

From: Tilla Crowne [REDACTED]
Sent: 17 June 2024 10:35
To: Harte, John
Subject: Re: Bevis Marks Synagogue City Plan 2040 Representation
Attachments: BM - Prof Green paper - reponse to Immediate Setting v1.1 reformatted.pdf
Categories: CONFIRMED

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)
 THIS IS AN EXTERNAL EMAIL

Dear John,

Please find attached a paper by Professor Green which we would like to add as a supplementary document to the synagogue's representation.

All the best,
Tilla

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 June 2024 09:52
To: Harte, John [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Bevis Marks Synagogue City Plan 2040 Representation
 Dear John,

Many thanks for your confirmation. I know that these are busy times, so I very much appreciate it!

All the best,
Tilla

From: Harte, John [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 June 2024 09:48
To: Tilla Crowne [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Bevis Marks Synagogue City Plan 2040 Representation
 Dear Tilla,

Thank you for your email. Confirming receipt of your email on Friday in relation to the City Plan 2040.
Kind regards

John Harte
MRTPI | Planning Officer | Policy & Strategy
City of London | Environment Department | Guildhall | London | EC2V 7HH



[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

WINNER | Planning Authority of the Year



From: Tilla Crowne [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, June 6, 2024 9:38 AM
To: Planning Policy Consultations <PlanningPolicyConsultations@cityoflondon.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Bevis Marks Synagogue City Plan 2040 Representation

THIS IS AN EXTERNAL EMAIL

Dear Planning Policy Team,
Please can you confirm receipt of my email of Friday 31st May containing the formal representations on behalf of Bevis Marks Synagogue in relation to the City Plan 2040.
Many thanks,
Tilla Crowne
Bevis Marks Synagogue Trustee



[Kal Nidre 5784 Appeal](#)
[We are grateful for your generosity which enables us to unite, succeed and prosper as a Kahal Please click here to donate.](#)
Thank you for your generous support.

Tilla Crowne
Trustee

e: [REDACTED]



Registered Charity no.
212517

From: Tilla Crowne
Sent: 31 May 2024 12:54
To: planningpolicyconsultations@cityoflondon.gov.uk <planningpolicyconsultations@cityoflondon.gov.uk>
Subject: Bevis Marks Synagogue City Plan 2040 Representation
Dear Planning Policy Team,
Please find attached our covering letter and formal representations on behalf of Bevis Marks Synagogue in relation to the City Plan 2040.
Many thanks,
Tilla Crowne
Bevis Marks Synagogue Trustee



Kal Nidre 5784 Appeal

We are grateful for your generosity which enables us to unite, succeed and prosper as a Kahal Please [click here to donate.](#)

Thank you for your generous support.

Tilla Crowne

Trustee

e: [redacted] | w: [redacted]

a: [redacted]



Registered Charity no.
212517

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Development Plans Team
Environment Department
City of London Corporation
Guildhall
London
E2P 2EJ

31 May 2024

Dear Sirs,

City Plan 2040 consultation response

We have carefully considered the draft plan, and hereby object to it in the strongest terms. It is in our opinion unsound.

Historical Significance

Bevis Marks Synagogue is one of the City's most significant heritage assets. Older than St Paul's Cathedral, in continuous use for worship for over 300 years, very largely unaltered, still the heart of a thriving but vulnerable community, and regarded as the "cathedral" of Anglo Jewry, its Grade 1 Listing hardly does justice to its cultural significance.

Such was the nature of the world in the late 1600s, the Synagogue was deliberately designed as an externally modest building, set within a courtyard off the main thoroughfares. However, it was equally deliberately designed so that once within the courtyard, visitors' eyes would be drawn to the sky and to heaven. The profile of the building was to be seen against the sky, enabling worshippers to see the religiously significant path of the moon and the appearance and disappearance of stars, and to wonder at the firmament. The building was designed with large windows, allowing daylight to fill the interior, both to serve very practical purposes, but also to reinforce the essential spiritual connection between worship and nature.

Over the many years, the Synagogue's setting has been compromised by buildings built nearby. However, the most important southern/western sky view remains magnificently open, and just enough natural light (albeit now largely reflected) still reaches the windows.

