

Report on activities of Barbican Quarter Action (BQA) and a request for further funding

In May the BAGC approved funds of £60,100 to fund the activities of Barbican Quarter Action's campaign to stop the City's proposed development at London Wall West.

BQA activities to date have had a major impact.

Whilst they have not, as yet seen off the proposal to seek planning permission to demolish the Museum and Bastion House and replace them with the largest office blocks that they can fit on the site. Our challenge has forced a postponement of the application, until March 2023.

Prior to this there will be 21 days of preapplication consultation. We will have the opportunity to challenge their submission.

Such information as has been shared with the general public, the Whole Life Carbon Assessment (WLCA) has been shown to be at best misleading and in part wrong, by Bob Stagg of Conisbee Structural Engineers and Simon Sturgis of Targeting Net Zero retained by BQA.

The failures of the City to consult properly and to share the rationale for their proposals have been exposed by the BQA and forced a rethink. This has led to more members questioning the proposal.

However, they are still determined to press ahead and realise £50M (reduced from the originally anticipated £70M) from selling a lease with planning permission for the maximum commercial development that will fit on the site. They are anxious that the Certificate of Immunity from Listing will run out in August 2024 and want to demolish before then. There is a risk that if granted planning permission they will press ahead with demolition without having secured a buyer for the site potentially blighting it for many years.

Demolition as opposed to retrofitting the existing buildings runs against both GLA and the City's Net Zero Carbon Strategies. It will not fit comfortably with the Net Zero Delivery Summit the Corporation is due to host at the Mansion House in May 2023. BQA seeks to ensure that these strategies are adhered to. The next stages of our campaign must major on this. It is likely that we will need to ask Simon Sturgis to review and report back.

£48,000 has been committed of the approved £60,100. (Appendix 1 Table 1 below) To support the campaign through to the application to planning we seek approval for a further £13,442 for a follow up review from Simon Sturgis, continued strategic advice and support from SEC Newgate and general running expenses. (Appendix 1 Table 2 below)

A progress report, setting out BQA's activities past, present and future. Appendix 2

Appendix 1

Barbican Quarter Action seeks additional funding to support its continued activities up until the City makes its application planning application. In addition to the £12,100 legal expenses approved but uncommitted (table 1) BQA seeks approval to spend a further £13,442 which is made up of £25,542 (table 2) less unused sum of £12,100 from the first approval (table 1)

BA Funds committed to date

Of the original sum approved by the BA in May all but £12100 has been committed the main underspend being on legal expenses which will probably be spent in the period running up to March when the City's project is due to go to planning

Table 1

Supplier /service	BAGC approved	Committed	Free
Legal	£13,800	£1,800	£12,000
SEC Newgate	£16,200	£16,200	
Website Design	£9,000	£8,900	
Douglas and King	£5,400	£5,400	
Sturgis	£6,600	£6,600	
Stagg	£1,800	£1,800	
Contingency	£7,300	£7,200	£100
Total	£60,100	£48,000	£12,100

Table 2
Further BQA Expenses to Planning Application

Supplier/service	November	December	January	February	March	Total	Inc Vat
Church hire			£150		£150	£300	
Printing Bulletin posters	£300	£300	£300	£300	£300	£1,500	£1,800
Website maintenance	£175		£150	£150	£150	£625	£750
Legal							
Ltd Co set up		£100				£100	£120
Advice re planning			£5,000			£5,000	£6,000
Advice re judicial review		£5,000				£5,000	£6,000
SEC Newgate 1 day /month	£825	£825	£825	£825	£825	£4,125	£4,950
Sturgis Review			£3,000			£3,000	£3,600
Sub total	£1,300	£6,225	£6,425	£1,275	£1,425	£16,650	£23,220
Contingency 10%							£2,322
Total							£25,542

Legal costs are estimates and subject to receiving quotes from the lawyers

Appendix 2

BQA Progress Report

Original Objectives

- To persuade City to change its mind and
- To oppose planning if they do not change.

Activity since approval for expenditure of BA funds

Creation of Website Londonstartshere.co.uk £8,900

SEC Newgate advised on General strategy and PR campaign £16,200.

