



FRAME PROJECTS

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review: 34 – 38 Wallis Road

Thursday 14 December 2017

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Russell Curtis
Johnny Winter
Tom Lonsdale

Attendees

Sarah Birt	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Steve Tomlinson	London Legacy Development Corporation
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Tessa Kordeczka	Frame Projects

Report copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Catherine Smyth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Jerry Bell	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Kate Harrison	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Jane.Jin	London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from two pre-application reviews and a planning application review between 2012 and 2014 of an earlier proposal for the scheme at 34 – 38 Wallis Road. Panel members who attended the previous meetings were: Peter Studdert (chair); Adam Khan; Catherine Burd; Martin Stockley; Mark Brearley; Neil Deely; and Tom Holbrook.

1. Project name and site address

Site at 34-38 Wallis Road, Hackney Wick, E9

Planning application reference:

- mixed use development: 17/00495/FUL
- residential development: 17/00496/FUL

2. Presenting team

Frank Green	BUJ Architects
Guy Forrester	BUJ Architects
Catriona O'Meara	BUJ Architects
Philip Chadda	TC Developments

3. Planning authority's views

A planning application for the scheme for 34 – 38 Wallis Road, which had been reviewed by the Quality Review Panel, was submitted in 2014 and recommended for approval by planning officers. The application was subsequently withdrawn, however, after an Environment Agency objection in relation to flood risk was unable to be resolved. The site is located in Flood Zone 3.

Two new planning applications have now been submitted – one for mixed use development, the other for residential only development. The Environment Agency has objected to the mixed use application; a response is awaited on the residential only application but an objection is not anticipated. Discussions have so far focussed on resolving the Environment Agency objection; the quality of the architecture proposed for the scheme has yet to be considered in depth.

Since the original planning application in 2014, a comprehensive masterplan for Hackney Wick has been developed and approved; consideration of the current applications should include an assessment of whether they fulfil the masterplan's aspirations for design quality.

The planning authority has supported the proposal for mixed use development. According to planning policy, commercial use has to be re-provided. If, as suggested by the Quality Review Panel, a solution for the residential only scheme is sought by adopting an alternative approach to the site's existing perimeter wall, which is a non-designated heritage asset, its impact on the provision of employment space would have to be taken into account.



4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel acknowledges the difficulty in reconciling the requirements of the planning authority for the development of the site at 34 – 38 Wallis Road and those of the Environment Agency. While it is able to support approval of the planning application for the mixed use scheme, it is unable to do so for that of the residential only scheme. It considers that this does not meet an acceptable standard of design quality. It makes some suggestions for a possible way forward – notably a more imaginative approach to the retained wall. The panel also, however, recommends reconsideration of retention of what is a non-designated heritage asset of low significance. While broadly supporting the architectural expression developed for the new buildings for the mixed use scheme, the panel thinks that there could be scope for lifting it a little. The architectural treatment of the residential only scheme appears less well developed. Success of the scheme will depend on the quality of detailed design, materials and construction. These comments are expanded below.

Site constraints – Flood Zone 3

- The panel acknowledges the dilemma confronting the applicant in reconciling the respective requirements of the planning authority and the Environment Agency – which has resulted in the submission of two separate planning applications. A simple resolution is not evident.

Response to heritage asset

- While the perimeter wall – the 'Hope Chemical Works Wall' – is a non-designated heritage asset, it is considered to be of low significance. The site is adjacent to – but not within – the Fish Island and White Post Lane Conservation Area. The panel therefore questions how valuable the wall might be and how strong the arguments for its retention and incorporation into the scheme. It would be helpful to carry out a thorough survey and appraisal of the wall to assess the significance of its various components.
- If retention of the wall compromises the integrity and quality of the scheme's design, and its significance is shown to be low, incorporating it should be reconsidered.
- If the wall is to be retained, the panel suggests that a stronger narrative between the wall and the architecture of the new buildings could be explored in order to strengthen the case for its retention.
- The panel suggests that further discussions with planning officers, informed by a thorough survey, could help to identify whether some segments of the wall are more significant and worthy of retention than others.



4.1 *Mixed use development*

- The panel had supported approval of the planning application submitted in 2014 for mixed use development at 34 – 38 Wallis Road. It continues to broadly support the proposal for mixed use development – which has since been slightly revised.
- The panel repeats its support for the scheme's architectural expression. The robust, understated industrial aesthetic relates well to the context of the wider area. The wall is incorporated successfully into the scheme where this is appropriate.
- Generally, the elevations work well. This is a prominent site and the panel suggests that there may be scope for adding interest to the architecture. This could, for example, be achieved by a different treatment to the top floor or by the sophistication of the detailing.
- As before, the panel stresses that the scheme's success will depend on the quality of detailed design, materials and construction.

4.2 *Residential only development*

- The panel is unable to recommend approval of the planning application for residential only development, as presented. It considers the streetscape that results from this proposal to be unacceptable.
- The panel suggests that it could be possible to create an active frontage by raising the buildings onto a podium, although it is unclear whether this would successfully address the Environment Agency's objections.
- If loss of employment space is considered to be a key policy objection to the residential only scheme, one solution would be to designate the free-standing building on the western end of the site as employment space, giving it a distinctive architectural character that would reflect its prominent position.
- The panel suggests that a creative and imaginative approach to the retained wall might lead to an acceptable solution. Reinterpreting and enhancing the wall in a way that adds to the interest and animation of the streetscape could be a way forward. This might, for example, include involvement of an artist. The wall would have to be made suitably robust and durable.
- The panel recommends that there be a stronger differentiation and distinction between the wall and the new buildings. A better solution might be to have the new buildings separated from, and enclosed by, the wall, rather than aligning them.
- The retained wall, and any newly created enclosure, will have an impact on the architectural language developed for the buildings – which will need to respond to the new relationship between the wall and the street.



- The elevations of the residential only scheme appear more bland and less detailed than those of the mixed use scheme. The panel therefore recommends that these be developed further.
- It is acknowledged that the planning application has been submitted and that, if the proposal is to be substantially revised, a new programme will have to be agreed.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel would support approval of the planning application for the mixed use scheme at 34 – 38 Wallis Road.
- The panel is, however, unable to support approval of the planning application for the residential only scheme. It makes some suggestions as to how the proposal might be revised in order to achieve acceptable design quality.

