



FRAME PROJECTS

## **London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel**

### **Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: IQL North masterplan**

Thursday 18 January 2024

The Lighthouse, 38 Celebration Ave, East Village, London E20 1DB

#### **Panel**

Hari Phillips (chair)

Angie Jim Osman

Mike Martin

John O'Mara

#### **Attendees**

Sara Dawes

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Frances Madders

London Legacy Development Corporation

Donald Roberts

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

James Bolt

London Borough of Newham

Ben Hull

London Borough of Newham

Deborah Denner

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#### **Note on process:**

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from four pre-application reviews. Panel members who attended the previous meetings were: Hari Phillips (chair); Angie Jim Osman (chair); Shashank Jain; Mike Martin; John O'Mara; Ann Sawyer.

## **1. Project name and site address**

Plots N20, N21, N22 and N23, International Quarter London North, Celebration Avenue, Stratford, London.

Planning application reference: 23/00441/FUL

## **2. Presenting team**

|                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Alexander Krol           | Mecanoo               |
| Arne Lijbers             | Mecanoo               |
| Anne-Marie van der Weide | Mecanoo               |
| Ryan Greenhalgh          | Hadley Property Group |
| Mark Lebihan             | Hadley Property Group |
| Stephen Rossouw          | Hadley Property Group |
| Jeremy Castle            | Deloitte              |
| Millie McDermott         | Deloitte              |

## **3. Planning authority briefing**

The Zonal Masterplan split International Quarter London (IQL) North into four plots, from N20 in the west, through to N23 in the east. Under the Stratford City Outline Planning Permission, IQL North was proposed as a commercial office district within the Stratford Metropolitan Town Centre, with heights of up to 60 metres AOD across most of the site, rising to 120 metres AOD facing Celebration Avenue. Plot N22 benefits from Reserved Matters Approval (ref: 17/00050/REM) for a commercial building, which has not been implemented.

Hadley Property Group have recently submitted a full planning application for a comprehensive mixed-use development for six towers, ranging from 20 to 32 storeys in height, up to 115.6 metres AOD and including basement. The scheme will provide 709 homes, 28,928 square metres (909 rooms) of purpose-built student accommodation, 845 square metres community floorspace, 8,421 square metres of flexible commercial, business and services space, servicing, landscaping, parking and other associated works. The planning application is accompanied by approval of details and non-material amendment applications to 'slot out' the site from the Stratford City Outline Planning Permission.

Planning officers would welcome the panel's comments on the evolution of the proposals, how its previous comments have been addressed, and the masterplan's ability to meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy BN.5. In particular, comments are sought on the quality and generosity of the public realm and landscape, the design and materiality quality of the architecture, as well as the quality of the commercial spaces, and residential and student accommodation.

#### **4. Quality Review Panel's views**

##### *Summary*

The panel commends the amount of work undertaken by the design team and feels that the scheme has the potential to meet the criteria for exceptional design, as set out in Local Plan Policy BN.5, if the comments in this report are addressed. It supports planning officers' use of conditions to ensure that the design team is retained through to delivery.

The panel finds much to admire in the public realm and feels that the landscape proposals have the potential to be very successful. It commends the clarity of the character areas and the positive solution found to embrace the challenging topography of the site by interweaving the play and amenity with the ramped routes.

Further refinements could be made to ensure that planting on the ground plane, terraces and roofs will provide year-round interest from the outset and over the long-term, as well as to ensure all initial planting will be retained through all phases of the development, especially where future change is planned, such as Montfichet Road. Consideration should be given to practicalities, including the type of paving and planters to be specified, the methods and frequency of irrigation and maintenance needed, and the visual impact of any health and safety equipment required. Further information and detailed drawings should be provided to demonstrate pedestrian priority and safety around service access on International Way.

The design development of the architecture is progressing well, but additional information and drawings are needed, with a further level of detail, to give planning officers confidence that a high-quality development will be delivered. The robust masonry language of the buildings should inform decisions on the materials to be specified and how they will be detailed, including the location of joints. Further consideration should also be given to how materials will transition from one surface aspect to another, including around and into corners, and how they meet other elements of the building, such as windows and columns. It is essential that samples of all the materials, particularly the bricks, are provided to show that the tone of the family of towers will meet the design team's aspirations.