City Claims in Whole Life Carbon Assessment (WLCAR) that Bastion must be demolished due to risk of Disproportionate Collapse rebutted at Webinar for members of the Court and Officers by

- Simon Sturgis Targeting NetZero £6,600
- Bob Stagg Conisbee Structural Engineers £1,800

Councillors meeting to challenge officers, gain grudging acceptance that WLCAR was misleading. Their request for a sight of their advisors' reports ignored.

Douglas and King Architects provide a critique on City proposals for site which demonstrates that the buildings are sound and should be retrofitted and repurposed £5,400

Regular briefing emails to members of the court

Questions to the Court from local CCs.

Where we are now?

Delayed application for planning from October/November to March/April to enable it to adjust plans in response to consultation (their reason). A result of the BQA campaign

Modified BQA objective: Repurpose and retrofit Museum and Bastion House in response to Net Zero strategies

20th Century England to put Bastion on its list of 10 buildings at risk of demolition.

City determined to go ahead with development in isolation from other projects in the area and refuses to develop a cultural plan for the Smithfield Barbican area.

BQA briefings to members of the Court are generating increasing awareness of the need for greater debate.

City continues to fail to acknowledge BQA.

City concerned of a delay to programme from a Judicial Review.

Looking Forward. Programme to March/April

Require approval from GC for a further £13,442 to support continued campaign up until an application is made to Planning

Develop strategy for objection to planning proposals.

Flesh out BQA's views on appropriate uses of site

Public meeting on 17th January

Continue to try to stop application and prepare for Judicial Review.

Set up BQA limited company to protect BQA individuals and provide a structure for crowd funding.

Freedom of information applications

Expand support base and consider raising a petition

Continue to challenge through communications to Court members, officers and residents.

ASB in the Barbican
Barbican Estate Security Committee update
for BAGC meeting 24 November 2022

A report based on 12 months data June 2021 to June 2022 which recorded anti-social behaviour incidents as reported by Barbican residents, together with findings & recommendations, has been provided to appropriate Corporation Members and discussions are ongoing.

DAVID BRADSHAW

Chair, Barbican Estate Security Committee

16 November 2022

Planning Report for BAGC 24th November 2022

Dear All,

I attach the planning lists for the last three weeks. There is nothing in the nearby vicinity to report on in either the first or third lists (dated 14th and 28th October) and just one application on the residential front in the second list (dated 21st October). This is for (yet another) major refurbishment, including the installation of suspended ceilings, in Lauderdale Tower, this time at 182.

A few updates....

1 Golden Lane.....so near but yet so very far.....

You are all now probably aware that the application to refurbish and extend (massively) 1 Golden Lane was debated at Tuesday's Planning & Transportation Committee meeting. I say "debated" but that is not really the best word to describe the process. In my opinion, the presentations from the objectors were excellent, as too was Cripplegate Common Councillor Elizabeth King's presentation. But, as someone on BarbicanTalk somewhat cynically and succinctly put it, the "property developers' lobbying body" yet again won the day. The vote was very close however with 14 in favour and 12 against. Three Barbican residents on the Committee voted against the scheme but two resident members voted in favour – these two votes therefore could well have changed the outcome. But it was not to be.

As an aside, neither of the two resident members who voted in favour of the scheme (their names can be seen on twitter if interested) represent our local Wards – one is an Alderman in the Castle Baynard ward and the other is a Common Councillor in the Coleman Street ward.

So yet again residents' objections have been ignored and many of the City's own planning policies totally disregarded. Permitting this massively oversized behemoth to be created is surely a disgrace - the overdevelopment of the site's current footprint and the proposed unnecessary increase in height and mass will cause considerable damage to residential amenity in the form of loss of daylight and sunlight, overshadowing, overlooking and light pollution.

We would remind that core strategic policy DE2 : New Development of the Draft Local Plan 2036 states that *'The design of all new development must ensure that: The bulk and massing of schemes are appropriate in relation to their surroundings and have due regard to the general scale, height, building lines, character, historic interest and significance, urban grain and materials of the locality and relate well to the character of the area,.....'* and that *'Development that would adversely affect the character, appearance or amenities of the buildings or area will be resisted'*.

