

**Our ref:** Chalcots Estate  
**Your ref:** Matt Briant  
**Email:** matt.briant@quod.com  
**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

Richard Limbrick  
Planning Manager (West)  
Regeneration and Planning  
Supporting Communities  
London Borough of Camden

For the attention of Richard Limbrick

By email

Dear Richard,

## Chalcots Estate pre-application enquiry

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with us at short notice. It is greatly appreciated.

I have set out in this letter the latest proposals for the Chalcots Estate, together with a brief overview of the planning history and our suggested points for discussion. I have also enclosed our proposed agenda, a draft pack of plans and a list of suggested application documents for submission for your review.

### Background

This pre-application enquiry concerns our forthcoming full planning application at the Chalcots Estate, Swiss Cottage, NW3 ('the Site') for:

*"Re-cladding of the five tower blocks (Taplow, Burnham, Bray, Dorney and Blashford) at the Chalcots Estate with a solid aluminium panel facade and associated external works, including fenestration changes and the installation of an aluminium monorail to the parapet level of each tower block and the stair core of the Blashford tower block."*

As you know, there is an extant permission at Chalcots Estate Application 2018/0503/P approved on 24 April 2018) for the replacement of windows and cladding of the five tower blocks with a solid aluminium panel facade and associated external works.

In the aftermath of the Grenfell disaster, the London Borough of Camden (LB Camden) undertook a review of its housing stock and found that the original cladding on the towers did not meet the limited combustibility requirement for buildings where the uppermost floor is more than 18m from ground level. As such, the cladding was removed and LBC has committed to the work achieving a Class A1 fire rating, which exceed the current requirements of building regulations.

A further non-material amendment application was subsequently submitted and withdrawn for an aluminium monorail system to the parapet level of each tower to provide easy access to the external facades for maintenance purposes. The application was withdrawn amid further design changes and consultation with residents.

The latest proposal seeks to address the needs of residents and combine the two proposals into one consent.

### The proposal

The new proposal is largely the same as the approved scheme with an almost identical cladding arrangement but in natural anodised aluminium panels to comply with an A1 fire rating. Changes to the window design have also been incorporated, in consultation with the residents, together with the inclusion of the monorail system to each tower.

All of the changes (summarised below) are intended to improve the overall safety of Chalcots Estate.

- Cladding panels:
  - Layout and jointing to accommodate 2 sets of cavity barriers.
  - Anodised finish to cladding panels to achieve A1 classification.
  - Cladding and closure of apertures to the Blashford stair core to provide fire separation and improve the visual appearance.
- Windows:
  - Dropped sill levels to reduce the risk of falling from opening windows to living rooms and bedrooms whilst improving ventilation to prevent overheating.
  - Revised window layout to remove transoms where possible to improve visual appearance and views out.
  - Anodised finish to window profiles achieve A1 classification.
  - Brickwork level adjusted to suit the revised sill levels.
- Access and Maintenance
  - Addition of a monorail system to improve the safety of access for maintenance, repairs and twice-a-year window cleaning.

### Cladding

J57S Natural Finished Anodised cladding is proposed for all the towers. The appearance of the proposed cladding is shown in the enclosed pack of plans and we will present visualisations of the cladding during the pre-application meeting. The material has been chosen to reflect the lighter colour of the previous cladding with a smooth surface. This is a move away from the more silver colour previously considered, based on residents' feedback and on the samples tested. A textured finish has been excluded because the samples tested showed signs of streaks from air pollution and rain after just 11 months.

The key driver for replacing the cladding, together with the changes to the windows and brickwork, is fire safety. Therefore, all of the proposed elements, including the roof replacement and brick work replacement, have been chosen as they are fire resistant.

The entire cladding system has been fire tested successfully, including the panels (4mm aluminium), rock wool insulation and stainless steel rails and fixings. More detail on fire safety can be found below.

### *Windows*

The changes to the windows retain the 'tilt and turn' windows to the living rooms and bedrooms but with a lower sill height of 200mm above finished floor level (FFL). The increased height between the top of the sill and the window opening (retained at 1300mm above FFL) would now be 1100mm and would decrease the risk of falls should anyone stand or climb on the window sill. The option for the 90 degree opening is essential to prevent overheating, which presents a competing risk.

