

**PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING: 26 January 2011**

**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION BY THE LTGDC  
 REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING**

<b>UDC CASE NUMBER:</b>	LTGDC-10-162-FUL	<b>DATE MADE VALID:</b>
<b>APPLICATION NUMBER:</b>	10/02315/LTGDC/LBN M	<b>TARGET DATE:</b>

<b>APPLICANT:</b>	London Development Agency & Transport for London
<b>AGENT:</b>	Transport for London
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Erection of two towers to support a cable car crossing of the River Thames comprising of a North main tower (to a maximum height of 87.63m AOD) at Clyde Wharf (northwest of Bell Lane) and a North Intermediate tower (to a maximum of height of 66m AOD) to southwest of DLR and Silvertown Way/Dock Road supporting the Gondola cable and communications cable.
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Western Gateway, West Silvertown, London, E16

**1. SUMMARY**

1.1 The application before Members seeks planning permission for part of a cable car proposal to link Royal Victoria Dock with Greenwich Peninsula. Due to the physical length of the proposal, the overall scheme requires planning permissions from the Development Corporation, the London Borough of Greenwich and the London Borough of Newham and consists of a north main tower (to a maximum height of 87.63 metres AOD) at Clyde Wharf (northwest of Bell Lane) and a north intermediate tower (to a maximum of height of 66m AOD) to southwest of DLR and Silvertown Way/Dock Road to support the Gondola cable and communications cable; a two storey station (incorporating mechanical drive room, concourse, ticket office and retail space on ground floor, and gondola arrival and departure platform at first floor) and associated compression tower (to a maximum height of 17m AOD) and boat impact protection within the Royal Victoria Dock; and associated works to the public realm between Western Gateway and Royal Victoria Dock including raising the Dock edge and provision of kiosk (comprising 14m sq of floorspace and sub-station). To the south, in the London Borough of Greenwich, the scheme consists of a two storey station, (incorporating concourse, ticket office and retail space on ground floor and gondola arrival and departure platform on the first floor), a two storey gondola storage building (including plant and other uses ancillary to the cable car and/or up to 269m<sup>2</sup> A1/A3/D1/D2 floorspace at ground floor level and first floor gondola

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maintenance area and workshop) and associated compression tower (to a maximum height of 19 metres AOD) and public realm works to the south of Edmund Halley Way; and a south main tower (to a maximum height of 89 metres AOD and associated ship impact protection) on south foreshore of River Thames, to the south of Queen Elizabeth II Pier, to support gondola cable and communication cable.

- 1.2 The part of the cable car for determination by the Corporation is the main and intermediate north towers. Both have a distinctive spiralling design comprising four twisting white 'ribbons' which eventually taper into the main supporting structure and running gear for the cables. The design has the support of CABE and the GLA.
- 1.3 The proposal is considered to complement the existing public transport network while also being a tourist attraction in its own right. Roughly 60% of future usage is expected to be attributed to events at the O2 and/or ExCeL exhibition centre. Linking these two attractions and the developing areas around them is seen as being one of the primary objectives of the scheme.
- 1.4 The scheme has attracted a mixture of objection and support from local residents. The primary concern for most residents is that the proposal will be noisy, will result in a loss of privacy and will obstruct views out of residential dwellings. The scheme is accompanied by an Environmental Statement which indicates no loss of residential amenity through noise, loss of privacy, overshadowing or in any other way.
- 1.5 London City Airport maintains an objection to the scheme, citing concerns that customer airlines may be required to reduce takeoff weight in order to meet safety parameters. It should be noted that the scheme meets current safeguarding criteria and that the objection is based on a loss of airline revenue. Despite this, the applicant has agreed to reduce the height of the north main tower to comply with London City Airport's request. The height of 87.63 metre AOD represents the reduced height of the north main tower. At the time of writing, no formal confirmation has been received regarding the removal of the objection by London City Airport.
- 1.6 The Environmental Statement also considers the impact of the proposal on local ecology and sustainability. The content of these chapters and the mitigation proposed are considered satisfactory by officers.
- 1.7 The application is recommended for approval subject to the conditions listed in section 11 of this report and referral to the Mayor of London for his Stage 2 determination. Following the issue of the decision a statement must be placed on Newham's Statutory Register confirming that the main reasons and considerations on which the Committee decision was based were those set out in this officer's report to the Committee as required by Regulation 21 (1) (c) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999.

## **2. SITE AND PROPOSAL**

### Site

- 2.1 The site in its entirety is a 3.43ha linear section of land and river extending from the Western Gateway of Royal Victoria Dock in the north east (within the London Borough of Newham) to Edmund Halley Way to the south west (within the London Borough of Greenwich). The overall length of the site is 1,100 metres and is divided

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by area between 14,667sqm in Greenwich and 19,722sqm in Newham.

- 2.2 From the north eastern end of the site, the boundary occupies a 22m by 102m section of the Western Gateway dockside. The boundary extends from the dockside to the south east, stepping in from 28 metres in width, to 22 metres, then 16 metres which is the width for most of the site. This width is interrupted by a circular elongation offset to the south east of the DLR alignment and again by a 75 metre by 62 metre industrial shed next to the river. The boundary extends into the River Thames where it ends at the Borough boundary at the centre of the river.
- 2.3 The site is surrounded by a range of land uses. The area of the most notable activity is along the northern side of Royal Victoria Dock, which contains several large buildings ranging between 18 and 9 storeys in height. The closest buildings to the site are residential with ground floor retail except for one 8 storey hotel. Other residential, hotel, retail and restaurant uses are found further along the Dock to the east, ending with the ExCel convention centre.
- 2.4 A 12 storey residential block is found between Silvertown Way and the southern edge of the dock. To the east of this building is two and three storey terraced housing.
- 2.5 Between Silvertown Way and the River the area is predominantly industrial. The most relevant industrial site is known as Clyde Wharf which is crossed by the development site. This is currently occupied by Laing O'Rourke and is used as a works depot for London-wide utility maintenance.
- 2.6 Silvertown Way serves the area by road and provides connections to the Lower Lea Crossing to the west and the A13 via Canning Town to the north. The DLR serves the site via two stations on separate branches – West Silvertown on the Woolwich Arsenal branch and Royal Victoria on the Beckton branch.
- 2.7 The site is beneath the approach and departure path of aircraft using London City Airport, which is roughly 1.5km to the east.