Yeah, right. As ever, this fell on the usual deaf ears. Frustrating (stronger words really needed!) doesn't even come close.....

If interested, the meeting can be viewed on YouTube via the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCaWEVvX_6M&ab_channel=CityofLondonCorporation

Clifford Chance set to downsize significantly from Canary Wharf to 2 Aldermanbury Square

It has been reported that law firm Clifford Chance is looking to return to the City of London after a decade in Canary Wharf. Property development investment fund Great Portland

Estates (GPE) has confirmed that it is in talks with the firm for a pre-letting of one of its largest office developments, 2 Aldermanbury Square. GPE is reported to have spent nearly £270m on the new development as of March, having initially bought the site for £93m 12 years ago, and is expecting “to pull in around £24m in annual rent from the site”. Brokerage Goodbody has given the development an estimated value of £480m.

Those with long memories will recall that Clifford Chance’s HQ was originally at 200 Aldersgate Street, a 434,005 sq ft office building completed in 1991/92. So the firm moved from a 434,005 sq ft building to a 1m sq ft site in Canary Wharf....but is now looking to downsize to a “320,000 sq ft development one-third the size of the original 1m sq ft rented in Canary Wharf....”

Comment – if Clifford Chance is doing this, is there not the prospect that other firms will also be seeking to downsize.....?? Is the City of London paying any attention...???

The news was covered in several newspapers, including CityAM, the link to which is shown below:

<https://www.cityam.com/city-calls-clifford-chance-looks-to-trade-canary-wharf-for-the-square-mile/>

Miscellaneous

There have been a number of interesting articles published recently and I thought that I would share a few with you.

Sticking with the theme of downsizing, reducing property valuations and changing working patterns post the pandemic

Crumbling commercial property valuations and sales signal looming slump

A recent FT article reported that UK commercial property market valuations are falling at their fastest pace since the Brexit vote and dealmaking is stuttering to a halt, in early indications that higher interest rates could tip the market into a prolonged downturn. According to index provider MSCI, UK commercial property values fell 2.6 per cent last month, the largest monthly fall since July 2016. “It’s a fairly gloomy outlook. There’s clearly a great degree of uncertainty in the market at the moment,” said Tom Leahy, head of real assets research for Europe, the Middle East and Asia at MSCI.

The outlook is similar across much of Europe as investors have retreated following rapid dealmaking at the start of the year. In the first nine months of 2022, a record €229bn of transactions were completed. But in the past three months levels were down 16 per cent on the same period last year, according to property company CBRE. Rising rates and mounting risks in the economy have quickly transformed the outlook for European property owners. Borrowing costs — a function of central bank rates and lenders’ perception of risk for the sector — have increased sharply in the past six months, while inflation has driven up construction costs. The attractiveness of property has also diminished as bond yields have risen.....

Property brokers and investors said the UK commercial property market peaked at the turn of the year. According to CBRE, investment volumes have dropped for three consecutive quarters. The number of pending transactions tracked by MSCI is at its lowest level since 2013, indicating that the market is likely to slow further. Deals that were being struck were at a

substantial discount to the levels valuers considered realistic at the start of the year — before the war in Ukraine and surging inflation led to successive rounds of rate rises.

The biggest deal to go through in recent months was Landsec’s sale of Deutsche Bank’s new City of London office, 21 Moorfields. Late last year, Landsec was privately approached by a potential investor willing to pay about £1bn, according to people with knowledge of the offer. Landsec instead opted for a public sales process and last month settled for almost 20 per cent less, agreeing a £809mn deal with Australian developer Lendlease.

The full article can be viewed via the following link:

<https://www.ft.com/content/19b115b0-893b-4962-847d-6b33daf99e74>

Office workers embrace hybrid working as post-pandemic norm

Another recent article in the FT reported that “office workers across the world’s biggest economies have not resumed their pre-pandemic commuting, instead embracing hybrid working as the new normal according to widely-watched commuting data. By mid-October trips to workplaces in the world’s seven largest economies were still well below their levels before the coronavirus took hold in early 2020..... In Japan, footfall was 7 below pre-pandemic levels while in the UK it was down 24 per cent. Across major advanced economies office trips are more popular on the middle days of the week, while Monday and Friday tend to show large drops in attendance. Cities which host financial and business districts saw a larger loss of office footfall than in other major population areas, according to the Google figures.

