

Gravesham Borough Council
Development Control
Civic Centre Windmill Street
Gravesend
Kent
DA12 1AU

Our ref: KT/2023/130393/01-L01
Your ref: 20221294
Date: 07 February 2023

Dear Rebecca

Demolition Of An External Stairwell, Construction Of A New Single Storey Roof Space, Removal And Relocation Of The Radar Mast, Internal Refurbishment, Improvements To The Exterior Facades And New Landscaping To Provide A Level Access To London River House And The PCC. The Existing Link Between The PCC And Grade II Listed Royal Terrace Pier Will Be Enhanced, And Repaving Works Is Proposed In The Forecourt Area Of The Listed Pier

Port Of London Authority, London River House, Royal Pier Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2BG

Thank you for consulting us on the above application. **We object to this proposal for the reasons set out below.**

Flood Risk

We object to the proposed development as it does not meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In particular, the proposal does not consider the condition or the required raising of the site's tidal Thames flood defences.

To meet the requirements of the NPPF the proposal should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The site is partially protected by the tidal Thames flood defences and the flood defence assets require maintenance and crest level raising to maintain this standard of protection. The submitted FRA does not consider defence raising, in line with the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan (TE2100), or assess the condition of the tidal defences.

The planning practice guidance (PPG) for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been revised as of August 2022. Paragraph 005 of the PPG states:

"Where flood risk management infrastructure such as flood defences form part of the strategy for addressing flood risk, strategic and site-specific flood risk assessments should, where appropriate:

- identify how this infrastructure will be operated, funded and maintained;
- ensure there is space for future maintenance or new flood risk management

- infrastructure that is likely to be needed;
- consider the consequences of flood risk management infrastructure failing or its design standard being exceeded;
- consider the likelihood of defences keeping pace with climate change, e.g. is funding available and what are the funding options (e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy, planning obligations / S106 agreements, or Partnership Funding). This should inform the nature of residual risk to be considered."

This provides further emphasis on the importance of flood defence infrastructure. It should be noted that site appears to heavily restrict future defence works due to the close proximity to and integration with the building.

Overcoming Our Objection

The PPG states that a 75-year design life is likely to form a starting point for the assessment of development design life (paragraph 006). For a new development, this would require defence raising to the levels required in 2070 by the TE2100 Plan. As the development is an extension to the existing buildings, we would accept a position that the 2070 defence raising would not be proportionate to the scope of development. However, as an absolute minimum, we would require the 2040 defence raising e.g. to no less than 6.90m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

In addition to meeting the requirements for 2040 defence raising, the proposal must include repairs to the flood defences. These repairs should be based on the results from a condition assessment of the flood defences which should be submitted as part of any future application. If defence raising would be limited to 2040 levels for this development, then the application should include assessment for the required 2070 defence raising. This should consider structural limitations of the existing assets and the buildability at site. We note that part of the defence appears to pass under London River House which may pose a significant challenge to maintaining the standard of flood risk protection to the site and surroundings.

Informative

It should be noted that the tidal Thames defences do not protect the entirety of the site. Said defences are formed of raised assets (such as flood walls) and also high ground. At the applicant's site Alexandra House benefits from the riverward location of the tidal defences. However, London River House and The Link Building features are situated riverward of the defence line. This is shown in Figure 3-1 of the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The FRA should refer to in channel-levels to consider the Finished Floor Levels for the areas situated riverward of the tidal defence line.

Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP)

The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 require a permit to be obtained for any activities which will take place:

- on or within 8 metres of a main river (16 metres if tidal)
- on or within 8 metres of a flood defence structure or culvert (16 metres if tidal)
- on or within 16 metres of a sea defence
- involving quarrying or excavation within 16 metres of any main river, flood defence (including a remote defence) or culvert

- in a floodplain more than 8 metres from the river bank, culvert or flood defence structure (16 metres if it's a tidal main river) and you don't already have planning permission.

For further guidance please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits> or contact our National Customer Contact Centre on 03702 422 549. The applicant should not assume that a permit will automatically be forthcoming once planning permission has been granted, and we advise them to consult with us at the earliest opportunity.

In preparation for the required FRAP, we would require the application to be supported by a method statement. This must detail what construction activities would be carried out within 16 metres of the tidal flood defences.

Future Thames Barrier

The Thames Estuary 2100 Plan sets out how we and our partners can work together to manage tidal flood risk in the Thames Estuary, from now and into the next century. It is an adaptive plan, ensuring current standards of flood protection provided by the existing tidal defence system are maintained or improved taking into account the effects of climate change e.g. sea level rise. We expect the Thames Barrier to continue to protect London from tidal flooding up until 2070, but over the longer term the Plan, published in 2012, sets out the strategic direction and several options for managing tidal flood risk in the Thames Estuary.

Beyond 2070, the long-term options to manage tidal flood risk include upgrading the existing barrier at Woolwich, 2 potential locations for a replacement barrier (Gravesend Reach or Long Reach) or flood storage.

Currently, all options continue to be investigated and assessed given that the decision on a preferred option is not planned until about 2040 when such a decision will be informed by the data and information available at the time.

This ongoing work is something the developer should be aware of as their site may be impacted in the future. We will contact the developer and landowners in the future should the Gravesend Reach area be taken forward as the preferred option. We would encourage the developer to regularly check Gov.uk for further and up to date information.

Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology

We object the proposal does not include a current preliminary ecological appraisal of the site.

If new cladding, lighting, removal of stairwells etc is to take place, a thorough assessment of the impacts to Bat and Bird species in particular will need to be carried out beforehand.

The proposal does not seem to include any form of significant riverward and landward ecological enhancement, or incorporation of a Sustainable Drainage

System scheme within in the landscape design. A lighting strategy by condition will be required to limit impact upon river and terrestrial species.

Provision of an enhancement strategy is supported by the NPPF paragraphs 179. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

“(a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity ; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
(b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

180. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

(a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.”

Our aim is to encourage the softening of the river edge where possibly and/or the use of softer landscape materials to provide an ecological betterment for the riverine ecosystem. Hard landscaping has the potential to increase run off and provide a greater potential for contaminants to enter the watercourse.

Overcoming our objection

Please provide a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, with enhancement/Sustainable Drainage System strategy.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Ms Laura Edwards

Planning Advisor

Direct dial 02084749079

Direct email KSLPLANNING@environment-agency.gov.uk

Environment Agency

Orchard House Endeavour Park, London Road, Addington, West Malling, Kent, ME19 5SH

Customer services line: 03708 506 506

Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/environment-agency