### Overall Proposal

- 2.8 The applicants are Transport for London and the London Development Agency who jointly seek planning permission to erect a cable car crossing of the River Thames between Royal Victoria Dock and North Greenwich. The purpose of the cable car is to link North Greenwich and the Royal Docks and their respective attractions of the O2 arena and ExCel convention centre to create a single tourist attraction rather than two attractions isolated from one another by the River Thames. The linkage itself is also intended to be integrated into the London transport network and is hoped to be an iconic addition to the east London skyline.
- 2.9 While the crossing is intended to improve connectivity across the river, the location of each station seeks to utilise existing public transport services such as the DLR on the Newham side and Jubilee Line underground on the Greenwich side. The cable car is to be Oyster compatible but operated by a third party private operator. The journey time is expected to be five minutes and cost up to £3.50 one way or £2.50 with a travelcard.
- 2.10 The structural elements of the proposal can be summarised as a south and a

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north station, two main towers and an intermediate tower.

- 2.11 The stations are referred to as the 'drive' and 'return' stations. The north station is the drive station as it contains the electric motor from which the system is powered. The southern station is the return, as this is where the cable turns back on itself.
- 2.12 The drive station is to overhang the dock and will be two storeys in height. The specific dimensions are 17 metres wide by 36 metres in length and 13 metres high. A compression tower will feed the cable and gondolas into the station and will be 10 metres in height.
- 2.13 The return station is also a two storey structure and is proposed to have dimensions of 35 metres in length by 17 metres in width and 13.5 metres in height. The garage where the gondolas are stored and maintained is located adjacent to this station and is proposed to be 20 metres by 28 metres and 12 metres in height. This building includes retail and exhibition space. A compression tower of 13 metres in height feeds the cable into this structure. Works to the northern end of the application site also include public realm improvements and a small kiosk building housing an electrical transformer.
- 2.14 A total of 34 gondolas are proposed for the scheme. Each has capacity for ten seated passengers or five passengers if two bicycles or two wheelchairs are included. This results in a maximum capacity of 2,500 passengers per hour.
- 2.15 The cable is held by three towers; a south main tower of 88.8 metres AOD, a north main tower of 87.63 metres AOD and a north intermediate tower of 66 metres AOD. The two main towers each have a base diameter of 10 metres and provide the support for the 431 metre span while maintaining a minimum 58.05 metre AOD air draft clearance above the Thames (this reduces to an average of 54.1 metres during spring high tides). The height of the span is the equivalent height of the Queen Elizabeth crossing that links Dartford with Thurrock.
- 2.16 The southern main tower is the only structure proposed to be built within the Thames. This is required since the 175 metre distance of the tower from the return station is the minimum distance that can accommodate the angle required to take the gondolas from ground level to the top of the tower. If the tower were located on land, this angle would be too steep.
- 2.17 Protecting the south main tower is a ship impact protection system made up of floating booms and restrains anchored by cables to the land.
- 2.18 The north main tower is located 20 metres from the bank of the Thames on the Clyde Wharf site. The tower's location will require part of an existing industrial shed to be demolished, reducing the building's length from 62 metres to 37.5 metres.
- 2.19 The north intermediate tower is located to the south of the DLR viaduct on a vacant area of hard standing. The tower has a base diameter of 5 metres and is ringed by a 2.5 metre high stand-off fence set back 5 metres from the tower.

#### Proposal for Consideration by LTGDC

- 2.20 The application crosses the Borough boundaries of the London Boroughs of

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Greenwich and Newham and also overlaps the Corporations planning functions area. For this reason, the scheme will require three separate planning permissions to cover the length of the cable car alignment. The red line plans are contained in Appendix 1 and show this extent.

2.21 Whilst Members are asked to come to a decision on the merits of the north main tower and north intermediate tower only, consideration of the overall project is obviously required. All other areas are for determination by either the London Boroughs of Newham or Greenwich.

### **3. MAIN ISSUES**

- Principle
- Design
- Transport
- Residential Amenity
- Noise and Vibration
- Aircraft Safety
- Biodiversity and Water Resources
- Energy and Sustainability

### **4. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

4.1 The site has been used for industrial and dockside uses since the 1850s. The surrounding sites of Royal Victoria Docks and Greenwich Peninsula have seen significant urban redevelopment since the 1980s. However the site within the Corporation's planning functions boundary has not seen substantial investment apart from the DLR viaduct.

### **5. CONSULTATIONS/NOTIFICATIONS**

#### London Borough of Newham

5.1 The application is due to be reported to Newham's Development Control Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> of January with a recommendation that the part of the scheme within Newham's jurisdiction be approved. Newham's formal resolution will be reported to Members on the night of the committee.

#### London Borough of Greenwich

5.2 The application is due to be reported Greenwich's Planning Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> of January with a recommendation that the southern part of the scheme be approved.

#### Greater London Authority

5.3 Overall, the GLA consider that the scheme is broadly acceptable in strategic planning terms. However some further information has been requested to verify that the scheme is compliant with the London Plan.

5.4 The proposal is considered to be of particular value as a link between 2012 Olympics venues and is considered to benefit the wider London area by becoming a tourist attraction and strengthening the local transport network.