Severe threat

The sky view and the natural light have, however, come under severe threat in recent years, as tall office buildings have been proposed. 1 Creechurch - widely regarded as a serious planning mistake - was built, and caused harm to the Synagogue. However, good sense has prevailed in other instances, with the proposed very tall tower at 31 Bury Street being refused planning permission in 2022, and the would-be developers of 33 Creechurch withdrawing their proposals for another very tall tower shortly afterwards.

However, these threats have not gone away. There is a current planning application speculatively to redevelop 31 Bury Street, which would be just as damaging as its predecessor, and we understand the owners of 33 Creechurch are working on a further proposal.

It is therefore more important than ever that the planning system delivers the protection it is supposed to provide.

The unsoundness of the draft City Plan 2040

Unfortunately, the draft City Plan 2040 does not deliver that protection. Indeed, it would in its present form facilitate development that would cause substantial harm. In doing so, it would conflict with the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, the NPPF and the London Plan.

Furthermore, while it pains us to do so, we will go further. It seems to us that the City Corporation has been duplicitous in the way it has drawn up the draft Plan. It has paid lip service to meeting its responsibilities to the Synagogue, while systematically putting in place measures that would allow substantially harmful development to take place.

On the one hand it has designated a Conservation Area. On the other, it proposes to remove the presumption against tall buildings in Conservation Areas; it includes the Synagogue within the Tall Buildings Area; and at least initially, it proposed (perversely) to exclude the 31 Bury Street site from the Conservation Area.

On the one hand, it includes in the draft Plan a policy to protect the setting of the Synagogue. On the other, the background paper is dismissive of the importance of the sky view, and the proposed policy defines the Synagogue's setting so narrowly that the policy is almost meaningless.

Put charitably, the Corporation seems to be trying to have its cake and eat it: both to meet its responsibilities towards the Synagogue as a heritage asset of the highest significance, and to allow the relentless pursuit of tall office buildings deemed (though without entirely convincing evidence) desirable for economic reasons. The draft Plan fails in this endeavour. In trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, it makes itself fundamentally unsound.

Our objections

Our objections are articulated on the official response form attached at Appendix 1. However, they can be summarised as follows:

1. The Synagogue is included within the Tall Buildings Area, without proper protection.

2. Policy towards Conservation Areas is weak, and, in particular, the current presumption against tall buildings in Conservation Areas is dropped.

3. The Corporation proposes to protect the "immediate setting" of the Synagogue, but this is wholly inadequate given the "immediate setting" is drawn so tightly, does not cover the 31 Bury St site, and effectively pays no regard to the important sky view above the Synagogue.

4. The Synagogue is denied even the level of protection afforded to The Monument, where views out and in are given protection.

The way forward

The Synagogue has always enjoyed a good relationship with the Corporation, and we hope this will continue to apply. We will welcome further dialogue in the hope of overcoming our objections, albeit to be productive such dialogue will have to be founded upon a significant shift in the Corporation's approach towards the Synagogue.

If our objections cannot be resolved, we request the opportunity to appear at the draft Plan's examination, to explain our concerns more fully and to answer questions.


Yours faithfully,

Tilla Crowne

Bevis Marks Synagogue Trustee, The S&P Sephardi Community

Appendix 1 – City Plan 2040 Representation Form

Model Representation Form for Local Plans

 <p>CITY OF LONDON</p>	<h3>Local Plan</h3> <p>Publication Stage Representation Form</p>	<p>Ref: Reg 19</p> <p>(For official use only)</p>
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Name of the Local Plan to which this representation relates:

City Plan 2040

Please return to City of London Corporation BY 11:00PM 31 May 2024

emailing to: planningpolicyconsultations@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Please note that all representations will be made public on our website in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012. This will include the name of the person and, where relevant, the organisation making the representation. All other personal information will remain confidential and managed in line with the City Corporation's privacy notice.

For more information on how we collect and process personal information, and your rights in relation to that information, please refer to the Environment Department's privacy notice available at [Environment Department Privacy Notice \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](http://cityoflondon.gov.uk) and the City Corporation's privacy notice available at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/privacy). Please also see our Statement of Representations Procedure available at: City Plan 2040 - City of London.

This form has two parts –

Part A – Personal Details: need only be completed once.

Part B – Your representation(s). Please fill in a separate sheet for each representation you wish to make.

