

Mr P Streeter  
Chairman  
The Spitalfields Trust  
18 Folgate Street  
London  
E1 6BX

09/07/2015

Dear Mr. Streeter

### **Blossom Street**

We wanted to write to you ahead of the consideration of our planning application by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Strategic Development Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> July.

#### **Consultation process**

In response to consultation on our emerging proposals, the Spitalfields Trust consistently raised three issues – both verbally and in writing – for us to work on together:

1. The Elder Street elevations
2. The Norton Folgate/Folgate Street corner elevations
3. The Blossom Street warehouses

This has been a valuable process and we have made significant changes in response to your comments and those received from other consultees. We feel our scheme is much stronger as a result.

#### **The Elder Street elevations**

In response to the Trust's comments we changed our approach to this building, initially by redefining the block as a number of separate buildings with proportions in line with the surrounding properties. We then introduced varied parapet heights with a mansard roof and dormer windows, wooden sash windows, and variation in brick selection and detailing. Finally, in response to our various meetings with the Trust, we paid particular attention to the front doors on Elder Street, where a clearer expression of lintels and door cases has been incorporated. Our principal point of difference is the inclusion of steps up to front doors on Elder Street, which we omitted to improve accessibility for wheelchair users.

#### **The Norton Folgate/Folgate Street corner elevations**

Our approach to the design of the corner plot facing Norton Folgate/Folgate Street has always been to mark the approach from Liverpool Street Station in an emphatic and purposeful manner. A contemporary response was always felt to be the most appropriate way to mark this point, but one which is shaped by the context within which it sits. Our approach here differed to that proposed by the Trust, but we did listen to your feedback and sought to reach a compromise by addressing the key issues you raised. The scheme now retains more of the historic fabric facing Norton Folgate than we originally conceived, the scale and mass has reduced, the external skin has changed from a precast solution to a brick solution, and the size and arrangement of windows has changed to a more regular rhythm of smaller windows which evoke the Georgian grain within which it sits.

### **The Blossom Street warehouses**

Since we last met, we have made significant progress on proposals for the retention and re-use of the internal fabric of the Blossom Street warehouses. The internal fabric of these buildings does not have any statutory protection.

Over the last 100 years the warehouses have been physically altered in a number of ways, adapting to the needs of their occupiers. British Land is committed to restoring, refurbishing and re-establishing these historic buildings.

Our retention and re-use strategy for the warehouses goes far beyond any statutory requirements and the commitments set out in the extant planning permission. We are committed to keeping and incorporating within the fabric of the warehouses the wooden joists, cast iron columns, brickwork and tiles. We will re-establish timber floors and ceilings which have been replaced with concrete, as well as repairing the historic parapet line. Furthermore, we have proposed a planning condition which commits us to this.

We hope you agree that these are positive moves, which will enhance the historic character of the Conservation Area. We will continue to explore ways to maximise the retention and re-use of the original warehouse fabric during the detailed design stage and would be happy to share this work with you.

### **Recent criticism of Blossom Street**

We have written to you following the submission of the planning application, but have had no response to our invitations to discuss the issues you identified previously.

Instead you have sought to characterise the scheme publicly with reference to 'glass and steel offices', 'corporate plazas' and 'big corporate occupiers'. This is manifestly untrue and it is disappointing that you have chosen to misrepresent our plans in this way, despite the time we have spent consulting and amending the design in line with many of your comments.

### **Our latest proposals**

Our vision for the site is to deliver what the Trust has consistently said this area needs - space for small businesses, contextual architecture, intimate courtyards, independent operators and the carefully considered restoration and retention of historic streets and buildings.

Our proposals will provide space for 2,650 jobs; new housing, including 30% affordable housing; active ground floor uses; and a commitment to promoting local employment, training and skills that will make a very real difference to the lives of young people in the Borough.

We have chosen a design team combining four architects, with a track record in designing contextual buildings and which respond sensitively to local character. Their designs have been informed by advice from leading heritage experts and welcomed by the independent Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), which concluded that: *'we find much to admire in the scheme and commend the careful analysis of the historic context and the sensitive response to the character of the Elder Street Conservation Area. The height and mass of the new buildings are appropriate for this location and achieve a successful transition from the tall towers of the City to the small-scale fabric of Spitalfields. The intense collaboration between different design teams has resulted in a contemporary intervention that successfully builds upon the heritage of this prominent part of London'*

We continue to offer an open forum for you to talk to us and would be happy to meet at any point to discuss our proposals with you further.



**Next steps**

We will be hosting an opportunity for local people to meet us to discuss the scheme, ahead of the Strategic Development Committee meeting, in the Garden Room of the Water Poet on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July and Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July between 5.30pm and 8.30pm. We hope that you and your fellow committee members are able to attend.

We will be openly publishing this letter and welcome any debate that follows. A copy will be provided to everyone who has taken part in the consultation process to date, as well as local residents and businesses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Wiseman".

**Michael Wiseman**  
**British Land and on behalf of the Blossom Street Project Team**