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- 5.5 It has been acknowledged that the towers and cable will sit within the London panorama from Greenwich, which is an identified view within the London View Management Framework. However, given the slender nature of the towers, the impact upon these views is considered to be minimal.
- 5.6 The route's path through the London City Airport safety zone has been noted and it has been mentioned that the Mayor will assess the consultation response from the airport when the scheme is referred back to him.
- 5.7 The designs of the towers are supported and are considered to be elegant and unobtrusive. The location of the route is considered to be acceptable by the GLA and each of the stations are said to be sited in sensible locations. The design of each of the stations is also supported.
- 5.8 In terms of access, the GLA consider that fare integration into the wider London network is of particular importance, as high fares could bar use. An Oyster system similar to that operated by Thames Clippers has been recommended for any private operator taking on the project.
- 5.9 The impact of the proposal on public transport capacity is considered to be minimal. As well as being a tourist attraction in its own right, the cable car is seen to improve public transport connectivity and is therefore considered to be a positive addition to the network.
- 5.10 The Travel Plan submitted with the application is supported and it is recommended that a construction logistics plan be secured by condition setting out how the river will be used in transporting materials. A suitable condition is recommended at paragraph 11 below which secure a Code of Construction Practice.
- 5.11 The noise generated by the scheme has been considered in relation to the impact the scheme may have on local residents in relation to mechanical operations, noise from users and the construction phase. Noise mitigation measures and conditions have been requested before the scheme is referred back to the Mayor. Construction noise is controlled by recommended condition 10 at section 11 below. See paragraph 9.28 below for further details of operational mitigation measures proposed in respect of the Newham part of the proposals.
- 5.12 The energy proposals for the scheme are considered to comply with the London Plan, however further detailed drawings of the roof photovoltaic cell have been requested.
- 5.13 The biodiversity considerations relevant to the northern towers relate to piling works close to the river. The GLA has highlighted concerns raised by the EA that the construction timetable will mean that piling will occur at a time of fish migration. Discussions between the applicant and the EA have occurred and mitigation measures are intended to be secured through the recommended condition 5 at section 11 below.

#### Environment Agency

- 5.14 The EA has indicated its support for the proposal and confirmed that it has no objection to any element within the London Borough of Newham. Seven planning

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conditions have been requested. However, three relate specifically to development within Royal Victoria Dock and therefore are not relevant to the scheme under LTGDC determination. The remaining four requested conditions seek the following:

- Demolition and construction method statement
- Scheme to deal with contamination risk
- Remediation verification report
- Piling risk assessment

5.15 These conditions are considered reasonable and are detailed in section 11 of this report.

#### London City Airport

5.16 Although City Airport has confirmed that the technical and physical aspect of aerodrome safety do not conflict with the proposed scheme, an objection has been raised as the height of the north main tower may have an impact upon the take off performance of some of its customer airlines. This objection is discussed in greater detail in section 9 of this report.

#### Port of London Authority (PLA)

5.17 The PLA considers that the minimum air draft above the River Thames (58.05 metres AOD) is sufficient to enable the vast majority of vessels to safely pass below it. However, it has stated that there will be cases where very high air draft vessels, such as large cruise ships, tall ships and crane barges, will not be able to pass underneath. The PLA is in discussions with the applicant and has stated that it is broadly satisfied that operational procedures should provide vessels with safe passage. Such procedures include emptying or removing the gondolas when very high air draft vessels are transiting beneath.

#### British Waterways

5.18 British Waterways has expressed concerns that the air draught of 54.1 metres at 'Mean High Water Springs' is not sufficient. Although the clearance of the spanning cable corresponds to the clearance beneath the Queen Elizabeth II bridge at Dartford, the basis of the concern is that the clearance beneath the cable car will have reduced by the time a vessel covers the distance between Dartford and the site on an incoming tide.

5.19 British Waterways has qualified its comments by showing examples of the types of vessels that may face this kind of restriction. These are all tall-masted ships including clippers, super yachts and sail training vessels.

5.20 In the opinion of officers, the concerns of British Waterways do not warrant an amendment to the scheme. In the first instance, tall-masted ships of the scale advised by British Waterways infrequently travel this distance up the Thames, as confirmed by the PLA in its separate consultation response. A scheme amendment to accommodate such vessels is considered to be an unreasonable request of the applicant.

5.21 Secondly, increasing the height of the cable is likely to exacerbate the concerns of London City Airport with regard to aircraft takeoff performance, while also

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increasing the already steep angle from the southern return station to the south main tower.

- 5.22 Given that the PLA are satisfied with the amount of clearance and the potential implications of increasing the clearance height, British Waterways' concerns are not considered to carry significant weight.

### CABE

- 5.23 CABE supports the scheme and considers that a good case has been made in connecting the attractions in both the Royal Docks and the Greenwich Peninsula. The towers supporting the cable are considered to have the potential to make an iconic contribution to the River Thames and display elegance, inventiveness and originality. However care needs to be taken to ensure that the visual impact of the escape stairs is reduced.

- 5.24 CABE also considers the stations to be less inspiring and that the wider landscape proposals require further thought.

### Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA)

- 5.25 The ODA has confirmed it has no objection to the proposal.

### London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG)

- 5.26 LOCOG has highlighted the key dates for ExCeL test events and Olympic competition events and has requested a condition that requires the completion of the development by the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2012. Such a condition would not meet the tests of Circular 11/95 as it is unreasonable and unenforceable. It should also be noted that this type of condition is the first example in a list of unacceptable conditions contained in Appendix B of Circular 11/95.

### English Heritage

- 5.27 The LDA's *Heritage Scoping Study of the Royal Docks Masterplan Area* has been highlighted by English Heritage with respect to how development may affect the setting of historic buildings.
- 5.28 By separate letter, English Heritage GLAAS has identified the site as lying within an Archaeological Priority Zone and has recommended a condition to secure a programme of archaeological work. This condition can be found in section 11 of this report.

### London Borough of Tower Hamlets

- 5.29 Tower Hamlets is supportive of the proposal, particularly as it considers that the scheme will provide an iconic feature and a sustainable transport option. It has also confirmed that it does not wish to make any adverse comment with regard to design, heritage, local views or visual impact.

### Natural England

- 5.30 Natural England has confirmed that the proposal does not significantly affect any

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priority interests in the area and therefore does not wish to object to the scheme.

### ExCeL

5.31 ExCeL has provided a detailed analysis of the proposal and is supportive of the principle of the development. The comments are centred mostly on the specific detail around the north drive station and the impact of the scheme on the Royal Docks area and are not considered to be relevant to the proposal before Members.

### Quintain Estate and Developments PLC

5.32 Quintain is the majority landowner of the depot on which the two northern towers are proposed to be located. Quintain welcomes the proposal but has two specific concerns.

5.33 The first is that the 5 metre zone around the base of each tower is not necessary as it is within a private secure site with no public access. Officers do not share this view as there is no guarantee that the site will remain undeveloped and secure. The reliance on the current wider security measures also assumes security control outside of the red line boundary of the application.