Part A

1. Personal
Details*

**If an agent is appointed, please complete only the Title, Name and Organisation (if applicable) boxes below but complete the full contact details of the agent in 2.*

Title

First Name

Last Name

Job Title

2. Agent's Details (if
applicable)

(where relevant)		
Organisation	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
(where relevant)		
Address Line 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Line 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Line 3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Line 4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Post Code	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E-mail Address (where relevant)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Part B – Please use a separate sheet for each representation

Name or Organisation:

3. To which part of the Local Plan does this representation relate?

Paragraph Policy Policies Map

4. Do you consider the Local Plan is:

4.(1) Legally compliant	Yes	<input type="text"/>	No	<input type="text"/>
4.(2) Sound	Yes	<input type="text"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4 (3) Complies with the Duty to co-operate	Yes	<input type="text"/>	No	<input type="text"/>

Please tick as appropriate

5. Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible.

If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to co-operate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

In general, the draft City Plan fails to give sufficient weight to heritage considerations. Despite some seemingly reassuring words, the effect of the various policies is to make it easier to justify large scale new development than to argue that such development is inappropriate for heritage and townscape reasons. This is a general objection which is applicable throughout the document, but the following are specific points of objection.

Policy HE1(6) should be strengthened. It is not enough that opportunities to enhance conservation areas should be “considered”. They should be positively sought and pursued.

Policy HE1(8) refers to the “defined immediate setting” of the Synagogue. “Defined immediate setting” is not a recognised concept, and introducing it has the effect of detracting from the generality of Policy HE1(1).

There is a conflict between HE1(1) to preserve and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, and HE1(8) which imposes substantively the same duty ‘preserve, and where possible, enhance the elements of setting that contribute to the significance of these heritage assets’ but only in respect of the ‘immediate setting’. On the basis that the specific overrides the general, then the protection of the Synagogue is weakened to concern only development within the tightly defined immediate setting. This would be contrary to national policy (the NPPF), and neither effective nor justified (since the policy disregards national policy and the statutory duties).

If HE1(1) prevails to protect the whole of the Synagogue’s setting, then HE1(8) is otiose. It would not be effective and indeed, causes confusion. HE1(8) should be amended to specify that the whole setting of the Synagogue should be protected.

The Synagogue and The Monument are given equal status as very important and sensitive heritage assets in policy HE1. However, subsequently, and specifically in policy S13 and para 11.5.11, The Monument is given significantly more protection than the Synagogue. In particular, Figure 16 shows protection given to views “of and from”¹ The Monument but the same does not apply to the Synagogue. The same principle should apply to the Synagogue as to The Monument, albeit special regard should also be paid to the culturally and religiously important setting of the Synagogue and the sky view.

Policy S12(5): it is insufficient for tall buildings to “take into consideration local heritage assets”. They should pay full regard to the need to preserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets of all types.

It is inappropriate that the Tall Buildings Area and the related height contours in Figures 14 and 15 should imply that the development of tall buildings very close to the Synagogue is permissible. Either these Figures should be amended to exclude the setting of the Synagogue, or else a strong protection should be introduced elsewhere (including Figure 16) to override the generality of what is shown in these figures and to make it clear that the protection of the setting of The Synagogue is to take precedence.

¹ The wording is contained in Policy S13

The presumption against tall buildings in Conservation Areas contained in Policy CS14 of the current City Plan should be retained and imported into one of the policies of the new Plan (probably Policy S12). The current policy says that the Corporation will refuse "planning permission for tall buildings within inappropriate areas, comprising: conservation areas...".

6. Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matters you have identified at 5 above. (Please note that non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why each modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

The following modifications are sought. Consequential modifications to supporting text, Figures and the Proposals Map may also be required.

Policy HE1

6. Development in conservation areas should preserve, and where possible, enhance and better reveal the character, appearance and significance of the conservation area and its setting. The buildings and features that contribute to the character, appearance, setting or significance of a conservation area should be conserved and opportunities to enhance conservation areas should be **considered positively sought and pursued**;

8. Development in the **defined immediate** setting of Bevis Marks Synagogue and The Monument should preserve, and where possible, enhance the elements of setting that contribute to the significance of these heritage assets, **with special regard paid to the culturally and religiously important setting of the Synagogue including the sky view**; and,

Policy S12

5. The suitability of sites for tall buildings within the identified areas and their design, height, scale and massing should **take into consideration local pay full regard to the need to preserve or enhance the significance of** heritage assets and other localised factors relating to townscape character and microclimate.

Add sentence:

Planning permission for tall buildings will be refused within inappropriate areas, which includes conservation areas.

