

**London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel**

**Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: Hackney Wick masterplan**

Thursday 13 October 2016

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

**Panel**

Peter Studdert (chair)  
Russell Curtis  
Tom Lonsdale

**Attendees**

Sarah Birt	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Peter Maxwell	London Legacy Development Corporation
Hannah Lambert	London Legacy Development Corporation
Andrew Tesseyman	London Legacy Development Corporation
Peter Foley	London Borough of Hackney
Tessa Kordeczka	Fortismere Associates

**Report also copied to**

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Allison De Marco	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Jermaine Thomas	London Borough of Tower Hamlets

**Note on process**

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from four pre-application reviews, and a previous planning application review, of the Hackney Wick masterplan. Panel members who attended the previous meetings were: Peter Studdert (chair); Russell Curtis; Neil Deely; Tom Holbrook; Julia Barfield; Alex Ely; Adam Khan; Ann Sawyer; Mark Brearley; Tom Lonsdale; Dan Epstein; and Peter Lainson.

## 1. Project name and site address

Hackney Wick Masterplan: area bounded by Wallis Road, River Lee Navigation and Hertford Union Canal

Planning application reference: 16/00166/OUT

## 2. Presenting team

Nick Ecob Karakusevic Carson Architects

## 3. Planning authority's views

The planning authority would welcome, in particular, the Quality Review Panel's comments on proposed buildings heights. An assessment of the overall townscape that will result from proposed heights, together with the impact of taller buildings on specific sites, would be helpful. The LLDC planning committee, and also Historic England, have expressed concerns in particular about the 11 storey building proposed for Plot K.

## 4. Quality Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The Quality Review Panel congratulates both the planning authority and the design team for the excellent documents, including the Design Code and Design and Access Statement, that support an effective masterplan for Hackney Wick. Their thoroughness is exemplary. The panel supports approval of the outline planning application for the Hackney Wick masterplan, subject to some refinements and a more substantial reservation on building heights. Detailed comments are provided below on proposed codes for: the public realm, with a suggestion for including more specific codes for the new north / south route; uses, including shop fronts, cycle and bin stores; and tall buildings, where panel members' views diverge, particularly on Plot K.

### *Hackney Wick masterplan principles*

- The panel notes that some developments on blocks within the masterplan area have already been considered by the Quality Review Panel, and that some have since been granted planning consent – with separate Section 106 agreements to ensure implementation of the masterplan principles.
- The panel encourages robust negotiations on affordable housing and recommends that aspirational targets be set clearly in the outline planning application. It understands that a baseline for affordable housing provision will be specified, with subsequent viability appraisals for individual developments.
- The panel seeks to provide a definitive view on both the Design Code and parameter plans for the Hackney Wick masterplan; its comments conform to the structure of the Design Code.

## Design Code

### Introduction

- The panel advises judicious application and interpretation of the two types of code: absolute codes, defined by ‘the applicant **must** ...’; and interpretive codes, defined by ‘the applicant **should**...’.
- It strongly supports setting a standard for the highest quality. There should, however, also be scope to judge a design acceptable that demonstrates high quality but may not comply rigidly with the conditions set by ‘**must**’.

### 1.0 Built form and character

- The panel supports the content of Section 1.0, which contains excellent, informative illustrations.

### 2.0 Public realm

- Ensuring unity across the public realm within the masterplan area may be challenging – especially since delivery will be by different developers over different phases.
- A clear distinction between key public realm areas, which require tight coding, and other areas, where a more flexible approach is appropriate, would be helpful. The panel suggests that this distinction is clarified in the introduction to Section 2.0.
- It considers that the codes for non adopted areas of the public realm are sufficiently strong – while also allowing the flexibility to create distinctive, individual spaces.
- It suggests, however, that the codes for adopted areas may not be sufficiently rigorous to ensure unity across the masterplan and avoid jarring shifts in quality and appearance.
- According a considerable amount of authority to the highway authority may be one approach; a preferable option, however, might be to commission a single design that encompasses those areas of the public realm where consistency is most important.
- In this context, the panel points specifically to the north / south route – arguably the most important space within the masterplan – and suggests that it would benefit from more detailed scrutiny: while experienced as a series of spaces, there is a strong case for designing it as a single conceptual space.
- The same codes apply to both the north / south route and historic yards (2.10 – Hard landscaping materials). The panel suggests that, given the significance of this route, it merits a separate treatment.

- The panel also questions the introduction of concrete block pavers for vehicle crossings; it considers that continuation of granite blocks would be appropriate.
- As a detailed comment, it is specified that planters must be built in and flush with footway level (2.12.2). Flush planting in footways may be vulnerable to people walking past, and ways to protect planting should be considered.