5.34 Quintain has also requested that sufficient protection to the river wall is secured in the construction of the north main tower and demolition of the industrial structure. Protection of the river wall is to be secured in the Code of Construction Practice under the proposed condition 8.

5.35 Quintain has also requested that collision prevention barriers should be positioned no more than one metre from the base of the towers to minimise land take.

## **6. APPLICATION PUBLICITY**

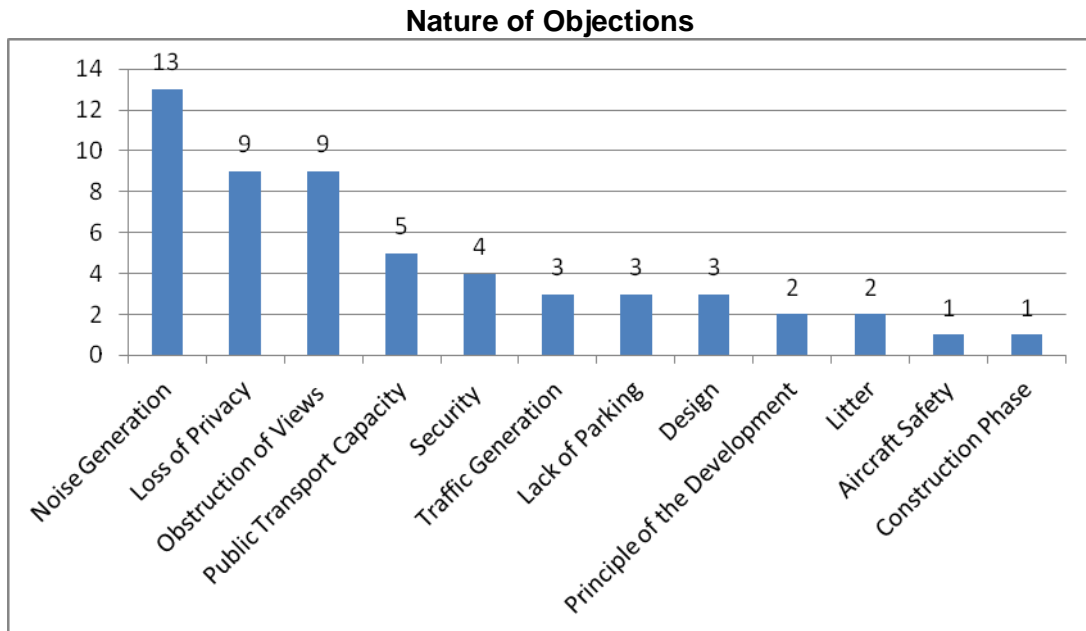
- Neighbour consultation sent: 02/11/2010
- Other consultations sent: 13/12/2010
- Advertised: 24/11/2010
- Site notice posted: 09/11/2010

## **7. REPRESENTATIONS**

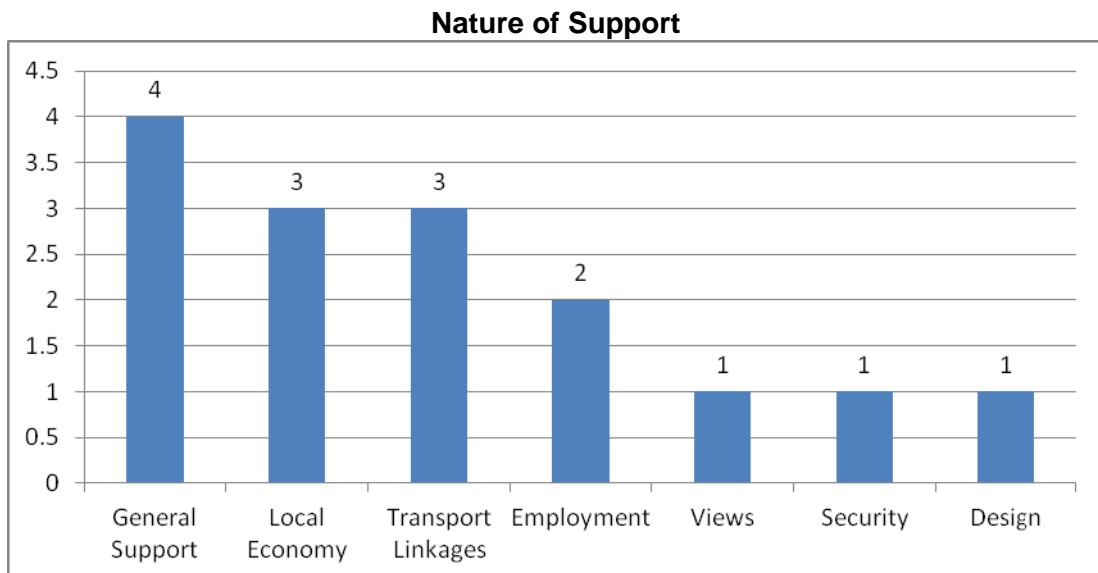
7.1 All representations received relate to the Newham part of the application. A total of 24 representations have been received, all from residential locations. Of these, 15 objected to the proposal, 8 were in support and 1 was neutral.

7.2 Of the objections received, the greatest concern was that the drive motor would be unacceptably noisy causing disturbance of local residents. These concerns are more relevant to the area of the scheme under consideration by Newham. Of more relevance to the section for consideration by the LTGDC are those objections concerned with a perceived loss of privacy as gondolas pass residential units and the obstruction of views from residential units looking out over the Royal Docks and the Thames. Obstruction of private views will only be a material planning consideration if it is in the public interest to protect such views. The loss of a private view from one dwelling is unlikely to be material but the loss of views from many

dwellings could be. In this case, given the location of the towers, officers do not consider, in any event, that the scheme presents any privacy issues for local residents. Similarly, the slender form of the towers is not considered to significantly obstruct views. These points are discussed in greater detail in section 9 of this report. The nature and frequency of all objections to the proposal are set out below.



7.3 The support for the proposal was more general, but also favoured the potential benefits the proposal would bring to the local economy and improvements to public transport linkages. The responses are summarised below.



7.4 The Greenwich side of the scheme received fewer responses, which may be attributed to a smaller residential population. The scheme received three objection and two supporting comments.

