



FRAME PROJECTS

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: Kesslers Site, Rick Roberts Way

Thursday 7 December 2023

Auditorium 1, Level 10, 5 Endeavour Square, Stratford, London E20 1JN.

Panel

Teresa Borsuk (chair)

Shashank Jain

Barbara Kaucky

Attendees

Nikita Gleeson

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Frances Madders

London Legacy Development Corporation

Cindy Reriti

Frame Projects

Bonnie Russell

Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Catherine Smyth

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Pippa Henshall

London Legacy Development Corporation

James Bolt

London Borough of Newham

Ben Hull

London Borough of Newham

Deborah Denner

Frame Projects

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from one pre-application review.

Panel members who attended the previous meeting were: Hari Phillips (chair); Teresa Borsuk; Shashank Jain; Barbara Kaucky; and Ann Sawyer.

1. Project name and site address

G-Park Stratford London, Former Kesslers Site, International Business Park, Rick Roberts Way, Stratford, E15 2NF

2. Presenting team

Phil Stanway	Chetwoods Architects
Yianni Kattirtzis	Chetwoods Architects
Craig Scott	Stephenson Halliday
Gwyn Stubbings	GLP
Lauren Whitely	GLP
Sue Willcox	Quod

3. Planning authority briefing

The site is a 2.4 hectare brownfield employment site, to the south of Stratford High Street, on the north side of Rick Roberts Way. It is bounded by the Channelsea Path and Transport for London's train depot to the east, and by parcels of residential development to the north and south.

The Stratford Gas Holder Station adjoins the car showroom to the south of the site. The western edge of the site abuts Rick Roberts Way, a coach park, and a series of storage units, known as the 'Rick Roberts Way sites', which comprise three parcels of land across a 4.3 hectare linear site, owned by LLDC, London Borough of Newham, and National Grid. In total, these sites aim to deliver 750 homes, a secondary school with a sixth form, and 1.2 hectares of open space.

The site is designated within the Local Plan as a Locally Significant Industrial Site and is identified as the employment cluster B.1b8 Rick Roberts Way. Phase 1 of the proposed development is being brought forward on part of the land currently within the Kesslers International Business Park site, which currently comprises a single occupied warehouse unit, B1, B2, B8 Use Classes, with a maximum height of 11.6 metres, 162 car parking spaces, and five HGV spaces. The proposal is for the demolition of the existing building and the construction of three new buildings, to provide employment floorspace. A significant reduction in car parking is proposed, from 162 to 12 spaces, half of which will be accessible parking, and there will be separate pedestrian and vehicular entrances to the site.

Officers would welcome the panel's comments on the design, scale and massing of the buildings, including the proposed staff amenity hub. Comments are requested on the public realm and boundary treatments, including the Channelsea Path stitch, and the scheme's biodiversity aspirations. Comments are also sought on environmental sustainability, particularly in regard to staff wellbeing, including cooling and mitigation of overheating.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel thanks the design team for setting out its response to previous comments. However, while some positive progress has been made, the scheme still seeks to apply a suburban model to an urban context. Instead, the site should be approached with a fresh outlook, acknowledging its opportunities and constraints, to produce a considered design response. Greater ambition is needed to provide a new, exemplar model for last mile distribution centres in an urban context. The scheme should prioritise people over logistics, making a positive contribution to the emerging neighbourhood beyond the red line boundary. The activation of Rick Roberts Way will be essential to this, providing animation and natural surveillance of the street. Moving the offices of building three to the street frontage may help to achieve this, as well as providing an improved outlook that will enhance employee health and wellbeing.

The design team's research into precedent urban architecture is welcomed, but further work is needed to translate the scale and character of the references into the buildings on this site. While interior warehouse spaces may be needed, the architectural expression of each building should respond to the urban grain of the emerging context.

Sustainability

- Given the climate emergency, a greater ambition is needed to reduce the scheme's carbon footprint. In particular, the panel feels that further thought should be given to potential uses that could be accommodated in the existing, relatively new building. Robust evidence should be provided to support its demolition.
- If reuse of the existing building is not possible, circular economy principles should be applied, including an analysis of existing materials and how they could be reused, ideally onsite or within close proximity.
- The panel commends the design team's commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent.

Response to an urban context

- The plan and layout of buildings should respond to the surrounding urban context, so that positive relationships and a greater contribution can be made, beyond the red line boundary, to the emerging neighbourhood.
- The panel questions whether the usual scale of operation and/or use is needed in an urban context. Thought should be given to whether a collection of smaller units might be more appropriate, where the scale of building, operation and vehicles is more appropriate to an urban context.

- It questions locating the amenity hub on the opposite side of building three, away from where the offices are located. Given that the offices have their own amenity provision there is a risk that the amenity hub will be under-used.
- It suggests that the offices should be moved to the street side of building three, in close proximity to the amenity hub, where employees will be able to enjoy views out over the green space along Rick Roberts Way, rather than into an internal yard. The offices and amenity hub will provide a welcome active frontage along Rick Roberts Way, contributing to the animation and natural surveillance of the street.
- Alternatively, thought should also be given to integrating the amenity hub into the footprint of building three, on the Rick Roberts Way frontage, rather than it being an appendage protruding out into the green space.

Architecture

- The panel welcomes the design team's research on urban architecture which has had a positive influence on the architecture and façade treatments. However, further work is needed to imbue the designs with the special quality and character of the references presented. The architecture should sit comfortably within the context of the emerging neighbourhood.
- Greater prominence should be given to the entry to the site. Opportunities for overlooking this entrance from the building should be considered.

Public realm, landscape and connections

- The panel welcomes the proposed stitch between the Rick Roberts way and the Channelsea Path. It supports officers' use of a section 106 agreement, to safeguard the delivery of phase two of the link, when Travis Perkins' lease expires on the adjoining site.
- It supports the retention of the greenery to the rear of the existing homes along the southwest boundary of the site, and welcomes the positive contribution that this will make to biodiversity net gain.

Next steps

- The panel would welcome the opportunity to comment on the scheme again, once further thought has been given to an appropriate urban typology in consultation with officers.