Policy S13

2. Protecting and enhancing significant local views of St. Paul's Cathedral, through the City Corporation's St. Paul's Heights code and local views from the Fleet Street, Ludgate Circus and Ludgate Hill processional route; the setting and backdrop to the Cathedral; significant local views of and from the Monument **and Bevis Marks Synagogue** and views of historic City landmarks and skyline features;

A statement to be added to at least one of the policies to clarify that the Tall Buildings Area does not override heritage and townscape considerations.

The objector reserves the right to add to or amend these proposed changes in due course.

Please note In your representation you should provide succinctly all the evidence and supporting information necessary to support your representation and your suggested modification(s). You should not assume that you will have a further opportunity to make submissions.

After this stage, further submissions may only be made if invited by the Inspector, based on the matters and issues he or she identifies for examination.

7. If your representation is seeking a modification to the plan, do you consider it necessary to participate in examination hearing session(s)?

No, I do not wish to participate in hearing session(s)

 Yes

Yes, I wish to participate in hearing session(s)

Please note that while this will provide an initial indication of your wish to participate in hearing session(s), you may be asked at a later point to confirm your request to participate.

8. If you wish to participate in the hearing session(s), please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

The modifications sought arise from the fact that, over a period of time, the Synagogue appears to have been the subject of a process whereby an appearance has been given of it being given protection against having its setting severely damaged by tall buildings, but in reality that protection is illusory, and the protection given in the current City Plan (where there is a presumption against tall buildings in Conservation Areas generally) is proposed to be withdrawn. This represents an abuse of process by the City Corporation, which not only renders the draft Plan unsound but would have seriously damaging consequences if not rectified.

The matter is complex and it is important the examining inspector(s) has the opportunity to have the position explained fully to them by the objector and other interested parties.

Please note the Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate in hearing session(s). You may be asked to confirm your wish to participate when the Inspector has identified the matters and issues for examination.