Further work is also needed to ensure that the residents of all six towers will have a high quality of life with buildings and homes that are well laid out, provide generous and varied amenity spaces, as well as adequate facilities such as cycle storage. Detail drawings should be provided.

## Public realm and landscape

### *Specification of trees and plants*

- Further details are requested on the maturity of the trees to be planted, including size of canopy and root ball, as well as the planting proximity to buildings and irrigation. A tree strategy should be provided, for the growth, maintenance, and replacement of trees, detailing their contribution to the Urban Greening Factor.
- Trees that will thrive in the long-term and in future climate conditions should be specified. While the inclusion of native species is supported, further consideration should be given to ash, which is currently under threat, and birch, which is short-lived.
- Planting should be layered, to ensure that year round interest is provided. For example, the planting of meadow flowers is supported, but they would benefit from being planted alongside robust plants that will help to mitigate wind effects and provide interest through the winter months.
- Engagement with London Borough of Newham tree officers is essential, to ensure that they are able to maintain the trees and plants proposed.
- Further detailed information and drawings are requested on the proposed planters, including their materiality, soil depth, irrigation and drainage, and their contribution to biodiversity net gain.
- The specification of ground-grown climbing plants is supported.

### *Paving*

- The hard paving has the potential to be successful, but further thought should be given to practical details, including cutting, laying, falls and drainage, particularly given the large-format paving proposed and the site's challenging topography.
- The panel suggest that poured, and potentially porous, paving that could also be coloured and/or scored should be considered.
- A softer ground cover that contributes to a sustainable urban drainage system could be introduced in places, such as play areas, to reduce the amount of hard paving throughout the development.

### *Phasing and ongoing maintenance*

- Consideration should be given to the intermediate and future use of Montfichet Road, to ensure that any trees and planting delivered in the early phases can be retained long-term. A phasing plan for planting should be provided.

- Detailed analysis is needed, to ensure that mobile elevating work platforms (MEWP) can navigate the site's challenging topography and that there is adequate space for them to manoeuvre between any planting and the buildings, to perform ongoing cleaning and maintenance without the inconvenience of having to use large cranes.

#### *Green roofs*

- The provision of a green roof on each of the tower blocks is supported. Detailed drawings should be provided, to give officers confidence that the proposed soil depth meets the requirement necessary for the roofs to contribute to the Urban Greening Factor.
- Any additional planting that can be added between the building maintenance unit tracks, to improve biodiversity and views down onto the rooftops, would be welcomed.

#### *Terraced amenity spaces*

- The panel asks the design team to check that the original aspiration in its concept drawings, for stepped massing to provide a soft landing between the tall buildings and the ground plane, will actually be achieved.
- Consideration should also be given to any health and safety requirements and the visual impact that, for example, man safe systems will have.
- Technical sections of the terraces, including the heights and relationship of planters, balustrades, and safety equipment should be provided.

#### *Character areas*

- The planting of a significant tree on the southwest corner of Celebration Square, at the intersection of International Way and Celebration Avenue, is commended.
- The provision of seating in a sunny location, that is also sheltered from the wind and the busy traffic on International Way, is also welcomed.
- The Cut has the potential to be very successful, and the panel welcomes the specification of planting proposed and the way that it has been consolidated to define outdoor spaces that work well with the adjacent interior uses.
- There is also potential for the outdoor areas to be further enhanced by individual tenants, through the addition of planters and pots adjacent to the buildings.

- The provision of one large character area, at the east end of the development, has the potential to be very successful with the slopes of Discovery Walk and the Community Gardens terminating in Valley Square, with its water feature.
- The panel commends the overarching character of play spaces, intertwined with the landscape as 'joyful moments of discovery', interspersed with places to rest and gather, as well as easy access to the ground floor uses in adjacent buildings. The playable route makes good use of the site's topography.
- The ramped route through Discovery Walk promotes inclusive use by all and the line of the ramp, necessitated by the gradient, helps to define the variety of spaces along its route and to bring them together.
- The panel feels that the food growing area is in a good location. It suggests that circular economy principles be applied to the specification of landscape materials, particularly in the community gardens area.
- Consideration should be given to the practicalities of the tool storage in the community gardens.
- The panel supports the improved, intimate scale and character of Valley Square, with planting that offers shelter from the busy traffic on International Way.
- It welcomes the programming of local, versus large, events in the square.
- The panel supports the design team's collaboration with Duncan & Grove to provide playground equipment. It suggests that this could be extended to blend adult exercise areas into the landscape, alongside play space.
- The proposed range of seating with backrests, armrests, and space to accommodate wheelchairs is welcomed.

