

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: Dace Road (Swan Wharf)

Friday 12 September 2014, 15.30 – 16.30

Level 10, 1 Stratford Place, Montfichet Road, London E20 1EJ

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Peter Stewart
Mark Brearley

Attendees

Rachel Gleave	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions
Will Steadman	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions
Hannah Lambert	London Legacy Development Corporation
Deborah Denner	Fortismere Associates

Report also copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Kathryn Firth	London Legacy Development Corporation
Esther Everett	London Legacy Development Corporation
Allison De Marco	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions
Paul Buckenham	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Shay Bugler	London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on a pre-application review of the proposals for Dace Road (Swan Wharf). Panel members who attended the previous meeting were: Peter Studdert (chair); John Lyall; Lindsey Whitelaw; Mark Brearley and Dan Epstein.

Declaration of Interest

Peter Stewart is a Quality Review Panel member. He is principal of the Peter Stewart Consultancy, who made representations in 2012 on behalf of a client against the Tower Hamlets proposed designation of the White Post Lane Conservation Area. Neither of the sites being considered at the QRP meeting lies in the White Post Lane Conservation Area as it was proposed at that time. He is also a friend of Christophe Egret at Studio Egret West.

1. Project name and site address

Swan Wharf, Dace Road, London, E3
Planning application reference: 14/00262/FUL

2. Presenting team

Andrew Jay	Constable Homes
Christophe Egret	Studio Egret West
Will Edmonds	Montagu Evans

3. Planning Authority's views

LLDC planning officers have serious concerns about the planning application for Dace Road (Swan Wharf). The scheme is located in the Fish Island Conservation Area, and includes construction of a new 6 storey building behind the retained façades of a 3 storey locally listed Victorian stable block. Planning officers feel that the height of this development will have a negative effect on the character of the conservation area and the locally listed building. In their view, the height of development proposed is excessive in relation to the width of both Dace Road and the existing yard. They also have concerns about the impact of the development on neighbouring housing, the lack of affordable housing and the scheme's architectural expression. There have been a substantial number of objections to the application, including a 700 signature petition.

4. English Heritage's views

EH do not support the planning application for Dace Road. In their view "the substantial demolition of a building that makes a very significant contribution to the character of a conservation will cause harm the historic environment in general and to the significance of designated heritage assets, in this case the conservation area. The proposals would also cause substantial harm to the building as a non-designated heritage asset." They also state that "in our view, the large roof extension is an incongruous addition to the distinctive gable roof form of the existing building, and appears oversized and visually very dominant."

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel (QRP) acknowledges the concerns of planning officers about this scheme, but feels that it has much to recommend it in terms of the quality of architecture proposed. The scheme includes a welcome mix of residential and workspace accommodation, with a café on the ground floor facing the canal. The panel expressed differing views on the scale and massing proposed. Some panel members felt this was justified by the quality of architecture proposed. However, it was the chair's view that the height of the new six storey building being proposed behind the retained façades of the stable block should be reduced by 1 storey because of its overbearing impact on the

locally listed building and on the neighbouring Ironworks building and internal courtyard.

The panel recognises that there are planning issues outside its remit that remain to be resolved, such as the lack of affordable housing. However, the panel feels that the scheme has the potential to set a much-needed precedent for high quality development in Fish Island. More detailed comments are provided below. Comments made at the previous QRP meeting, which remain relevant, are repeated for clarity.

Scale and massing

- The panel expressed differing views on construction of a six storey new building behind the retained façades of the existing stable building on Dace Road.
- Some panel members felt that the quality of architecture proposed justified this scale of development.
- However the chair of the QRP recommended that the height of the new building should be reduced by 1 storey. This would achieve a more sympathetic relationship with the Ironworks and the internal courtyard, as well as with the conservation area, and the locally listed stables.
- The panel welcomes the reduction, from 6 to 4 storeys, in the design of the block in the courtyard adjacent to Crown Wharf, a locally listed gabled building.
- This will allow more light into the courtyard, and allow the stable block to remain the dominant element on Dace Road.
- The extended stable block completes a coherent urban block, together with the Ironworks building.

Mix of use

- The scheme includes a significant proportion of workspace, in the existing buildings and the new 4 storey courtyard building, as well as 46 residential units.
- The majority of the workspace will be provided in the existing stable building, which benefits from generous floor to ceiling heights.
- The panel welcomes this mix of uses, offering workspace that is likely to support the cultural industries characteristic of the area, as well as providing new homes.

Residential accommodation

- In general the scheme proposes high quality residential accommodation, with thoughtfully designed internal layouts to maximise their sense of space.
- Whilst the majority of the flats proposed are single aspect, the quality of their design compensates for this. However, care will be needed to ensure adequate ventilation, particularly for south facing units.
- Where the proximity of the stable building to the existing Ironworks residential development creates homes in proximity that is far from ideal, this is mitigated by the design of balconies and windows.

Architectural expression

- The panel welcomes the refinements that have been made to simplify and strengthen the architectural expression. The application scheme has the potential to set a precedent for high quality development in Fish Island.
- The visualisations promise architecture that is both robust and rich in detail, particularly when seen from the canal.
- As a detailed comment, the panel thinks that alterations to the 1950s building should be kept to a minimum to retain its character.
- The relationship between the brick gable of the stable block, and the charred timber clad top storeys of the new building, would also benefit from further exploration.
- Retention of the frame structure overhanging the canal, as remnant of the building's historic use, is welcome.
- Maintaining the quality promised by the planning application drawings will be key to the success of the scheme, and conditions relating to the quality of materials and construction should be used to ensure this.

Next steps

- In terms of the QRP's remit to comment on the quality of development proposed, the panel would support the application - subject to a reduction of 1 storey in height of the new six storey building behind the retained façades of the stable block.