**Response to the City of London Corporation report:
"Policy Paper: Bevis Marks Synagogue – Immediate Setting"**

Historical and Cultural Assessment

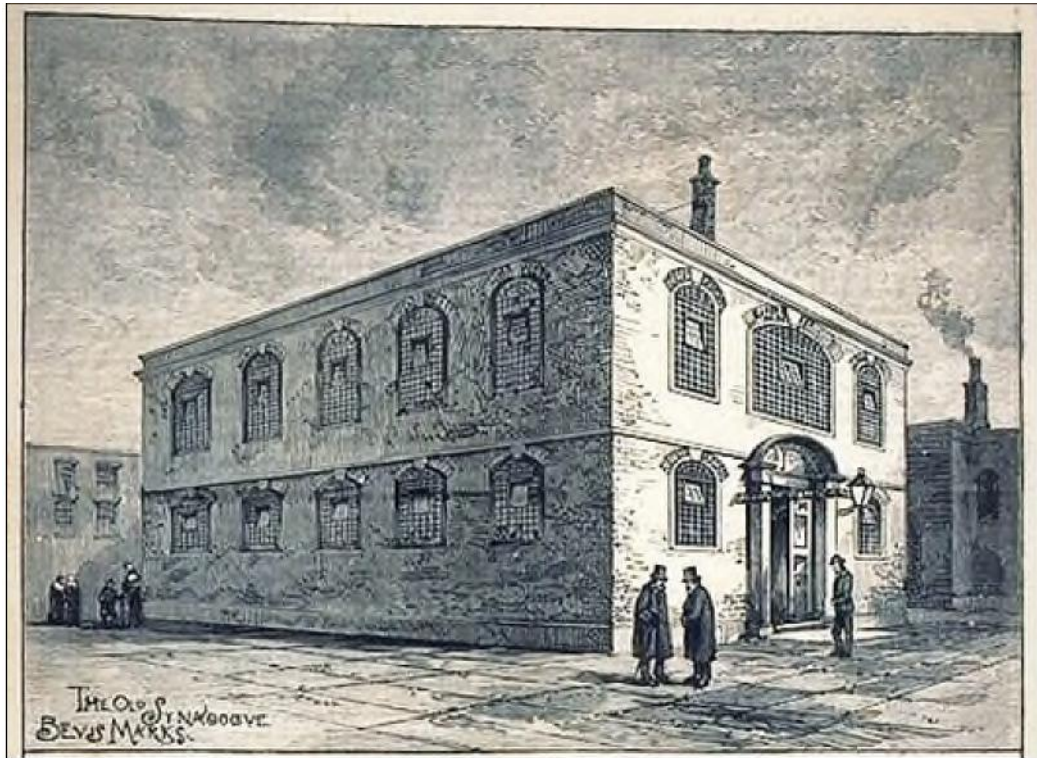
1. I am Professor of Modern European History at the University of Oxford, with a particular interest in British Jewish history and heritage, and extensive experience working with national and international heritage organisations like Historic England, the National Trust, and the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage. It is in this capacity that I have been asked to produce a response to the "Policy Paper: Bevis Marks Synagogue – Immediate Setting" produced in December 2023 (hereafter **PPBM**).
2. Recognising the importance of Bevis Marks Synagogue, and the unique qualities of its "Immediate Setting", the **PPBM** proposes that this "*Immediate Setting should be subject to specific guidance in order to preserve the significance of the Synagogue*" (Executive Summary, p.3) and "*That Bevis Marks Synagogue and its Immediate Setting be referenced in policy, in the same way as the Monument and its setting*" (Policy Proposal 5.1, p.24). This recommendation is broadly welcome.
3. The **PPBM** also differentiates between the so-called "Immediate Setting" of Bevis Marks Synagogue and "*the 'wider setting' beyond: the modern development and tall buildings visible in views of the listed building which make no contribution to its significance.*" (Executive Summary, p.3) As this paper will demonstrate, that recommendation is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the heritage value of Bevis Marks Synagogue, which is not purely architectural. More generally, this distinction between "immediate" and "wider" setting is artificial, cannot be effectively applied in the context of Bevis Marks, and diverges in important respects from established practice in planning and the conservation of significant heritage assets.
4. Crucially, the **PPBM** takes no account of the sky view from within Bevis Marks courtyard. In this context, it is worth noting that the illustrative material provided to support the policy proposals gives a misleading impression of the so-called "immediate setting" because the **PPBM** only includes photographs of buildings, and no sky is visible in any of these photographs at all. This failure to consider light, the sky and protected views is particularly surprising given the vocally expressed concerns of the London Sephardi Trust and the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, as outlined on pp.5-6.
5. The approach outlined in the **PPBM** conflicts with heritage best practice, as outlined by Historic England Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2015), which recommends that "*Significant places should be managed to sustain their values*" (Principle 3) and defines heritage value as follows: (1) *Evidential value*: the potential of a place to yield evidence about human activity. (2) *Historical value*: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present (3) *Aesthetic value*: the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place (4) *Communal value*: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

6. All four of these values are relevant to Bevis Marks, but when it comes to a living place of worship *Communal Value* necessarily carries particular weight. All over Europe there are beautiful synagogues which are empty shells, because the Jews were either killed or left. They have historic value, **not** communal value. The unique significance of Bevis Marks lies in the fact that it is the oldest continually functioning synagogue in Europe, remains a living community, and preserves a unique liturgy.
7. Unfortunately, the **PPBM** completely ignores the communal value of the synagogue, identifying the significance of Bevis Marks Synagogue simply as “Architectural/artistic”, “Historic” and “Archaeological” (3.1 pp.4-8). This approach represents a fundamental failure to understand the significance of Bevis Marks for British Jews, for the Sephardic diaspora and as a place of worship for London’s Sephardic community.
8. To recap: Bevis Marks Synagogue is the oldest continually functioning synagogue in Europe. It lies at the heart of the Sephardic diaspora, and has a history that is at once proudly British and properly global. The synagogue may not be formally designated as a World Heritage Site, but it is a heritage site of world historical importance. For this reason, the campaign to “save Bevis Marks” generated newspaper coverage in New York and Israel, and objections from Jewish groups in continental Europe and the United States.
9. Bevis Marks is also a site of unique historic importance for the British Jewish community. In the heart of the City, close to the Bank of England and the Mansion House, it speaks to their history since the readmission under Cromwell, and to their unique status as the only significant Jewish community in Europe with a continuous history of this kind. To quote the submission made to the City in 2019 (in connection with the proposal to construct a 49-storey tower on the site of 31 Bury Street, ref. 20/00848/FULEIA) by the London Jewish Museum, *“Bevis Marks Synagogue is ... much more than a Grade 1 listed building. It is the ‘Cathedral’ Synagogue to Anglo Jewry and should be protected in its cultural, historical and religious significance in the same vein that St. Paul’s Cathedral or Westminster abbey could expect from its local and national government ... That synagogue deserves the protection that ought to be afforded to it in ensuring that the building and its community are able to exist as intended...”*.
10. The symbolic importance of Bevis Marks and the emotional attachment of British Jews to this synagogue must now be apparent to all concerned. The Public Sector Equality Duty to *“foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not”* (Equality Act 2010) is a cornerstone of our diverse and multicultural society. The City therefore has a duty to show particular sensitivity for the religious and cultural concerns of this community when formulating policies to protect Bevis Marks.
11. Religious experience is fundamental to the use and historical significance of this building. Sustaining the spiritual dimensions of the building and the community that animates it is therefore central to preserving the heritage value of this asset, which cannot be distinguished from its religious and communal functions. This issue is completely overlooked in the **PPBM**, which focuses only on the *“siting, townscape, scale and (for the most part) materiality that formed the setting of the building originally, even if the buildings on many of the plots are now modern.”* (3.2 p.11)

