle spaces and affordable workspace.



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No	BACKGROUND PAPERS	NAME/DESIGNATION AND TELEPHONE EXTENSION OF ORIGINAL COPY	LOCATION CONTACT OFFICER
1.	Hackney Local Plan 2033 (2020) and the London Plan (2021)	Louise Prew, X 8613	2 Hillman Street, London E8 1FB



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