.....Survey data suggest that people like working from home and the practice helps to lower firms’ overheads and carbon emissions, but evidence on the impact on productivity is mixed.

.....In the UK, a regular survey run by the Office for National Statistics showed that more than a fifth of UK workers were using a hybrid model of working in early October, largely unchanged since the spring. The proportion rose to more than half of the workforce for information and communication, with professional, scientific and technical activities being only a little lower.....

The full article can be read via the following link:

<https://www.ft.com/content/91899837-0fc7-4fe8-9581-60517d85399b>

What commuters get up to when they no longer commute

Yet another FT article questioned what hybrid workers are doing with the time not spent travelling to work, estimated at 60mn hours per day in the US alone? “US workers are sleeping more”, according to an analysis on the New York Federal Reserve’s Liberty Street Economics blog. Youngsters in particular are also reallocating commuting time to social events, exercise and eating out, while older age groups devote more time to childcare, DIY and cooking. Yes, they are also spending some of their saved time working. But “the decrease in hours worked away from home is only partially offset by an increase in working at home”, the researchers write.

“There is ammunition here both for those who advocate bringing more people back to half-empty offices and for the champions of more remote work. The former will gnash their teeth at the idea of working hours lost to a longer lie-in. The latter will claim that less time lashed to

the laptop makes for happier and more engaged staff. Unhelpfully, data on the productivity of hybrid workers remain scant.”

We will all have our own thoughts on hybrid vs full time office work so I will not make any comment – and have attached the article for you to read if you so desire.

And finally.....

GoPuff going puff?

The first relates to GoPuff which, you may recall, was planning some months ago to open a facility in Aldersgate Street. The application was however thankfully withdrawn. A contributor to Barbicantalk (thank you whoever you are) posted the following article headed “The Fantasy of Instant Delivery is Imploding”.

In brief the article describes that GoPuff was supposed to “crack Silicon Valley’s longtime obsession with one-hour delivery. ...Indeed, “Gopuff is part of a class of startups that soared during the pandemic, trying to solve a logistics and math puzzle that’s dogged Silicon Valley for decades: Can an e-commerce company whisk products to your house in under an hour? And more important: Can it actually make money doing so?.....

Covid-19 lockdowns created the perfect conditions for the model to finally work—billions of people trapped at home, desperate to have anything and everything delivered as quickly as possible, for almost any price. Nearly \$10 billion of venture capital gushed into so-called quick commerce companies like Gopuff

By early 2020, Gopuff had 165 warehouses covering some 600 US cities. Then, in the span of two years, the startup raised an astounding \$3 billion in venture capital from the likes of SoftBank Group Corp.’s infamous Vision Fund, acquired the 28-year-old liquor retailer BevMo!, and expanded into Europe by buying two smaller competitors. By 2021 its valuation had risen to a hyperbolic \$15 billion, and the founders had cashed out by selling some of their shares to investors. They bought a private plane and decamped from Philadelphia to intracoastal mansions in Miami.....

But the transition from peak pandemic to a new normal has interrupted the party. Once-wary shoppers have returned to stores looking for discounts, inflation is back, and the economy has foundered.....

By their own admission, the Gopuff founders never imagined this scenario. After the company burned roughly \$700 million in expansion mode in 2021, in recent months it’s laid off almost 2,000 employees, withdrawn from parts of Europe, shelved grandiose plans for new categories, raised fees on customers, and halted a planned initial public offering as its valuation has plummeted.....”

The full article can be read via the following link:

<https://archive.ph/2022.10.25-042811/https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2022-10-24/gopuff-layoffs-signal-instant-delivery-s-demise#selection-4053.0-4053.380>

That’s all for now folks.

Apologies for the seemingly endless number of articles but I hope some, if not all, prove to be of interest.