12. The **PPBM** defines the so-called “immediate Setting” so narrowly that it offers no meaningful protection to the synagogue. Introducing this concept into the **PPBM** allows the City to pay lipservice to its obligation to protect a significant heritage asset, while in practice creating a framework that will facilitate development that would cause substantial harm.
13. The so-called “Immediate Setting” as currently designated by the **PPBM** is intended to support its historical and architectural significance, by preserving its *“original courtyard location and design; reinforcing the discretion of its siting and seclusion from the street (architectural), reflecting in turn the wider historical narrative of Anglo-Jewry (historical); and maintaining a sense of traditional scale and proportions that illustrate how the Synagogue would have related to its historic townscape (architectural)”* (3.2.p.11) Particular importance is attached to scale, historic plot size, group value, materials and detailing, but no importance is attached to the value of the courtyard to the community as a social and religious space (for example, during Sukkot).
14. Critical here is the failure of the **PPBM** to appreciate that the sky views from within the courtyard form an integral part of its historic setting, immediate or otherwise. Remarkably, despite changes to the surrounding buildings over the past centuries the view of sky around the synagogue has survived relatively unscathed. Preserving this sky view is important for preserving and understanding the historical and architectural significance of the building, and for sustaining its religious and communal value.
15. Surprisingly, the **PPBM** also fails to protect the synagogue’s historic setting in its entirety. Yet Bevis Marks was not just a synagogue but a communal hub - surrounded by community assets that included several schools for children and advanced Jewish study, an orphanage, ritual bath, kosher shop, homes and community offices, as seen in the 1876 map below. These buildings were kept at a one- or two-story height, until redeveloped at the end of the 19th century, and the whole block should be understood as comprising a historic unity. Even today, the synagogue’s freehold includes the site of Valiant House, and it is necessary to cross land owned by the synagogue to access the service entrance to Bury House. It is difficult to understand why the **PPBM** has chosen to exclude the rest of the Bevis Marks city block – and, specifically, the sites of Holland House and Bury House - from the so-called “immediate setting”.



15. The **PPBM** notes that according to *Buildings of England*, “the building’s discreet, off-street location in an enclosed, private courtyard stemmed from a contemporaneous law forbidding the Jewish community from building on a high street” (p8). This discreet courtyard setting is not unusual for a Sephardic synagogue. Like Bevis Marks, the Lisbon synagogue is located in an urban landscape, concealed in a street block behind a fence and wall with the main façade facing an inner courtyard, because this synagogue too was built at a time when Portuguese



