



City of Westminster Cabinet Member Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Built Environment
Date:	19 August 2016
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Naming of the new thoroughfare within the former site of Block C, Mercers Covent Garden Estate, London, WC2
Wards Affected:	St James's
Policy Context:	
Key Decision:	No
Financial Summary:	Not Applicable
Report of:	Director of Planning

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A notice of intention to name a new thoroughfare on the former site of Block C, Mercers Covent Garden Estate, Mercers Street, WC2 has been received from Deloitte Real Estate on behalf of the developer.
- 1.2 The developer has applied to the City Council to name the new thoroughfare as "Mercers Walk".
- 1.3 In addition to the application to name the new thoroughfare as Mercers Walk, an application was also received at the same time to number the proposed new buildings on the redevelopment site. Consultation was carried out with the Royal Mail separately on this application and they had no comments to make and subsequently reserved the proposed addresses and postcodes on their Not Yet Built register.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the naming of the new thoroughfare on the former site of Block C, Mercers Covent Garden Estate as **Mercers Walk** be approved.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1. The PDA Section of London Fire has objected to the use of the name Mercers Walk. Their ground for objection is that the prefix 'Mercers' is duplicated within the surrounding area and this could cause confusion and possible delay when responding to an emergency.
- 3.2 Officers contacted the PDA Section at London Fire to seek a possible reconsideration and withdrawal of their objection. However, they were not prepared to withdraw their objection to the proposed name 'Mercers Walk' but stated that they are only acting in an advisory capacity to the Council, and whilst their objection still stands, it is the Council who are the street naming authority and it is therefore the Council who is the final arbiter and decision maker.

In view of the objection received, the proposed naming of the new thoroughfare as Mercers Walk within the redevelopment site of the former Mercers Block C site is now put forward for the Cabinet Member's decision.

- 3.3 The City Council's Street Naming guidelines that were formally adopted by the former Environment and Planning Committee on 31 March 1998 (a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1 to this report) broadly require that street names are not duplicated, are easy to pronounce and have some local historical connection with the area.
- 3.4 The relevant legal considerations for the Cabinet Member to consider in reaching a decision are set out in Sections 6 and 8 of this report. If the Cabinet Member agrees to the naming of the new thoroughfare as Mercers Walk, the Director of Planning will assign the name by statutory order. If, however, the Cabinet Member does not approve the naming, then the developer will be informed that their application is refused.

4. Background, including any Policy Context

- 4.1 The site is located in the Covent Garden area of Westminster bounded broadly to the south by Long Acre, to the west by Mercer Street, to the east by Langley Street and to the north by Shelton Street. The former buildings on the site have been demolished and construction of the new buildings is currently underway. The new thoroughfare will create a link between Mercer Street to the west and Langley Street to the east.

Following the grant of planning permission to redevelop the site for a mixed use scheme of residential and commercial uses, the applicant/landowners, the Worshipful Company of Mercers, has expressed their desire to adopt the name Mercers Walk as the name for the new pedestrianised 'piazza'. The newly created thoroughfare would not provide vehicular access into the site.

The applicant has provided a very detailed document in support of the street naming application including the historical justification for the name Mercers. The name is chosen in keeping with the history of the area and for ensuring continuity of the Mercers connection with the area which dates back centuries.

As mentioned in Section 3 above, the PDA Section at London Fire has raised an objection stating that the naming of the thoroughfare should not duplicate a name that already exists in the area, namely Mercers Street. Within the applicant's detailed supporting documentation, they have noted the fact that other 'duplicated' names have been used commonly within the area, such as Neal's Yard and Neal Street, Langley Court and Langley Street, Bedford Court and Bedford Street and St Martin's Lane and St Martin's Court. They have also stated that utilising a repeated name can strengthen local links between the name and the area and also that the name will provide an important way-finding reference to the location of the thoroughfare.

It should also be noted that the Council's current Street Naming and Numbering guidelines and those of the LF&CDA include 'Walk' as an acceptable suffix. The guidelines state that 'All new pedestrian ways should end with one of the following suffixes:- Walk, Path or Way'. On this basis, the suffix 'Walk' is considered acceptable and is in accordance with both the above guidelines.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial considerations relating to this report.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Under **Section 6 of the London Building Acts (Amendment) Act, 1939**, the Council may by order assign "any name which they think fit to any street, way, place, row of houses or block of buildings whether or not in substitution for a name already given or assigned". The use of these words gives the Council a wide discretion. However, Section 6(3) requires the Council to consider any objections it receives, before making such an order.

Under **Section 5 of the London Building Acts (Amendment) Act, 1939**, one month's notice must be given to the Council of the intended name of any street, way, place, row of houses or block of buildings. The Council may object to any proposed name.

- 6.2 The City Council's guidelines on street and building naming and numbering, states that new street names should not duplicate any similar name already in use in the borough or neighbouring boroughs. A variation in the terminal word, i.e. 'street', 'road', 'avenue', etc will not be accepted as sufficient reason to duplicate a name.
- 6.3 The Department of Transport's Circular Roads 3/93 provides advice on street naming and renaming insofar as it is important to both the Royal Mail and the Emergency Services to avoid giving streets similar names within the same locality. The close juxtaposition of similar names such as Park Road, Park Avenue, and Park Gate Drive in the same area has proved to be a particular source of difficulty. A great number of calls to the Emergency Services are received each day and some callers can be vague in the details they provide. Where names are duplicated it can be extremely difficult to pinpoint an exact location to enable an ambulance or fire engine to attend in the time allowed.

As mentioned above, the PDA Section at London Fire has raised an objection to this particular naming on the ground of duplication in the surrounding area.

In exercising the Council's discretion, the Cabinet Member must take into account the advice set out in this report, along with the outcome of the consultations which have been carried out, and the Council's own guidelines on street naming and renaming.

7. Staffing Implications

- 7.1 There are no staffing implications involved.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Ward Councillors for St James's Ward were consulted on the proposed name. Councillor Louise Hyams responded saying 'it sounds fine, thank you for consulting me'.

Royal Mail had no objections to the proposed name. They have also reserved the addresses and postcodes for the proposed new buildings on their Not Yet Built register.

Emergency Services (PDA Section London Fire) have objected on the grounds of duplication in the surrounding area.

No response was received from the Covent Garden Community Association.

A public notice was posted on site on 17 March 2016 allowing the statutory period of 28 days for any written support or objections to the proposed naming to be made to the City Council. No responses have been received arising from the posting of the public notice.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:

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By email to rclifton2@westminster.gov.uk or 020 7641 2520

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Application form.

Response from PDA Section, London Fire dated 23.06.16.

Response from Royal Mail dated 01.04.16.

Consultation email to Ward Councillors (x3) dated 22.04.16 and response from Councillor Hyams dated 25.04.16.

Public Notice dated 17 March 2016.

Appendix 1

Guidelines on Street and Building Naming and Numbering in the City of Westminster.

Appendix 2

Location plan showing the extent of the new thoroughfare named Mercers Walk.

For completion by the **Cabinet Member for Built Environment**

Declaration of Interest

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: _____ Date: _____

NAME: **Councillor Robert Davis, MBE, DL,**

State nature of interest if any
.....

(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation in the report entitled Naming of the new thoroughfare within the former site of Block C, Mercers Covent Garden Estate, London, WC2.

Signed

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Built Environment

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:
.....
.....

If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Director of Law, Chief Operating Officer and, if there are resources implications, the Director of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy & Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.