



FRAME PROJECTS

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: Stratford Waterfront: cultural / education buildings

Thursday 13 December 2018

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Teresa Borsuk
Adam Khan
Mike Martin

Attendees

Sara Dawes	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Richard McFerran	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Grant McClements	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Victoria Bates	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Rachel Meunier	London Legacy Development Corporation
Sophie Backhouse	London Legacy Development Corporation
Tessa Kordeczka	Frame Projects

Report copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Catherine Smyth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Leona Roche	London Legacy Development Corporation
Greg Smith	London Legacy Development Corporation
Ben Hull	London Borough of Newham

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from three pre-application reviews of the Stratford Waterfront cultural / education buildings. Panel members who attended the previous meetings were: Peter Studdert (chair); Teresa Borsuk; John O'Mara; Adam Khan; Jayne Earncliffe; Mike Martin; and David Gilpin.

1. Project name and site address

Stratford Waterfront, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

2. Presenting team

Kirsty Leslie	Allies and Morrison
Oliver Ralphs	Allies and Morrison
David Williams	O'Donnell + Tuomey
Peter Maxwell	London Legacy Development Corporation
Irene Man	London Legacy Development Corporation

3. Planning authority's views

The Stratford Waterfront hybrid planning application has been submitted. The detailed element comprises: four cultural / education buildings; the public realm; and Carpenters land bridge. The outline element comprises residential development of up to 600 units. The outline planning application for residential development was considered by the Quality Review Panel on 29 November 2018 (see separate report).

Designs for the four cultural and education buildings – Sadler's Wells; BBC Studios; UAL: London College of Fashion; and V&A East – have been refined since the previous review by the Quality Review Panel in April 2018. The planning authority would welcome the panel's comments on the revised proposals – including how effectively they respond to its earlier comments. In particular, it requests that the panel provide clear advice on whether the design of each building complies with the criteria of LLDC Local Plan Policy BN.10 – which includes a requirement for 'outstanding architecture'.

The hybrid planning application is expected to be considered by the Planning Decisions Committee in April 2019.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel appreciates the clear presentations of how the revised designs for the four cultural and education buildings have responded to earlier comments. The panel repeats its warm support for the designs all four buildings – Sadler's Wells; BBC Studios; UAL: London College of Fashion; and V&A East – and confirms that they would all meet the policy requirement of 'outstanding architecture'. Adjustments have been made to the design of Sadler's Wells to address wind mitigation; the panel recommends exploring alternative solutions that would appear better integrated into the building's architecture. It also recommends some rationalisation and simplification to the waterfront elevation of the BBC Studios in order to express the integrity of the building's volumes more clearly. These comments are expanded below and those made at the previous review that remain relevant are repeated for clarity.



This report should be read together with the separate report of the review, also on 13 December 2018, of the Stratford Waterfront masterplan and public realm strategy.

Sadler's Wells

- The panel had previously expressed strong support for the design of Sadler's Wells. Its human scale – and extensive activation of its frontage – can be expected to result in a popular venue, open and accessible to all. The panel had particularly commended the design's directness and simplicity, including a highly effective spatial strategy.
- The design has been refined to respond to the need to integrate wind mitigation measures, in particular at the southwest corner of the building on Stratford Walk, the approach to Bridge F10, and Waterfront Place (identified as Location 3). A concrete screen has been incorporated, as an extension to the canopy above.
- The constraints introduced by the need to effectively address wind mitigation are fully understood, but the panel is not convinced that the optimum solution has yet been identified. The intervention of the concrete screen does not integrate well – it appears added on rather than an integral part of the building's architecture. Something of the canopy's original elegance has been lost.
- In the design's earlier iteration curtain wall glazing extended around this corner – successfully blending the building's bridge and waterfront elevations. These are now separated. Also, in its previous review, the panel had suggested that further activation of the Sadler's Wells frontage might be achieved by opening up the community dance area more to the public realm on the podium level. This area is now occluded by the concrete screen.
- The panel suggests that an alternative solution might be sought by continuing, and extending out, the curtain glazing to provide shelter, and reverting to a design of the canopy as a discrete component in itself. The panel therefore recommends some revision to the design of the corner of the building to provide effective wind mitigation while retaining the integrity of the building's architecture.
- The panel repeats its view that the rear of the building along Carpenters Road has the potential to work well.
- With refinement to the design suggested above, the panel has no reservation in advising that Sadler's Wells will meet the requirement of Local Plan Policy BN.10 for 'outstanding architecture'. It thinks that it will become a very impressive entrance to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.



- There are some doubts about the value and impact of proposed planting on the canopy. It is probably appropriate that planting is not visible at podium level, but the panel questions how it will be perceived by those looking down from the studio terraces. While its purpose may be to enhance biodiversity, few sedum varieties are native and also considering other species is therefore encouraged.

