



London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Stratford Waterfront: cultural / education buildings

Thursday 12 April 2018

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Teresa Borsuk
Adam Khan
Mike Martin
David Gilpin

Attendees

Catherine Smyth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Anne Ogundiya	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Rachel Meunier	London Legacy Development Corporation
Ruth Holmes	London Legacy Development Corporation
Sophie Backhouse	London Legacy Development Corporation
Tessa Kordeczka	Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Sara Dawes	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Richard McFerran	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Grant McClements	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Sophie Hockin	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Greg Smith	London Legacy Development Corporation
Leona Roche	London Legacy Development Corporation
Ben Hull	London Borough of Newham

1. Project name and site address

Stratford Waterfront, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

2. Presenting team

John Tuomey	O'Donnell and Tuomey
Sheila O'Donnell	O'Donnell and Tuomey
Bob Allies	Allies and Morrison
Nick Péri	Allies and Morrison
Kirsty Leslie	Allies and Morrison
Peter Maxwell	London Legacy Development Corporation
Irene Man	London Legacy Development Corporation
Duncan Price	BuroHappold

3. Planning authority's views

The planning authority welcomes the refinements that continue to be made to the four cultural and education buildings at Stratford Waterfront: Sadler's Wells; BBC Concert Studios; London College of Fashion; and V&A East. It would welcome the panel's comments on the revisions to the designs of these four buildings since its previous review on 16 November 2017.

The cultural and education buildings – and also the public realm – will be submitted as a full planning application.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel is greatly encouraged by the quality of the designs developed for Sadler's Wells, BBC Concert Studios, London College of Fashion and V&A East. All four buildings will contribute towards creating an exciting cultural and education district. Generally, the panel thinks that the public realm and landscape design strategy should respond more strongly to the scale of the buildings. It recommends further thought to the threshold of Stratford Waterfront where Sadler's Wells meets Bridge F10, and also the legibility of the route from Bridge F09 through the London College of Fashion to Carpenters Land Bridge beyond. The revised brief for the BBC Concert Studios has resulted in an even more successful building – now expressed more strongly and simply. The complexity of the design of the London College of Fashion has been skilfully handled. The panel suggests, however, further thought to strengthening the expression of the building's base. V&A East promises to be an exceptional building. The panel recommends exploring the possibility of creating a more satisfactory relationship between V&A East and the colonnade of the London College of Fashion. These comments are expanded below.

This report should be read together with the separate report of the review on 12 April 2018 of the Stratford Waterfront masterplan, public realm and landscape design strategy.



Impact on masterplan, public realm and landscape design

- In considering the designs of each of the cultural and education buildings, the panel identified the challenge for each building to drive the success of the public realm and landscape design.

Sadler's Wells

- The panel repeats its warm support for the design of Sadler's Wells. Its human scale – and the extensive activation of its frontage – will result in a popular venue, open and accessible to all.
- The panel particularly commends the directness and simplicity of the design. The spatial strategy is excellent – creating spaces that are robust and habitable.
- The double height entrance on Bridge F10 is particularly successful. The panel suggests that further activation of the frontage might be achieved by opening up the community dance area on the podium level more to the public realm.
- There is a wider point relating to the treatment of the public realm at the southwestern corner of the building. This corner can be perceived as the threshold to Stratford Waterfront – and there may be potential to exploit the potential of the Sadler's Wells building to reinforce the sense of that threshold – and contribute to the character of the space at that corner.
- The panel also thinks that the architecture of the building and the landscape design could work together more effectively to mitigate wind levels, especially at that corner.
- The panel recommends consideration of swing doors – rather than sliding doors – to minimise strong gusts of wind through the building, which would detract from the quality of the environment within the building. This is a detail that is essential to get right at this stage.
- While the building's canopy will provide some shading at podium level, the panel recommends careful consideration of the possible risk of overheating on the southwest facing façade at first floor level.
- The design works particularly well in drawing light into the studios at level 03.
- While fully supporting the idea of planting above the canopy, care will need to be taken to ensure adequate conditions, including depth of soil, irrigation and maintenance, to ensure that it thrives.

