

Answers to questions that people may be asking about planning proposals for the Bermondsey Street area of Southwark

Q) Has the council made decisions about proposals for new tall buildings in the London Bridge/Bermondsey Street area?

A) No. The council has been consulting the public on proposed guidelines for tall buildings set out in a draft document called the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge Supplementary Planning Document. These guidelines are under discussion and have not been adopted by the council. They are not expected to be adopted until 2011.

Q) Consultation on this planning document closed in March of this year. Are there plans to carry out more consultation?

A) Yes. Some people have contacted the council since the original consultation closed wanting to make comments. We have decided that there will be further consultation later this year starting on 6 September and running through to 15 October and this will be widely publicised. If you have written to us you will be notified by letter.

Q) I have heard about and seen some details of a proposal for some tall buildings on a site at St Thomas Street/Snowsfields/Bermondsey Street. What is the status of this?

A) Sellar Developments, who are also building the Shard at London Bridge, are considering a proposed development of this site and have discussed this with the council but they have not made an application for planning permission yet.

The council is aware that Sellar Developments have also carried out their own consultation and have had meetings with local people and organisations to discuss their ideas over the last 2 years.

Q) If a planning application is made for a development of tall buildings on this site will I be consulted?

A) Yes. If these discussions result in an application for planning permission being made, the council will send individual letters to all properties over a wide area around the application site. We will also write to everyone who has responded on this issue following our consultation on the SPD. There will also be site notices, press notices and other publicity.

Q) And if an application for tall buildings on this site is made, who will make the decision?

A) This is not certain. The decision may be made by the Planning Committee of Southwark Council in which case we will make sure that anyone who has commented on the proposal is made aware of the date and time of the meeting so that they can attend.

A major proposal that goes over certain limits such as tall buildings over 30 metres in height (about 10 storeys) or developments of over 150 houses or flats may be decided by the Mayor of London.

In some cases of very major developments the decision may even be referred up to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and a public inquiry would be held (this is how the decision to grant planning permission to the Shard was made). It is possible that this could happen in this case.

In any case, the council will form a view on the proposal at its planning committee which will be presented to the Mayor or the Secretary of State if one of them is to take the decision.

Q) There was an application that was made to the council in 2009 concerning very tall buildings on the St Thomas Street site. What was that?

A) In March 2009 Sellar Developments applied to the council for what is called a 'scoping opinion'. This means that they are considering making an application for planning permission and, because it would be a major development, they needed advice from the council about the type and amount of detail that they would need to put into an Environmental Impact Assessment which they would have to provide if they did make an application for planning permission. To do this, they had to provide some indication of the type of development that it would be. The council did not give any opinion about whether the development would or would not be acceptable. It simply advised on the information it would require if and when a planning application was made.

Q) Has the council assessed Sellar's proposals and decided that they are acceptable including an assessment of their impact on the Bermondsey Street Conservation Area?

A) No. No such assessment has been made yet.

Q) I have seen posters, a leaflet or an email with a picture of very tall buildings dominating the corner of Bermondsey Street and St Thomas Street and described as the council's proposals. Is this genuine?

A) No. The photomontage on posters displayed recently in Bermondsey Street and Crucifix Lane and appearing on leaflets and in emails circulating in the area do not represent any council proposal or any scheme that has been discussed with the council. The posters and leaflets were not produced by the council.

Q) The posters and email also said that 'failure to register objections will be taken as approval of the council's new vision for the area.' Does the council ever assume that people who do not respond to their consultations are in favour of proposals that are under discussion?

A) No. The council never assumes what the views are of people who have not responded to their consultations. This statement was made in a poster and in emails that were not produced by Southwark Council.

Q) If I sent a letter of objection to tall building proposals after the end of the formal consultation period on the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge Supplementary Planning Document (this ended on 26 March 2010) will my comments still be considered?

A) Yes. All comments will be carefully considered by the council before it makes any decisions about this planning guidance. We will be formally re-opening the

consultation later in the year. We will also take into account all of the comments received so far but this will be an opportunity to make further comments if you wish.

Q) What does the draft supplementary planning document say about tall buildings in this part of St Thomas Street/Bermondsey Street?

A) The draft supplementary planning document says that the St Thomas Street car park site 'is identified as having potential for a tall building element' subject to guidance set out elsewhere in the document. This includes detailed requirements for tall buildings to ensure they make a positive contribution to the area, are sensitive to the historic context and sensitive to their impact on the local environment among other considerations. It also says that tall buildings in the London Bridge area should form an appropriate transition from the height of the Shard/London Bridge Tower to the generally lower scale height and scale of the adjacent conservation areas.

Q) What does the draft supplementary planning document say about protecting the character of Bermondsey Street?

A) The draft SPD recognises that Bermondsey Village has a special character and any development will need to respect and respond to this. This includes not wanting the view up Bermondsey Street to be dominated by a tall building. Building heights should step down to the Bermondsey Street corner and any development along the Bermondsey Street frontage should continue the established heights and building line of the street.

Q) What role did Sellar Developments have in the preparation of the draft supplementary planning document?

A) Council officers have been meeting with and talking to several of the main land owners and developers in the area to understand what sorts of plans they may wish to bring forward. There have also been discussions with Guy's Hospital and Network Rail. Guy's Hospital and Sellar made financial contributions towards the technical work that was done by the council on the supplementary planning document in an arrangement similar to those made by the Greater London Authority with land-owners and developers elsewhere in London.

**Councillor Peter John
Leader of Southwark Council
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