Best wishes,

Sue Cox

Beech Street

BAGC Report ~~September~~ November 2022

Summary

The BA Beech Street working party are proposing to modify the BA's position on the City's Beech Street proposal. Previously the BA decided not to take a position on the City's proposals as there were clear differences in attitude across the estate. This position remains but the working party plan to provide a critical analysis of this very flawed proposal.

We seek approval from the BAGC to follow this course.

The City Proposal

The City's proposals as outlined in our last briefing note are unchanged and are repeated here.

The City are proposing to consult on a hybrid scheme which essentially permits only zero emission vehicles in both directions for most of Beech Street but allowing **any** vehicle to turn left out of Golden Lane and proceed along Beech Street in an easterly direction. Residents would not be exempt from the scheme, but camera timings should allow residents to come and go from resident carparks. If this consultation has a successful outcome, there is money available to implement the scheme.

At the same time, the City would **engage, not consult** on the wider Healthy Streets Plan for the Barbican and Golden Lane (and now possibly Bunhill) area. There are no funds available to implement such a scheme.

Discussion

These options were discussed at the Streets and Walkways meeting on 6 September. I wouldn't like to write the minutes. Three alternate immediate options were presented. 1a 1b 1c. they're outlined in an appendix to this note. All three of these options attempt to resolve the issue of Fortune Street being used as a rat run, together with Islington's reluctance to provide resident exemptions to a no turn into Fortune Street restriction.

1a and 1b are preferred by the City. 1c, which is the proposal outlined in the summary above, is preferred by Islington and reluctantly accepted by the City as a compromise. Both Sue Pearson and Randall Anderson objected to the 1c proposal on several grounds, not the least of which was that the lower end of Golden Lane, which is effectively a School Street would become a rat run for eastbound non-zero emission vehicles.

The committee concluded that if within four weeks the City and Islington had not come to an agreement on either of options 1a or 1b a decision would be made under urgency as to whether or not to proceed to consult on option 1c. It seems very unlikely that any option other than 1c will be put forward for consultation.

At the same time, the City would engage, whatever that means, on the Healthy Streets Plan for the Barbican and Golden Lane area.

Appendix Alternate Beech Street Proposals

Option 1a – Zero emission scheme based on the experiment

Under this option, the design largely replicates that used during the experiment but with a different restriction on Fortune Street to prevent it being used as a through-route for eastbound traffic moving through the area.

It is proposed that a “no right-hand turn” sign would be placed at the eastern end of Fortune Street. Vehicles would not be able to travel south on Whitecross Street and onto Chiswell Street but must continue straight onto Dufferin Street and then left onto Bunhill Row, leading back to Old Street. Local traffic with a legitimate access need to the Bunhill area can still approach from the west, but eastbound through-traffic must use other routes.

A much smaller area bounded by Errol Street, Bunhill Row, Whitecross Street and Chiswell Street is negatively impacted compared to the previous Fortune Street ETO. Traffic entering the area is only adversely affected if approaching from the west, traffic is unaffected if approaching from the south, north or east. Similarly, journeys originating on Fortune Street and Dufferin Street will have longer routes to the southeast but are unaffected if heading in other directions.

While a final decision has not yet been taken, it appears unlikely that Islington will agree to Option 1a being included in the public consultation. As noted, this reflects concerns about local opposition and that any changes may only be in place for 18 – 24 months while an area-wide approach is developed and implemented, resulting in confusion for people who drive.

Option 1b - Zero emission scheme based on the experiment but keeping the Golden Lane/Beech Street junction open to zero emission vehicles

As above but with the Golden Lane/Beech Street junction open to zero emission vehicles only. We have requested Islington share information from the Fortune Street ETO to determine how many people that live in the smaller affected area requested exemptions, to be able to compare the impacts of Options 1a and 1b to Option 1c, and we are awaiting this information.

Option 1c – Zero emission scheme with Golden Lane / Beech Street junction open to all traffic

Under this Option, the design of the zero-emission zone would prevent Beech Street being used by non-zero emission vehicles along the east-west axis but allow all vehicles to use Beech Street eastbound carriageway between Golden Lane and Silk Street. Any vehicle travelling south on Golden Lane would be able to turn left onto Beech Street.

Zero emission vehicles would also be able to turn left from Beech Street onto Golden Lane.