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## **8. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

### 8.1 Central Government Guidance

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth  
PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment  
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation  
PPG13: Transport  
PPG24: Noise and Vibration  
PPS25: Development and Flood Risk

### 8.2 The London Plan, consolidated with alterations since 2004 (2008)

2A.1 Sustainability Criteria  
3B.9 Tourism Industry  
3C.1 Integrating Transport and Development  
3C.3 Sustainable Transport in London  
3C.9 Increasing the capacity, quality and integration of public transport  
3C.10 Public Transport Security  
3C.15 New Thames River Crossings  
3D.6 Olympic and Paralympic Games  
3D.14 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation  
3D.16 Geological Conservation  
4A.1 Tackling Climate Change  
4A.3 Sustainable Design and Construction  
4A.15 Flooding  
4A.20 Reducing Noise and Enhancing Soundscapes  
4B.1 Design Principles for a Compact City  
4B.2 Promoting World Class Architecture  
4B.3 Enhancing the Quality of the Public Realm  
4B.5 Creating Inclusive Environments  
4B.9 Tall Buildings  
4B.11 London's Built Heritage  
4B.12 Heritage Conservation  
4B.13 Heritage Conservation-led Regeneration  
4B.15 Archaeology  
4C.16 Importance of the River Thames  
4C.18 Appraisals for the Thames Policy Area

### 8.3 Draft Replacement London Plan Development Strategy, Consultation Document, (2009)

Policy 2.4 2012 Games and their Legacy  
Policy 5.1 Climate Change Mitigation  
Policy 5.2 Minimise Carbon Dioxide  
Policy 5.12 Flood Risk Management  
Policy 6.1 Strategic Approach  
Policy 6.2 Providing Public Transport Capacity and Safeguarding Land for Transport  
Policy 6.4 Enhancing London's Transport Connectivity  
Policy 7.1 Building Environment  
Policy 7.2 Inclusive Environment

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Policy 7.5 Public Realm  
Policy 7.8 Heritage Assets and Archeology  
Policy 7.7 Location and Design of Tall and Large Buildings  
Policy 7.15 Reducing Noise and Enhancing Soundscapes  
Policy 7.19 Biodiversity and Access to Nature  
Policy 7.20 Geological Conservation  
Policy 7.29 The River Thames

#### 8.4 London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan (2001)

EQ4 Quality of Waterside Development  
EQ9 Protection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance  
EQ19 Urban Design Considerations  
EQ43 Archaeology  
EQ62 Protection of the Flood Plain and Urban Washlands  
UR1 Major Opportunity Zones  
UR6 Royal Victoria Dock North  
UR7 Royal Victoria Dock South  
UR8 Royal Victoria Dock South (Thames Barrier Lands)  
S3 Quality of Development  
S4 Sustainable Development  
S13 Improvement and Promotion of Rivers and Waterways  
S14 Protection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance  
S16 Thames Policy Area  
S33 Extension and Improvement of Public Transport  
S35 Alternate Forms of Transport  
T5 Public Transport, Cycling and Walking  
T12 Thames River Crossings  
T30 Restrictions on Development within the Airport Safeguarding Area

#### 8.5 Other Relevant Planning Policies & SPG's

The Mayor's Transport Strategy (2010)  
Royal Docks – A Vision for the Royal Docks, London Development Agency (2010)  
Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area Planning Framework (2007)  
London City Airport Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Guidance (2005)

## 9. ASSESSMENT OF MAIN ISSUES

### Principle of the Development

9.1 The principle of a crossing at this location is supported in policy terms. The form of the crossing is also supported in principle as a tourist attraction, as part of London's public transport network and as a driver for the local economy.

9.2 The most relevant central government guidance for the development is PPG13 which relates to transport. This seeks that development is appropriately linked to transport infrastructure with the emphasis on locating development near public transport nodes and facilities for walking and cycling. PPG13 goes on to state that where development is likely to stimulate a high level of visitation, such as with tourism, leisure and recreation development, measures to increase the use of sustainable modes of transport should be prioritised. The Royal Docks and the Greenwich Peninsula are both areas where development is due to increase and are

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also home to major tourist attractions. The proposed link between the two areas is a clear demonstration of how the Governments transport objectives can be met.

- 9.3 At a regional level, the proposal is supported in the London Plan at policy 3D.7 which encourages the development of new tourist attractions especially in areas for regeneration and opportunity areas, such as the Royal Docks.
- 9.4 The proposal is also consistent with the London Plan at policy 5C.2 in relation to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Among a list of objectives, this policy seeks to ensure that transport proposals associated with the Games contribute to the delivery of the Mayor's wider transport strategy.
- 9.5 The proposal is in line with the Mayor's Transport Strategy, which seeks to reduce the dependency on private vehicles for transport within London. More specifically, Section 5.8 of the Strategy deals with crossings of the River Thames and acknowledges the historic lack of crossings in east London. Innovative solutions to river crossing are sought in the Strategy, which includes options for a cable car and specific reference is made to a fixed crossing between Silvertown and North Greenwich. Proposal 39 of the Strategy refers to this link as being able to provide congestion relief for the Blackwall Tunnel, which may be an unrealistic expectation for this type of crossing but the scheme does meet the Proposal 39 objective of providing local linkages across the river.
- 9.6 The principle of locating a crossing at this location is supported in the Lower Lea Valley OAPF. The site lies within sub-area 15: Thameside West, which allocates a safeguarded crossing from Silvertown to Greenwich Peninsula. While the original intention was for this crossing to be a tunnelled road, the use of the safeguarded route for the cable car crossing can also be supported in the same way. The proposal does not prevent or inhibit any future tunnel crossing of the Thames at this location, but rather will act as an above ground marker for future routes.
- 9.7 The local level policy for the area makes no mention of this type of crossing and Newham have advertised the scheme as a departure from the adopted plan. It is understood that Newham officers do not regard the scheme as being unacceptable in principle.