### 3.0 Uses

- In Section 3.2 – Workspace frontage, the panel suggests rephrasing ‘Locations for ground floor windows **must** be carefully considered to animate the public realm’ (3.2.2) and ‘Where parameter plans allow flexibility between A and B uses the design of workspace frontage **must** reflect the proposed use’ (3.2.6) in order to clarify how this might be demonstrated and tested.
- The panel recommends that, with reference to security shutters (3.3.5), ‘**should**’ be amended to ‘**must**’. It also thinks that solid shutters, while appropriate for workspaces, should be precluded for shop fronts – and recommends that the code is unambiguous on this point.
- In Section 3.7 – Residential frontage, the panel recommends expanding and strengthening the code on cycle stores (3.7.5 / 3.7.8). In order to encourage maximum cycle use, secure storage is essential.
- It is preferable for cycle stores to be entered from semi private spaces, rather than directly from the street. However, if cycle stores are entered from residential entrance lobbies, for example, these will need to be designed sufficiently robustly.
- Similarly, entrances to bin stores must be robust and durable enough to withstand damage – which would quickly detract from the quality and appearance of buildings.

### 4.0 Typical conditions

- As noted above, the panel thinks that the north / south route should benefit from a more specific treatment within the Design Code.

### 5.0 Retained heritage assets

- There are diverging views on the heritage value of the giant letters ‘HW’ on the western elevation of Everett House (5.8).
- While it could be argued that this be retained as part of Hackney Wick’s more recent heritage, this prominent wall – which will mark the eastern entrance to the north / south route – might also benefit from a more creative approach to public art.
- A less prescriptive code about the retention of existing street art (5.8.6) should therefore be considered.

## 6.0 Key places

- The panel is satisfied that the codes for Queen's Yard's built form and use (6.1) and public realm (6.2) are appropriate, including the proposed height of Plot LM (Block M) (see below).
- It also supports the codes for Boathouse Yard's built form and use (6.5) and public realm (6.6)
- Reflecting comments above, the panel thinks that further consideration should be given to the north / south route (6.8). It is not convinced that 'Proposals for the North South Route **should** have the characteristics of a 'Working Yard' as set out in the Public Realm section of the Design Code' (6.8.1), despite the listed exceptions.

## 7.0 Tall buildings

- The panel thinks that the proposed height of nine storeys for both Plot B (Block B) and Plot GHI (Block H) is appropriate in the context of their location on the canal edge (7.2 / 7.4).
- There are reservations, however, about the proposed height of nine storeys for Plot EF (Block E). This building could appear oppressive. A nine storey sheer wall would significantly detract from the character of the central yard envisaged for this block (7.3), which also includes buildings of four and five storeys.
- A building of this height can be expected to have a negative impact on aspect, daylight and sunlight levels of adjacent plots on Block E, especially for any single aspect accommodation facing this building.
- The panel also has concerns about the impact of a building of this height in this location on the quality of the environment at street level. It will lie at the heart of the new Hackney Wick neighbourhood, characterised in large part by narrow streets and lower buildings, including those of heritage value.
- There is a view that it will be the design of this building – its form and articulation, including set backs and layering – that determines whether nine storeys are appropriate.
- The panel concludes, however, that reducing the height of Plot EF to seven storeys would be a more satisfactory resolution of the massing of this block.
- The views of panel members diverge on the height of Plot K (Block K), proposed at 11 storeys (7.5).
- Some panel members think that the principle of having a tall building in this location to define Hackney Wick can be justified. A 'landmark' building will serve to locate the new Hackney Wick neighbourhood and station. It must,

however, demonstrate outstanding architectural quality, as required by LLDC Local Plan Policy BN.10.

- Others think that a building of this height will detract significantly from the quality of place aspired to for Hackney Wick. In particular, it is felt that confronting an 11 storey north facing elevation when arriving from the station will not convey Hackney Wick's special character – which is not conceived of as a place of towers, but rather of intriguing streets and buildings.
- All panel members agree, however, that it will be essential that this building benefit from the highest quality architecture – whatever its height – and strongly recommend that an architectural competition be considered.
- The panel supports the proposed height of Plot LM (Block M) in Queen's Yard (7.6).

#### *Next steps*

- The panel repeats its appreciation of the enormous amount of effort that has gone into developing an effective masterplan for Hackney Wick and would support approval of the outline planning application, subject to refinements in response to its comments.
- It records, however, that there are reservations about the proposed heights of buildings on Blocks E and K, with a diverging view within the panel on the height of Plot K.