*Service access.*

- Detailed information and drawings should be provided to show that pedestrians on International Way will be given priority over vehicles using the service access to the basement, as well as how the access route relates to the adjacent spaces.

## Architectural expression and residential quality

### *Architectural expression, tone and materiality*

- The south elevation of the first and second floors of the podium of Block E, facing onto Valley Square, would benefit from a greater void to solid ratio, similar to that of Block B.
- The human scale that the textured brick gives to the lower levels of the towers is welcomed, but further thought should be given to how the residential entrances of Blocks B, C and D, which are a single storey in height below a deep brick spandrel, can be made to feel more welcoming through, for example, the use of lighting.
- Materiality should extend beyond any change in direction so that joints are hidden and do not erode the robust masonry language of the buildings.
- Detail drawings should be provided to show the transition of masonry from one surface aspect to another, including from a vertical to horizontal face, as well as into reveals and how the masonry meets the windows.
- Detail drawings of how the textured brick will meet on the internal corners of buildings should be provided.
- Masonry should be used where possible, as it not only supports the language of the buildings, but it is easier to maintain and has a longer life than metal. The use of metal for panels at ground level, on the inside wall of loggias, and in the crown of the buildings should be clarified. Opportunities should be explored for replacing this with either brick or exposed tinted precast / concrete.
- Further thought should be given to developing a language for the brick patterns and brick design that responds to the construction method, whether that be hand-laid bricks or precast.
- Samples of bricks and metal should be provided, to demonstrate that the materials and tones will work well together in this family of six tower blocks. Bricks should be sourced in the United Kingdom, where possible.
- The panel feels that the use of thin soffits, constructed of timber or metal, do not complement the robust masonry language. At the very least the masonry should be detailed with a deeper reveal to maintain its visual depth.
- Detailed information and drawings are requested to show soffits joints, drainage, how the soffits meet columns, and how they will be cleaned.
- Details of balcony drainage should be provided.

### *Quality of residential accommodation*

- In all of the blocks, further consideration should be given to reducing the number of homes where bedrooms are directly accessed from a living room.
- The residential entrance to the affordable homes, in Block D, should be afforded greater generosity in keeping with the other blocks.
- For all of the residential entrances, further consideration should be given to the journey from entrance lobby to the core.
- Further thought should be given to the plan and layout of the upper ground floor of Block D, to ensure that offices and staff rooms have adequate daylight.
- Clarity should be provided on whether internal play spaces will be available for use at any time, or whether they will need to be booked.

### *Quality of student accommodation*

- High-quality amenity space is essential to the health and wellbeing of the students who will be living in Blocks E and F.
- The generosity of the amenity space in Block F could be greatly improved if an internal stair was provided, to connect the ground floor lobby and the first floor shared amenity spaces.
- The kitchen / living / dining rooms should have greater generosity, beyond providing seating and space for only the number of students in that core. For example, the first floor kitchen / living / dining room, in the north corner of Block F, could be greatly improved if it was extended to include the space of the adjoining bedroom, to the southeast. If necessary, the panel feels that a reduction of one bedroom on each floor, to increase the area of the kitchen / living / dining room, could be justification for additional height.
- The panel feels that the amenity space should be distributed throughout the height of the towers, so that all students have an amenity area within close proximity of their room.
- A variety of amenity spaces should be provided, from areas that can accommodate large gatherings including, for example, a cinema or games tables, to smaller intimate spaces for individuals who prefer quieter activities.
- In addition to dedicated amenity space, consideration should also be given to fostering casual encounters between students in areas such as lift lobbies and corridors.
- The provision of rooftop amenity space is welcomed.



### *Cycle storage*

- Further thought should be given to the provision of some cycle storage within Block F, to provide students with internal access from a cycle store to their room.
- In Block B, consideration should be given to improving the journey between the cycle store and the lift / stair cores, to provide a more direct route. Double-sided lifts could offer a solution.

### *Next steps*

- The Quality Review Panel would welcome the opportunity to comment again, in a chair's review of the architecture and residential quality, to assess the scheme against the requirements of Local Plan Policy BN.5.