



FRAME PROJECTS

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: Stratford Gasworks site, Rick Roberts Way

Thursday 18 January 2024

Boardroom 1, Level 10, 5 Endeavour Square, London E20 1JN

Panel

Teresa Borsuk (chair)
Michál Cohen
Jayne Earncliffe
Amber Fahey
Keith French

Attendees

Nikita Gleeson	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Anne Ogundiya	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Paul Taylor	London Legacy Development Corporation
Daniel Legg	London Borough of Newham
Halil Yorel	London Borough of Newham
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Tessa Kordeczka	Frame Projects
Eleanor Schone	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
Cindy Reriti	Frame Projects

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from a pre-application review of the Stratford Gasworks site. Panel members who attended the previous meeting were: Peter Bishop (chair); Teresa Borsuk; Keith French; Helen Hough; and Ann Sawyer.

1. Project name and site address

Stratford Gasworks, Rick Roberts Way, London E15 2GN

Planning application reference: 23/00457/FUL

2. Presenting team

Chris Wilkinson	Jo Cowen Architects
Andrew Harland	LDA Design
Tom Simons	St William
Alex Ash	St William
David Taylor	Montagu Evans
Chris Gascoigne	DP9

3. Planning authority briefing

A planning application for the scheme at the Stratford Gasworks site was submitted on 15 December 2023. It seeks permission for 239 homes – houses, maisonettes and apartments – a number which the planning authority considers appropriate and which includes 35 per cent affordable housing.

The site is within the setting of the Three Mills Conservation Area, with designated heritage assets on Abbey Lane to the south. As a former gasworks, it is heavily constrained not least by a retained pressure reduction station.

The panel's views were requested on the scale and massing of the buildings, including the footprint and height of the tallest buildings and their impact on the townscape, including as viewed from Rick Roberts Way. Both Gateway House (currently 13 storeys) and Holloway House West (currently 10 storeys) exceed prevailing heights identified by Local Plan Site Allocation SA3.6, and Policy BN.5 on proposals for tall buildings would apply.

The scheme includes new public realm in addition to private green space for residents. Questions remain about the successful delivery of improved connections and access to the adjoining Greenway. Uncertainty also remains about whether the scheme will deliver high quality accommodation and public realm, as well as contribute positively to the wider local community.



4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel welcomes the opportunity to comment on the amended proposal for the Stratford Gasworks site: it is clear that much work has been undertaken by the design team since its earlier review. Serious reservations about the proposal remain, however. The strategic approach to this complex site requires further thought in order to better reconcile buildings and landscape. A stronger relationship to the Greenway should be sought, including by improved access. The proposed scale and massing of some buildings exceed prevailing heights identified in the Local Plan; the quality of residential accommodation is likely to be compromised as a result. In addition to stronger integration of buildings and landscape, the panel recommends refinement of the public realm at the arrival point to the development at Rick Roberts Way and also along the central route through the scheme to Abbey Lane. Clear demarcation between public, semi private and private spaces will be important for the scheme's success. Further work is required to achieve coherent and distinctive architecture across the scheme. Assurances should be sought that all inclusive design standards are met. Lack of ramp access to the Greenway is a particular concern. There is much to commend in the ecological approach, and also play provision. Focus should remain on environmental sustainability, including maximising opportunities for PV solar panels.

The panel concludes that substantial amendments to the proposal are required in order to be able support the planning application for the Stratford Gasworks site.

Strategic approach

- Despite revisions, significant concerns remain about the strategic approach to the masterplan for this significant site. The panel points to the importance of conforming to principles established by the Urban Design and Landscape Framework for the Rick Roberts Way sites.
- Diverse typologies – houses, maisonettes, apartment blocks – are brought together in the masterplan. The panel is not convinced, however, that a coherent strategy emerges that successfully integrates buildings and landscape. The rationale behind building footprints and heights – and how they shape the landscape – is not readily apparent.
- Access to and from the Greenway remains compromised and there is some sense of the development turning its back on the Greenway, partly as a result of the proposed geometry of the buildings, rather than stitching into it. Strengthening links to the Greenway should be a determining factor in the strategic approach.
- Continued consultation and negotiation with Thames Water should be pursued to ensure adequate access for all to the Greenway at the earliest possible date.



