

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: McGrath Site

Thursday 13 March 2014, 15.30 – 17.00

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Neil Deely
Tom Holbrook
Julia Barfield
Ann Sawyer

Attendees

Will Steadman	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions
Eleanor Fawcett	London Legacy Development Corporation
Hannah Lambert	London Legacy Development Corporation
Esther Everett	London Legacy Development Corporation
Deborah Denner	Fortismere Associates
Tessa Kordeczka	Fortismere Associates
Gabrielle Appiah	Legacy Youth Panel
Nick Ecob	Karakusevic Carson Architects
Ciaran Chapple-Canty	Karakusevic Carson Architects

Apologies / report also copied to:

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions
Kathryn Firth	London Legacy Development Corporation
Amy Thompson	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Mike Watson	Galliard Homes

1. Project name and site address

McGrath Site: land at Hepscott Road

2. Presenting team

Frank Green	BUJ Architects
Roger Castle	BUJ Architects
Guy Forrester	BUJ Architects
Rory O'Connor	CJ O'Shea
Austin Mackie	Austin Mackie Associates
Sven Mündner	creative industry consultant

3. Planning authority's views

The McGrath waste transfer site is designated as an opportunity site within the Fish Island Area Action Plan. The site cannot come forward until policies that safeguard waste sites are satisfied. The heritage value and potential retention of existing buildings on the site have been discussed with the project team.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The size and location of the McGrath site arguably make it the most important site within Fish Island. It occupies a strategic position in relation to plans for the new Hackney Wick Neighbourhood Centre, and has significant assets, including its water-side location on the Hertford Union Canal and existing heritage buildings. A site of this significance requires excellent design to exploit its potential fully, including its successful integration into the wider context.

Proposals are at an early stage. On the basis of the lacklustre presentation made, however, the Quality Review Panel is not confident that the design team appointed for this project has the range and depth of skills required to deliver high quality development of this complex and challenging site. The panel recommends a fundamental rethink, starting with the appointment of an experienced masterplanner/urban designer.

Developing a vision

- The panel recommends that the development of this site should fully engage with emerging LLDC planning policies and guidance for Fish Island, which build on the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Fish Island Area Action Plan.
- The panel stresses the need to consider the site as a whole – rather than as separate components – as well as its prominent place within broader plans for the new Hackney Wick Neighbourhood Centre.

- The panel therefore recommends close cooperation with the design team working on the Hackney Wick masterplan in order to arrive at a fully integrated and consistent vision.
- The panel supports proposals to improve the permeability of the area, including a new north/south route that would provide a more direct link between the site and Hackney Wick Station.
- The panel believes that there is enormous potential for creating a high quality, commercially viable, mixed use development that captures the area's particular character.
- The major assets of a south-facing canal side, as well as heritage buildings which could accommodate interesting new uses, should be fully exploited.
- As proposals evolve, the panel recommends that they include more detailed responses to the site's relationship to the A12; the mixed use economy of the site; and proposed retained buildings.

Next steps

- The panel looks forward to reviewing revised design proposals that demonstrate an ambitious, integrated vision for the site that fully realises its unique potential and maximises its value.
- The panel would welcome a further opportunity to comment on this scheme, at an early pre-application stage.