### Design

- 9.8 The scale of the development and its location next to and over the River Thames means that particular emphasis must be given to the quality of the design. The London Plan seeks a high quality of architecture in such policies as 4B.1 relating to design principles, 4B.9 tall buildings and 4C.16 development adjacent to the River Thames. However, policy 4B.2 is arguably the most relevant regional policy in its aim to promote world class architecture and design as the proposal has the potential to become an internationally recognised landmark during the 2012 Olympics. This policy emphasises contemporary and integrated designs for the built environment and promotes design-led change in key locations.
- 9.9 Newham's UDP policy EQ5 make specific reference to development over rivers and seeks development that makes a positive contribution to the use of the waterway while being sympathetic in design to the waterside location.
- 9.10 The rationale behind the design of the towers has been to minimise the visual

impact while at the same time maintaining sufficient structural integrity. This has resulted in towers with a sculptured and distinctive form when viewed from any angle, whether from close or distant locations. Most noticeable is the bulk of the supporting structure in the form of four outer ribbons that twist and taper towards the peak and the narrow interwoven structure that sits within. At the peak of each tower, the ribbons blend into a narrow plane that splits to form the support for the cable running gear. A spiral staircase is suspended within the tower which enables maintenance access and emergency escape. The tower detail can be found in Appendix 2.

- 9.11 The towers are to be constructed from steel plates formed and welded together off site and painted white in long life paint. The gaps between the outer ribbons provide lightness and visual permeability while the inner interwoven structure provides the bracing required to maintain lateral and torsional strength. This strength means that the towers will remain upright should one of the four outer ribbons be lost to accident or impact.
- 9.12 Each of the towers is intended to be illuminated internally so as to enhance their unique skeletal form. This will give the impression of the towers glowing from within and the outer surfaces casting a silhouette. The lighting concept for the gondolas seeks to achieve the appearance of a glowing string of disembodied lights floating across the Thames.
- 9.13 The Environmental Statement accompanying the application has provided confirmed viewpoints showing current views and the superimposed views of the cable car in situ. These viewpoints range from the riverfront and attractor locations around the Royal Docks and Greenwich Peninsula to as far as the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site. This analysis demonstrates that the crossing is visible from short to medium distances but difficult to discern from longer distances, even when illuminated at night. A selection of these views can be found at Appendix 3. Officers are satisfied that the proposed views represent an accurate depiction of the completed scheme and that views will be enhanced, rather than worsened.
- 9.14 Consultation response relating to the design of the towers has been positive, as has been reported in section 5. CABE commented that the towers are 'elegant, inventive and original'. Similarly, the GLA consider the towers to be elegant and unobtrusive.
- 9.15 The cable car crossing has the potential to become a London icon, particularly in the background of the 2012 Olympics. While the towers with their gondolas strung in between are of a significant scale, the design has been considered in such a way as to be noticeable yet unobtrusive. Most importantly, the design is of sufficient quality to complement such well known modern east London landmarks as the O2 Dome, the Royal Dock developments and the Canary Wharf skyline.

### Transport

- 9.16 The cable car scheme has been presented as a form of public transport as well as being an attractor in its own right. However, the predicted travel demand indicates that public transport users will make up 30% of users, with 10% being solely tourism related and the remaining 60% event related. Event related travel is expected to be equally split in number whether the event is at the O2 or ExCeL.

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- 9.17 The overall number of annual users is predicted to be 800,000 during the first year of operation and 1.5 million by year 14. The annual capacity is up to 30 million per annum so overcrowding is not considered to present an issue in the short to medium term.
- 9.18 Both the northern and southern stations are relatively well connected to existing public transport services. The southern return station is located 300 metres from North Greenwich Underground station which is served by the Jubilee line and has capacity for up to 20,000 passengers per hour. The Thames Clipper service operates from Millennium Pier nearby and has a high tourist usage. The northern drive station is 180 metres from Royal Victoria DLR station which provides an important link to the public transport interchange at Canning Town.
- 9.19 The Transport Assessment accompanying the application has considered weekday and weekend scenarios with and without events at the O2 and ExCeL and has concluded that the cable car has the capacity to cope with predicted loadings. The scenarios of the Jubilee and/or DLR being suspended have also been considered and indicate that full capacity of the cable car will be temporarily reached. Newham's Transportation Officers have confirmed that they are satisfied with these predicted scenarios.
- 9.20 Officers consider that the scheme will have an insignificant effect on the local public transport network and if anything will serve to support and complement existing services by providing an alternative crossing of the Thames.

#### Residential Amenity

- 9.21 A frequent local objection to the proposal has been the perception of a loss of privacy in residential units near the scheme and that views out of these units will be obstructed. Although the loss of views is not necessarily a material planning consideration, these matters are discussed below.
- 9.22 The nearest residential units to the proposal are the 12 storey Western Beach Apartments located on the south western corner of Royal Victoria Dock. There is a concern from residents that passing gondolas will allow people traveling on the cable car to view inside these units and discourage residents from using their balconies and opening their curtains. Once built, the minimum distance between the gondolas and these units will be 74 metres. These will be passing from the northern drive station some 204 metres to the north and the northern intermediate tower 114 metres to the west. Existing transport infrastructure in the immediate area is located much closer than the path of the gondolas, although it is acknowledged that this is not at a comparable height. Silvertown Way is 30 metres to the south and the DLR viaduct is 60 metres to the south. The distances between the cable car and residential units are shown in Appendix 4.
- 9.23 When compared with normal minimum set back distances applied to habitat rooms between new and existing residential developments (normally around 18 to 20 metres), the moving gondolas at a distance of 74 metres do not, in the opinion of officers, represent a privacy issue.
- 9.24 The scheme is not considered to present any overshadowing issues for residents of this building. In addition to the 74 metre offset, the narrow permeable form of the towers and the relative size of the gondolas also mean that overshadowing is not a

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concern. For this same reason it is not considered that views out of any units will be significantly obstructed.