Bevis Marks Synagogue, 1891 - Showing clear sky-views all around

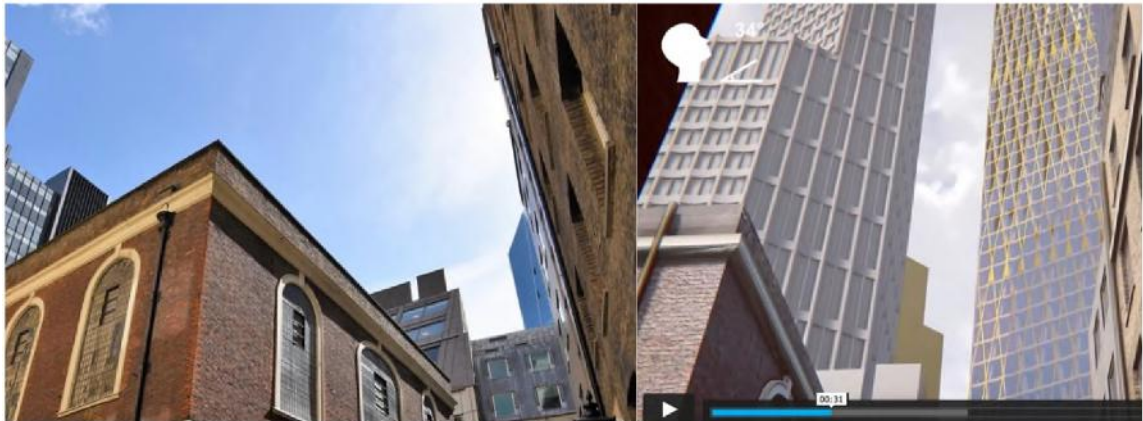
law forbade non-Catholic places of worship from facing the street. Here, however, the sky view has been preserved completely intact. Visiting helps us to understand how Bevis Marks once was - and that both the sky view and a sense of privacy and seclusion were integral to the architect’s original conception. As far as possible, it is this effect we need to retain.

16. This can best be achieved by abandoning the artificial distinction between the so-called “immediate” and “wider” settings of Bevis Marks in such a way as to protect both the sky view and the sense that the synagogue has been set apart from the surrounding area. The City recognised that these issues were interlinked in June 2022, when it rejected planning permission for development of 31 Bury Street on the grounds that the proposal “*would adversely affect the setting of the Grade 1 listed Bevis Marks Synagogue and its setting and amenities by reason of the overbearing and overshadowing impact of the development on the courtyard of the Synagogue.*”² The closer a building is to the synagogue, the more dominating such a building will feel to congregants.

17. In this context, it is worth noting that the construction of 100 Leadenhall, which already has planning permission, will have a significant impact on both the sky view and the sense of

² APPLICATION NUMBER: 20/00848/FULEIA. 22 June 2022.

peaceful seclusion in the synagogue courtyard. We can get a sense of this when we contrast the current situation (below left, current view), with the projected outlook had the building at 31 Bury Street received planning approval (below right, including both 31 Bury Street and 100 Leadenhall). The stark contrast between these images underlines how important the sky view is to the immediate setting of the synagogue, and how fragile that setting currently is.



18. The spiritual significance of the sky view at Bevis Marks has been inscribed into the material fabric of the building. In Hebrew, the synagogue is known as *Sha'ar Hashamayim* (Gate of Heaven). These words – *Sha'ar Hashamayim* - are carved in stone above the entrance gate, and painted above the synagogue's doors. They originate in the Biblical episode of Jacob's dream of a ladder with angles ascending and descending. Upon waking Jacob exclaimed: 'How awesome is this place, it is none other than the House of G-d and the Gate of Heaven'. For this reason 'Gate of Heaven' is considered a euphemism for a 'House of G-d': Aldgate and Bishopgate may have been the gates into the City of London, but the synagogue was the 'Gate of Heaven' for the Jews. The experience of 'heaven' is currently felt upon entering the quiet courtyard of Bevis Marks Synagogue, and seeing the sky all around it. This is how it should remain.



19. The sky view in the courtyard at Bevis Marks serves important ritual purposes. Many Jewish rituals are determined by views of the sky. The Jewish Sabbath concludes at the appearance of three stars. These first appear in the darkening eastern sky and would not be viewable if the sky around the synagogue was obstructed. Similarly, the beginning of each new Jewish (lunar) month is marked by the appearance of the new moon: this is the occasion for a special prayer (*kiddush lebana*), which can be recited only upon seeing the moon in the night sky. (Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 42a). Should buildings block out views of the eastern and southern sky, this ritual would be lost to the community.

20. Importantly, the sky view in the courtyard is critical to ensuring that enough daylight reaches the interior of the synagogue to enable the community to pray there even on dark winter days, and to retain the existing spiritual qualities of the building. As shown here, the synagogue was originally designed to admit plentiful light, facilitating the reading of printed texts by all present, which is intrinsic to Jewish worship.