BBC Studios

- The panel had previously expressed warm support for the design of the BBC Studios – which had been reconfigured to respond to a revised brief to include a Rock and Pop studio. The design responding to this change resulted in improvements to what was already a strong proposal.
- In considering subsequent refinements to the design, the panel thinks that some rationalisation and simplification of the waterfront elevation would further improve it. The clarity of the three dimensional volumes making up the building could be strengthened. The concept of a simple ‘box’, with a ‘wrap’, has become somewhat obscured. In particular, the upper element of the building – rooftop plant – could appear rather as a ‘lid’ to the building rather than a clear expression of the building’s volumes, undermining a consistent composition.
- The panel identifies a particular inconsistency in the treatment of the infill between the BBC Studios and the adjoining UAL: London College of Fashion. This junction appears ambiguous and detracts from the clarity of the building’s form. The panel feels that if the infill is faced in the same material as the main ‘box’ it should be in the same plane. Alternatively, if the vertical plane of the infill falls between the ‘box’ and the ‘wrap’, a third material could perhaps be considered.
- The panel supports the architectural expression of the main accommodation stair.
- It also thinks that the architecture of the rear elevation enjoys a real clarity – the tough, strong simplicity of the building along Carpenters Road works well.
- The proposed materials – painted ribbed steel; pre-cast concrete; and perforated aluminium fins – show much promise.
- The plan of the building is logical and rational – with studios both below and above podium level, with those above enjoying daylight.
- As a minor point, while the public foyer at level 03 suggests an open, welcoming building and promises to be highly successful, the main entrance at podium level appears rather underwhelming. Although not intended as an overtly public space – unlike the adjoining Sadler’s Wells – the panel thinks that it could offer a slightly more uplifting welcome.



- As previously noted, the location of the entrance to the Rock and Pop studio on Carpenters Road will add to the activation along Carpenters Road, making it a safer and more secure environment. The panel advises ensuring that there is ample space along the Carpenters Road frontage for the expected queues of visitors – and also that planting proposed along Carpenters Road will be sufficiently robust to withstand crowds.
- The panel repeats its strong support for this interesting building – which it considers to comply with Local Plan Policy BN.10.

UAL: London College of Fashion

- The panel repeats its view that this building will be a striking addition to Stratford Waterfront – and will function well for all those who use it. The internal planning of the building – with perimeter ‘workshops’ located around a ‘heart’ – is ingeniously thought through.
- Modifications to the design since the previous review respond well to the panel’s earlier comments and result in increased clarity and simplicity. Improvements include: extension of the public threshold within the building; adjustment to the hierarchy of entrances, including public access at waterfront level; and a more resolute and extensive use of concrete.
- The panel particularly commends a design that – for such a large and complex building – appears so effortlessly simple. The building’s architecture reads clearly – with elevations both to the waterfront and to Carpenters Road working well. A stronger, bolder interaction with the ground has been achieved.
- Earlier concerns about the legibility of routes through Stratford Waterfront – between Carpenters land bridge and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park across Bridge F09 – have been addressed, including by a reconfiguration of the entrance at waterfront level.
- The exceptionally high quality design of UAL: London College of Fashion will easily satisfy the criteria of Local Plan Policy BN.10.

V&A East

- The panel continues to find much to admire in the design of V&A East – it will be a unique, beautiful building.
- The panel had previously recommended further thought to how the building comes up against the colonnade of UAL: London College of Fashion at podium 01 level. The colonnade sets up a strong direction, with the geometry of V&A East stepping into it. (The colonnade has since been modified by incorporation of wind mitigation measures, notably the addition of retractable



screens to the colonnade columns – see also separate report on the Stratford Waterfront masterplan and public realm strategy).

- A better relationship has been established with the colonnade columns, although a question remains about how the spaces between V&A East and the columns will be used and experienced, especially at the point where the building comes up very closely to a column and where spaces may be darker.
- The panel recommends that the paving of this area of the podium level – between UAL: London College of Fashion and V&A East – be kept extremely simple, in order to create and reinforce a feeling of spaciousness.
- The panel repeats its view that V&A East indisputably demonstrates ‘outstanding architecture’ and therefore complies with Local Plan Policy BN.10.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel repeats its strong support for the four cultural and education buildings at Stratford Waterfront – Sadler’s Wells; BBC Studios; UAL: London College of Fashion; and V&A East. Each building has the potential to meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy BN.10. The panel is pleased to support approval of the hybrid planning application, with some refinements in response to its comments.
- The panel would welcome in particular another opportunity to comment on an alternative approach to the wind mitigation measures for the southwest corner of Sadler’s Wells.