BBC Concert Studios

- The panel also offers its warm support for the design of the BBC Concert Studios, which has been reconfigured to respond to a revised brief – the inclusion of a Rock and Pop studio. The design responding to this change in brief results in improvements to what was already a strong proposal.
- The tough, strong simplicity of the rear elevation along Carpenters Road works well. The panel asks whether more of that expression might be replicated on the front elevation – although this is now less complex.
- The simplicity of the BBC Concert Studios sits comfortably between the more complex articulation of Sadler's Wells and the London College of Fashion.
- The plan of the building is logical and rational – with studios both below and above podium level, with those above enjoying daylight. An interesting journey up through the building is created.
- The location of an entrance to the Rock and Pop studio on Carpenters Road, which will generate queues, will add to the activation of Carpenters Road, making it a safer and more secure environment.

London College of Fashion

- The London College of Fashion is a complex building – but many of its challenges have been imaginatively tackled by the design team. The panel thinks that it will be a striking building that functions well for all those who use it.
- The internal planning of the building – with 'workshops' located around a 'heart' – is successful. A good balance between spaces, including voids, has been achieved and the depth of the floor plan managed well. The studios / workshops can be expected to be excellent places to work.
- Overall, the panel thinks that the London College of Fashion will be an exciting place to be. There is a sense of theatre – including in the negotiation from waterfront to podium level.
- The panel suggests further consideration of how connections within the building might work – for example, security lines and the boundaries between public and private spaces.
- This should also explore the thermal separation of spaces – which will be required to effectively control the environment through the building. It welcomes the proposed simple, openable windows in the studios / workshops. Careful attention will also need to be given to acoustic performance.

- The panel is less convinced by the architectural expression of the elevations. In particular, it recommends further thought to establishing a stronger base to the building. The colonnade presents an opportunity to create a tough and muscular base that meets the ground strongly. At the moment, it appears rather precarious: a stronger, bolder interaction with the ground is needed. In terms of materials, a marginal preference is expressed for concrete, rather than steel, for the colonnade.
- The panel repeats the point made when considering the Stratford Waterfront masterplan and public realm about lack of legibility of the route through Stratford Waterfront from Bridge F09, coming from Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, to Carpenters Land Bridge.
- The route through – either at waterfront level through the building or at podium level along the colonnade – will not be obvious to those arriving from Bridge F09. There should be a clearer and more intuitive way to signal the existence of Carpenters Land Bridge. The panel also thinks that the design of the entrance at waterfront level does not appear to relate strongly to the architectural expression of the rest of the building.

V&A East

- The panel continues to find much to admire in the design of V&A East – which has been slightly refined since its earlier review.
- The design retains all of its elegance. The distinctive ‘folding / pleating’ of the architecture remains, although reduced on the rear elevation, and the materials proposed are exciting. The internal circulation has been rationalised but still offers an enjoyable journey through the building.
- The panel recommends further thought to the way that the proposed V&A shop comes up against the colonnade of the London College of Fashion. This abutment appears rather awkward and the panel suggests exploring ways to establish a more satisfactory relationship between V&A East and the columns of the colonnade.
- The panel strongly supports the inclusion of terraces at level 04 – with views both to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and International Quarter London (IQL) – and the generous café terrace fronting onto Waterfront Square.
- While welcoming the terraces, the panel recommends that some thought is given to the proximity to V&A East of the Stratford Waterfront residential blocks and potential overlooking.
- At the rear of the building, along the Carpenters Road elevation, the panel suggests that the stairs could perhaps be made more obvious by opening them out a little more. Some thought should be given to how far the stairs might be protected from wind.

- Where buildings have two entrances – including V&A East and Sadler’s Wells – thought should be given to minimising gusts of winds through the building.
- The panel questions whether the dominant sky sign proclaiming V&A East is necessary and whether something more subtle might be appropriate for this sculptural, jewel-like building.
- In relation to the public realm associated with V&A East, the panel recommends further thought to enlivening the space created between V&A East and the London College of Fashion at podium level, on the approach to the Carpenters Land Bridge.

Environmental sustainability

- The panel welcomes the details provided of the sustainability strategy for each of buildings and commends the ambitious targets set for environmental performance.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel commends the progress made in developing the designs of the cultural and education buildings at Stratford Waterfront. It encourages the design teams to continue to refine the designs, taking into account the comments above, and in consultation with planning officers.