Bevis Marks Synagogue, 1891 - Showing light entering the building from its southeast

21. Originally, the courtyard on three sides ensured that the synagogue windows were completely unobstructed, maximising the daylight admitted. Since then, the construction of higher buildings in the surrounding area which encroach upon the synagogue's sky view has reduced the amount of direct sunlight and reflected light entering the synagogue through these windows, significantly darkening the interior. Nevertheless, when looking out from the synagogue gallery windows one can still see the sky on both sides. Any further encroachment on the synagogue sky view is likely to make that impossible, blocking direct light and reducing the amount of reflected light that reaches the interior to a dangerously low level that threatens the synagogue's ability to function.
22. In a Jewish house of prayer, light has great spiritual significance and must be protected. The Talmud (Tractate Berakhot 31a) rules: Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said: One should always pray in a house with windows, as it is stated regarding Daniel 6:11: *"And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went to his house. In his attic there were open windows facing Jerusalem and three times a day he knelt upon his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his G-d"*. Likewise, the pre-eminent Jewish legal authority Rabbi Yosef Karo (Bet Yosef, OH:90) asserted that windows enable one to see the sky, look heavenward during prayer and experience humility.

23. This requirement to pray in a house with windows reflects the fact that the observance of Jewish rituals is shaped by the positions of the sun and moon in the sky across the day, month and year. For example, Jewish prayer times are determined by the daily course of the sun: its journey from east to west over the southern horizon determines the times of our prayers, and is the inspiration for much of our liturgy. For this reason, the morning service (*Shahrit*) begins with the blessing, *'Blessed are you G-d who is sovereign over the universe, who fashions light and creates darkness...who brings light over all of the land and refreshes creation each day...Blessed are you G-d who creates the luminaries.'* Later in the morning, when light currently shines into our courtyard and penetrates into the synagogue, it casts its glow across the pews, creating warmth on the faces of congregants, and lifting their thoughts skyward. On Yom Kippur, the darkening light and the glow of candles in the evening is a sign that the Gates of Mercy are about to close. In this way, the changing presence of light in the synagogue is intimately connected to the spiritual experience of worshippers. Any change to the current sky view would have profound implications for the religious value of the synagogue as a spiritual space and house of Jewish prayer.
24. Circumcision is a foundational ritual in Judaism since only after he is circumcised is a Jewish boy considered to have joined the Jewish community: it is a medical procedure carried out on a baby's eighth day by a trained professional called a mohel. Ample light is essential to perform this ritual safely, but recent testimony from mohels who have conducted circumcisions in Bevis Marks confirms that any further reduction to light levels would render this impossible. Bevis Marks Synagogue contains two historic circumcision chairs from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, testifying to the long history of circumcision here. Ending the practice of circumcision at Bevis Marks would mark a significant rupture in three hundred years of tradition, harming the synagogue's significance as a place of worship and communal life. It is an excellent example of the kind of intangible heritage that needs to be preserved.
25. Finally, I note that in the past the City has understood the importance of protecting the light in the courtyard of Bevis Marks and the synagogue itself. Indeed, thanks to the intervention of the Planning Committee in 1978, what was then the new building at 33 Creechurch was required to slope the upper floor to maximise light into the synagogue interior. For a while, this decision actually improved the situation. In the light of the current situation, it is an important precedent.

CONCLUSIONS

The recommendations produced in the **PPBM** are welcome but not sufficient because they demonstrate only a limited understanding of the significance of Bevis Marks synagogue as a heritage asset. Specifically, these recommendations fail to appreciate the importance of the sky view from the courtyard of Bevis Marks as an element of the so-called “Immediate Setting”, and the relationship between Bevis Marks and the whole city block in which it is situated. This is because the **PPBM** refers only to historical, archaeological and architectural value but does not take into account religious or communal value – both past and present. More specifically, the **PPBM** shows limited understanding of Jewish history, ritual and religious practice in relation to this site.

Historic England guidelines state that “*significant places should be managed to sustain their values*” (Historic England Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance, 2015, Principle 4). In the case of Bevis Marks Synagogue, this must include sensitivity to the religious and communal value of the synagogue to British Jews. This is a particular concern given the City’s obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty to foster good relations between members of different communities.

On that basis it is clear that the concept of “immediate Setting” as applied to Bevis Marks in the **PPBM** should be abandoned, and its historic setting understood to include the entire city block, and the view of the sky from the courtyard: a protection similar to that accorded the Monument, and more consistent with planning precedent.

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