### Noise and Vibration

- 9.25 The Noise and Vibration chapter of the ES highlights the fact that there is currently no guidance in the UK on noise from cable car systems. In principle, the scheme would produce a transportation corridor that would behave much like a light rail system in terms of frequency of operation and capacity and therefore could be argued to assess the scheme using guidance appropriate for a railway. However, the noise produced by a railway comprises a series of discrete event i.e. pass by of each train interspersed by quiet periods. In contrast, the cable car would be driven continuously and could be assessed under the same guidance as with continuous industrial noise. In comparison with railway noise assessment, industrial noise assessment is more onerous and provides a worst case outcome. Therefore, this guidance has been applied to the noise assessment.
- 9.26 The ES has identified potential noise and vibration sensitive receptors around the scheme. These can be found at Appendix 5. Of most relevance to the part under consideration by the Corporation are Western Beach residential apartments to the east, Hanover/Wesley Avenue Apartments also to the east, Waterfront Studios and Nakhon Thai restaurant both underneath the cable car alignment.
- 9.27 The noise assessment found that, without mitigation, the cable car would lead to adverse effects in Hanover/Wesley Avenue apartments in the early morning and evening and the north façade of Western Beach Apartments at night. Furthermore, these locations would experience internal noise levels marginally above guideline levels were they to have windows open. The Nakhon Thai restaurant is also likely to experience adverse noise conditions.
- 9.28 The source of the predicted operational noise levels is the northern drive station and not the cable running through the running gear atop the towers. Mitigation is comprised of an acoustic shroud around the drive mechanism, internal noise cladding and absorption material and reducing the running speed of the cable as appropriate, particularly at night and in the early morning. Such mitigation is to be secured by Newham's permission. It is not considered necessary to require the applicant to enter into a Section 106 agreement to secure this mitigation, as this would duplicate measures imposed by Newham.
- 9.29 The construction phase of the towers is another source of noise and vibration. All construction will comprise rotary bored piling followed by general construction activity. The north intermediate tower is the closest to sensitive receptors, however noise at the closest residential dwelling (Western Beach Apartments) is not considered to be significant even without mitigation. The Waterfront Studios is likely to be effected by piling works, however the exceedance is relatively small and can be reduced through mitigation. Suggested condition 10 at paragraph 11 below limits noise during the construction phase effectively requiring mitigation measures.
- 9.30 Construction vibration is not considered to be significant at any nearby sensitive receptors.

### Aircraft Safety

- 9.31 Circular 01/10 Control of Development in Airport Public Safety Zones (PSZ) seeks to restrict development near airports, essentially advising that development should not lead to an increase in population living, congregating or working in an airport PSZ. Paragraph 10 specifically advises that there should be a presumption against development in such areas. However, in the case of transport schemes, the approach is that individual schemes should each be considered on their own merits.
- 9.32 The London Borough of Newham has produced the London City Airport Supplementary Planning Guidance (2005) which seeks to ensure the safety of aircraft taking off, landing and flying in the vicinity of London City Airport. In line with Circular 01/10, the SPG advises that there is a general presumption against development within the airport PSZ but also states that some applications will be considered on their own merits
- 9.33 Although London City Airport has confirmed that the design of the cable car does not conflict with the safeguarding zone, an objection has been raised regardless. This objection stems from one of the airport's customer airlines being required to increase the climbing angle of their aircraft taking off. While this does not present any safety issue, it does mean that the takeoff weight of these aircraft will need to be reduced, thereby reducing the financial return on each flight departing to the west. The applicant has argued that this is purely a commercial matter for the airline and does not translate into a material planning consideration for the authorities to consider. On the information at hand, officers agree that the scheme does not raise a safeguarding issue and is in line with the guidance found in the circular and the SPG. Therefore, the current objection from London City Airport does not present a robust reason for refusal. However, to avoid any ambiguity that may lead to future challenge from the airport or its customer airlines, the applicants have agreed to lower the height of the north main tower to 87.63 metres AOD. At the time of writing this report, London City Airport had not confirmed whether this reduction in height is sufficient to remove its objection.

### Ecology

- 9.34 The River Thames is designated as a Site of Metropolitan Importance and the Royal Victoria Dock a Site of Nature Conservation. In light of these designations, the applicant has compiled an ecological assessment and has included this as a chapter of the ES.
- 9.35 In relation to the tower, the ecological assessment found that the towers and overhead cables have the potential to affect birds in the area. Migratory and overwintering birds may be affected by construction disturbance, while wildfowl, wading birds, gulls and cormorants may be susceptible to collision. The northern towers are not considered to lead to any significant habitat loss.
- 9.36 The ES suggests mitigation measures to be introduced to minimise disturbance to bird populations. This includes vegetation clearance outside breeding periods and bird reflectors to be placed on the communication cable where it crosses the Thames and Royal Victoria Docks.
- 9.37 Natural England and the Environment Agency have confirmed that they are satisfied with the ecological assessment of the scheme.

### Energy and Sustainability

9.38 The scheme is not considered to be a high energy user in its own right and can be said to be an alternative to the private vehicle when travelling between the Royal Docks and North Greenwich. In addition to these factors, the applicant has provided an energy statement within the ES which outlines the following low carbon technology measures:

- rainwater harvesting on the southern station roof
- the use of photovoltaic cells to be installed on the northern station, aiming to offset 18% of baseline CO2 emissions site-wide.
- natural ventilation to be utilised in both stations
- shading and high performance glazing to be installed to limit cooling requirements
- building facades and roofs designed to maximise daylight within all spaces
- low energy lighting to be used throughout
- brown roofs to be installed on the southern gondola building and northern kiosk structure
- variable speed drives adopted to increase longevity and reduce energy consumption.

9.39 All of these measures fall outside of the area for consideration by the LTGDC but are acceptable to officers when considering the scheme overall.

## **10. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR APPROVAL**

10.1 The application has demonstrated that the cable car crossing of the River Thames will be a positive contribution to the regeneration areas of the Royal Docks and Greenwich Peninsula and will be a convenient link between the major attractors of the O2 and ExCeL. The proposal will support the existing public transport network while also being a tourist attraction in its own right.

10.2 The design of the scheme is well considered and has the potential to become an icon of east London. The twisting form of the towers, the types of materials and the approach to the lighting will mean that the scheme has the potential to stand the test of time.

10.3 Some concern has been raised from local residents in terms of noise and privacy. Officers are satisfied that the submitted information demonstrates that there will be no significant loss of residential amenity.

10.4 London City Airport also have concerns relating to the impact on takeoff performance for some of their customer airlines. Officers are satisfied that no safeguarding issues are raised by this objection.