- In order to better assess the masterplan for this site, the panel suggests that it would be helpful to see it more clearly positioned within its context, including through additional illustrations of what already exists in and around the site.

Scale and massing

- The proposed scale and massing currently exceed that recommended by the Urban Design and Landscape Strategy. Building heights that exceed the masterplan are subject to the requirements of Local Plan Policy BN.5 on proposals for tall buildings. On the basis of the information presented, the panel does not consider that the proposal would meet those requirements.
- The massing and footprint of Holloway House West, at 10 storeys, is excessive and is unlikely to provide high quality accommodation, resulting, for example, in excessively long internal corridors. The panel recommends that two separate blocks might be a more satisfactory solution, both for residential accommodation and public realm.
- Gateway House, a taller building at 13 storeys, appears uncomfortably located, isolated in the northeast corner of the site,

Public realm and landscape design

- The panel acknowledges the complexity and challenges of the site. As noted above, however, a stronger integration of buildings and landscape is required. Currently, a looseness and lack of definition compromises creation of a coherent whole.
- The panel considers that the arrival point into the development from Rick Roberts Way should benefit from a more generous approach in order to achieve a distinctive civic space in this location.
- The panel suggests that the orientation of Holloway House West is perhaps a missed opportunity to create a more central public space.
- The central route through the scheme – from Rick Roberts Way through to Abbey Lane – could benefit from a more celebratory approach to signal its primacy. It will be important to ensure clear demarcation for pedestrians and cyclists within Bazalgette Lane, onto which homes also open.
- The panel supports ideas for communal activity, including the proposals for community gardens at Gasworks Green (public) and Holloway Gardens (private). Attention should continue to be given to clearly defining public, semi private and private spaces.
- There is also much to support in the ecological approach taken, including urban greening and biodiversity, as well as in the provision of play.



Architectural expression

- The scheme's architectural expression has yet to demonstrate consistently high quality; it currently lacks coherence and distinctiveness.
- While the architecture of the lower buildings – Holloway House East, Abbey Court, the houses and the maisonettes – shows potential, that of the taller buildings – Gateway House and Holloway House West – requires considerably more thought.
- Depth and detail could be achieved, and monotony avoided, by reconsidering materials and balconies. The panel is not convinced by the extensive use of different coloured bricks.

Quality of residential accommodation

- The panel did not in this review consider details of plans and layouts of residential accommodation. As above, however, it notes that the tall buildings, in particular Holloway House West and Gateway House, can be expected to result in less than optimal quality, with, for example, lengthy internal access corridors.

Inclusive design

- The panel questions why only stepped access is provided at a critical point for leaving and joining the Greenway where it meets Abbey Lane.
- There is currently no wheelchair access to the Greenway and the panel strongly recommends exploring inclusion of a ramp in this location. As above, consultations with Thames Water on access to the Greenway should include adequate provision for all users.
- As a general point, the panel advises the design team to revert to the LLDC inclusive design standards to ensure compliance across the development – both buildings and landscape.
- Assurances are required that all housing typologies included in the scheme meet Building Regulation requirement M4(3).

Environmental sustainability

- Continued close attention to energy performance, including through testing the impact of the buildings' orientation on shading and overheating, is recommended.
- The panel considers that there could be further scope to exploit solar energy within the scheme and encourages the design team to maximise opportunities for inclusion of PV solar panels.



Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel notes that a planning application for the scheme for the Stratford Gasworks site has been submitted. At this stage it is unable to support the application. It would, however, welcome the opportunity to review amendments to the proposal taking into account its comments and in consultation with planning officers.

