

LACH Working Group 435, 441, and 451 Ridout St – Tower Proposal

General Comments: The proposal fails to adequately reflect or consider the very high importance of this site to the history of London and its remaining heritage properties. This is London's 'stellar' site in an area that saw the earliest beginnings of London. Far more proper understanding and acknowledgement of this should have required, at the least, consultation among heritage groups, professionals and the people of London to change this very important site.

The existing buildings are not only of hugely significant importance to London's history, but are architecturally distinguished, comprising part of London's almost entirely lost 'Georgian architecture'. Surmounted (in views) by a glass tower, they would lose most of this distinction.

This proposal requires multiple zoning amendments regarding height and use which would alert the community to the incompatibility of this application. The education component is a current and historic use of the buildings. The height of construction on this site is zoned to the height of the existing buildings – this requires a variance to a height just over 10 times higher than an existing National Historic Site. How can this tower 'provide for continuity and harmony in architectural style with adjacent uses that are of architectural and historical significance'? The height totally overwhelms and impacts the 'heritage attributes' of these heritage properties.

The *Downtown Heritage Conservation District Guidelines (DHCD)* have also frequently been ignored.

Furthermore as this is a National Historic Site, so there should have been far more consultation with the *Historic Sites and Monuments Board (NHSM)* and their standards and guidelines.

The HIA statement is adequate as far as history is concerned, but there is little correspondence between this and the plans for the proposal itself which does not adequately cover the issues and frequently fails to answer the questions it asks. There are no proper renderings of how this proposal would fit within the historic surroundings and a lack of acknowledgement of the historic nature of the site. There should be a 'view study' including historic views or paintings of the Forks for instance. It lacks terms of reference and – in the absence of any Tall Buildings guidelines in London – does not have any proper oversight.

Constant iterations of the fact that the historic buildings will be conserved are misleading – they will be severely compromised by this adjacent development.

Specific Comments:

Context: This is one of the major issues: the site next to the place where London was founded at the Forks of the Thames. It is flanked by the historic properties of Eldon House and the Old Courthouse and Gaol – it is in the heart of a very important heritage environment, which it would compromise or destroy. The *NHSM* statement refers to the viewscape of the complex as a whole (which is highly visible from a distance). The municipal Designation documents state that the historic context, architecture, streets, landscapes and other physical and visual features are of great importance.

The *DHCD* ranks the site as 'A' and 'H' which require the most stringent protection. In *DHCD* new construction should 'respect history' and 'character-defining elements' should be conserved and it should be 'physically and visually compatible'. It is hard to see this development as visually compatible in any way. This is not in the Central Business District or the commercial heart of London where it might possibly fit, and it is highly visible from the Downtown and prominent on the cliff of the Thames River banks.

Site and siting: The proposed development is crammed up right behind the historic properties – presumably to get above the flood line. Even so, it is extremely close to this. This also means that the tower is far more visible and obtrusive to the views and vistas.

The 'heritage attributes' of the Ridout St complex include its view and position. This proposal would obliterate those.

The proposal constitutes a barrier to the river visually, physically and psychologically. It serves to isolate the Forks and Harris Park as public, community-wide amenities. It also impinges significantly on the views from the river and the Forks.

In the HIA construction related impacts have not yet been determined. Building Condition Reports and Vibration studies could have already been carried out as the proponent owns the buildings. There should have been a request to, and consultation with, the Eldon House board to facilitate necessary on-site analysis and this should have been shared with the City.

Mitigation measures reference a 40-m buffer between construction and properties but potential impacts need to be determined before the application proceeds.

It is noted that this proposal is sited above the existing flood line. However, climate change may continue to heighten this line. *UTRCA* should be consulted. The HIA also does not consider what threats to the heritage structures and grounds could occur as a result of any intrusion by new development into areas that have or might serve as a stormwater retention/detention area at this critical juncture of the Thames River. It may also impact waters upriver leading to flooding within Harris Park.

Size: The footprint is minimized because of the precarious site, but the height is maximized.

Height: The 40-storey tower is far too high – and would be the tallest building in London. This is not the right place for this. The historical importance of these buildings is minimized and trivialized by the structure, and reduced to a footnote. It is noted that views, vistas, viewscales and viewsheds are recognized as important heritage considerations in the statements of the *DHCD* and *NHSM* and designation documents.

The 'new' and the 'old' are not joined or linked in this proposal and the heritage buildings appear only as an afterthought. There are no references in the proposal prepared as to how the existing structures could be restored, reused and incorporated into the overall site.

The shadow study does not adequately address the effect on Eldon House, given that the development is directly to the south and building is butted right up the garden wall. The grandeur of the estate is effected by its lawns, mature trees and ornamental vegetation and the views of visitors and customers of its teas on the lawn and verandah will be severely limited. The proposed development will not just shadow but overwhelm the estate and visitors will be greeted by a wall of glass and a looming modern 40-storey tower.

Before any development proceeds an Arborist Report should be conducted.

Massing/design: There is no transition between the tower and its surroundings. It forms no connections with, or address the heritage attributes of Eldon House in particular. The 'base, middle and top' portions of the design, designed to break it up conspicuously fail to do that and have little impact on its incongruity. The base or podium is faced with buff brick does not work in 'joining up' and instead overwhelms the heritage structures which should constitute the primary focus at this site.

Materials: The use of white horizontal stripes on the Tower structure does not mitigate, in any way, its height. The 'curves' are a poor attempt to add interest. There is no attempt, except for the buff brick,(which can be scarcely seen from the front) to reference the heritage of the existing structures. The overwhelming use of glass is also not in any way consistent with, or compatible to, the heritage structures in front of it.

Mitigations: The differences in height cannot be mitigated in any way. The report admits there is 'no one way to mitigate adverse impacts'.

LACH does not recommend the implementation of this proposal.