Tilt-only windows are proposed in the kitchens, bathrooms and WCs where the sills cannot be dropped due to the presence of worktops, bathtubs and WCs beneath them. As a result of the changes to the windows, transom positions and numbers have been adjusted to improve the visual appearance of the towers and enhance views for residents. The level of the brickwork parapet has also been adjusted to accommodate the new, larger windows.

The windows are proposed to be PAN 34 – Dark Bronze to add warmth to the façade treatment compared with the previous dark grey windows.

### *Access and maintenance*

To date the building has been accessed externally via abseilers for cleaning and maintenance. The proposed monorail system includes cradles and would improve the safety, speed and cost of cleaning and maintenance operations in the future.

### *Overall appearance*

The massing and bulk of the towers will not be altered as a result of the above changes, although the monorails will project approximately 500mm from the facades of the towers, altering the appearance at the top of each tower slightly. The pack of plans enclosed demonstrates that the impact of the monorails on the overall appearance of the towers would be minimal.

### **Fire safety**

The previously approved PPC cladding finish has been changed to an anodised finish to achieve the A1 Reaction to Fire classification that LB Camden has committed to, over and above regulatory requirements. In addition, aluminium rainscreen cladding has been added to the Blashford stair core to provide fire separation and improve the visual appearance.

Each of the towers will include Automatic Opening Vents (AOVs) on every floor, including automated front door openings on the ground floors, to meet a structural fire resistance of 120 minutes. Stainless steel sleeves will also be fitted over the existing gas flues as part of the extensive façade refurbishment of all five blocks.

The proposed system was tested during the summer of 2019 and was found to pass the requirements of British Standard 8414. Unlike the original ACM panels, the solid aluminium also does not possess component parts. It is therefore more robust, will not delaminate over time and will require less maintenance.

A fire safety strategy has been prepared for each tower block, which form the basis for the design and materials chosen. The Fire Safety Strategies for Blashford Tower and Taplow Tower (as an example of the four identical towers) have been enclosed.

### **Public consultation and Construction Management Plan (CMP) requirements**

In developing the latest proposals there has been regular correspondence with the residents of Chalcots Estate. Ahead of submission of the planning application, and in line with LB Camden's guidance on public consultation during COVID-19, we intend to hold an online presentation for residents followed by a question and answer session. The residents and the Tenant Resident Associations (TRA) for each of the five blocks are well set up for electronic communications but a leaflet drop would also be undertaken to advertise the meeting to residents.

On the CMP, we are aware of LB Camden's advice on construction management during COVID-19 but would welcome your view on the level of detail and engagement we will be required to undertake, particularly given this is a resubmission relating to an extant permission.

Whilst the development is large in scale due to the number and height of the five towers, the proposal to re-clad the towers is relatively straight forward. We would therefore hope that, given the nature of the proposals and the regular dialogue with residents via the existing Chalcots Works Group, wider community engagement with local businesses and neighbouring residents may not be required.

We are obviously keen to be in a position to re-clad the towers as soon as possible, particularly as they currently have no cladding at all. Therefore, a discussion on the CMP requirements would be greatly appreciated.

### **Conclusion**

It is considered that the proposals would greatly improve the condition and appearance of the towers, whilst ensuring they achieve a Class A1 fire rating.

The proposals are only subtly different visually from the previously approved scheme but present clear benefits in the use of the windows and allow for the future safe maintenance of the building. Also, cladding of the stair core on Blashford will create a uniform appearance and enhance fire safety.

Overall, the works will result in substantive benefits for the residents. The proposals ensure the safety of the towers against fire, safety and improved views for residents due to the revised window layout, and ease of access to the external facades for cleaning and maintenance. As such, the safety and appearance of the towers will be maintained for years to come.

We look forward to discussing our proposals with you and welcome your feedback.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Briant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Matt Briant  
Senior Planner

enc. Agenda for pre-application meeting, pack of proposed plans, and Fire Safety Strategies for Taplow Tower and Blashford Tower

cc. Astrid Kjellberg-Obst, Patricia Westerburg and Poppy Carmody-Morgan