10.5 The Environmental Statement accompanying the application demonstrates to the satisfaction of officers that the scheme will not result in an unacceptable impact on the environment.

10.6 The application before Members is recommended to be approved, subject to the Stage 2 referral response from the Mayor of London and the conditions listed in section 11 of this report. Following the issue of the decision, a statement must be placed on Newham's Statutory Register confirming that the main reasons and

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considerations on which the Committee decision was based were those set out in this officer's report to the Committee as required by Regulation 21 (1) (c) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999.

## 11. CONDITIONS AND REASONS

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be commenced not later than the expiration of THREE YEARS from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements under Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. This planning permission applies to the following drawings, plans and details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

WEA-682-201 P3 Cable Profile  
WEA-682-213 P1 Site Plan London Thames Gateway Development Corporation  
WEA-682-611 P1 North Main Tower Base/Site Plan  
WEA-682-612 P1 North Intermediate Tower Base/Impact Plan  
WEA-682-622 P2 North Main Tower Assembly  
WEA-682-623 P1 North Intermediate Tower Assembly  
WEA-682-626 P1 Tower Head/Base Detail

Reason: To ensure that the development is completed in accordance with the approved plans, in accordance with policies EQ18 and EQ19 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan 2001 and policies 4A.3, 4B.1, 4B.2 and 4B.3 of the London Plan 2008.

3. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in strict accordance with the submitted details including the accompanying Environmental Statement.

Reason: To ensure that the environmental impacts of the development are properly mitigated.

4. Prior to the commencement of the structure of the towers above the base foundations, full details of a lighting scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include all technical details and specification, intensity in Lux levels and final illustrative images of the lighting proposal. The approved details shall be implemented in full thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the scheme is visually appropriate at night, to ensure residential amenity is maintained, public safety and highway safety, in accordance with policies EQ19 and EQ45 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan and in accordance with policies 3A.3, 4B.1, 4B.2 and 4B.10 of the London Plan 2008.

5. No impact piling shall take place without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority and only in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Construction Practice approved under condition 7 of this permission.

Reason: In order to minimise noise and disturbance during construction and to minimise the contamination risk to groundwater, in accordance with policies

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EQ45, EQ46 and EQ47 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan 2001 and policies 4A.3, 4A.19, 4A.20 and 4B.1 of the London Plan 2008.

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, full details including specifications and annotated plans of the cable catenary and tower heads shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be implemented in accordance with the approved details, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that any changes or additions to the tower head or cable is of an appropriate design standard and specification, in accordance with Policies EQ19, and EQ28 of the London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan (adopted June 2001, saved from 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007 by direction from the Secretary of State) and Policies 4B.1, 4B.2, 4B.3, 4B.9 and 4B.10 of the London Plan (Feb 2008, Consolidated with Alterations Since 2004).

7. Any craneage or other structure used in the construction of each tower that is expected to exceed the highest point of that tower shall not be used unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of aviation safety and in accordance with policy T3 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan 2001.

8. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, and prior to any demolition works, a Code of Construction Practice shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Code shall include all methods of site preparation and construction, including traffic management, use of the river to transport materials, sourcing of materials, smoke and odour control avoidance of fires, wheel washing, noise and vibration and implementation and monitoring. The approved Code shall be implemented in full thereafter.

Reason: In the interest of pollution control and residential amenity, in accordance with policies EQ45, EQ46 and EQ47 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan 2001 and policies 4A.3, 4A.19, 4A.20 and 4B.1 of the London Plan 2008.

9. Deliveries of construction and demolition material to and from the site by road shall only take place between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and 0800 and 1300 Saturday and at no time on Sundays or Bank Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of pollution control and residential amenity, in accordance with policies EQ45, EQ46 and EQ47 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan 2001 and policies 4A.3, 4A.19, 4A.20 and 4B.1 of the London Plan 2008.

10. Noise from construction activities shall not exceed 75dB Laeq 10 hour measure 1 metre from the façade of any occupied building, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and only in accordance with the Code of Construction Practice approved under condition 7 of this permission.

Reason: In the interest of pollution control and residential amenity, in accordance

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with policies EQ45, EQ46 and EQ47 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan 2001 and policies 4A.3, 4A.19, 4A.20 and 4B.1 of the London Plan 2008.

11. Prior to the commencement of development approved by this planning permission (or such other date or stage in development as may be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority), the following components of a scheme to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site shall each be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the local planning authority:

1) A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:

- all previous uses
- potential contaminants associated with those uses
- a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors
- potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.

2) A site investigation scheme, based on (1) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.

3) The site investigation results and the detailed risk assessment (2) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.

4) A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in (3) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Any changes to these components require the express consent of the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: In the interests of human safety and environmental protection, in accordance with polices EQ4, EQ9, EQ10, EQ11 and EQ12 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan and in accordance with policies 3D.14, 4A.3 and 4C.3 of the London Plan 2008.

12. Prior to the first operation of the proposed development , a verification report demonstrating completion of the works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met. It shall also include any plan (a long-term monitoring and maintenance plan) for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action, as identified in the verification plan, and for the reporting of this to the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of human safety and environmental protection, in accordance with polices EQ4, EQ9, EQ10, EQ11 and EQ12 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan and in accordance with

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policies 3D.14, 4A.3 and 4C.3 of the London Plan 2008.

13. No soils, or infill materials, are to be brought onto the site unless they have been satisfactorily proven to be uncontaminated and present no risks to human health, planting and the environment. A declaration to this effect, together with acceptable documentary evidence to confirm the origin of all imported soils and infill materials, supported by appropriate chemical analysis test results, must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent uncontaminated and remediated land from becoming contaminated with material that is potentially harmful to humans, planting and the environment, in accordance with policy EQ49 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan 2001 and policy 4A.33 of the London Plan 2008.

14. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a programme of archaeological work shall be implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme pursuant to this condition and archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that any archaeological remains that may be on site are suitably recorded, in accordance with policy EQ43 of the adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan and policy 4B.15 of the London Plan 2008.

**CASE OFFICER:** Stephen Allen

**Appendix 1:** Application Red Line Plans

**Appendix 2:** Tower Details

**Appendix 3:** Perspective Views

**Appendix 4:** Separation Distances