



FRAME PROJECTS

## **London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel**

### **Report of Formal Review Meeting: UCL East (Pool Street West)**

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**

Hilary Wrenn	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Peter Maxwell	London Legacy Development Corporation
Hannah Lambert	London Legacy Development Corporation
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Tessa Kordeczka	Frame Projects

#### **Apologies / report copied to**

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Catherine Smyth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Irene Man	London Legacy Development Corporation
Ben Hull	London Borough of Newham

## 1. Project name and site address

UCL East – reserved matters: Phase 1, Pool Street West

## 2. Presenting team

Alex Lifschutz	Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands
Abigail Thomas	Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands
Nawed Khan	UCL
Richard Maung	Deloitte Real Estate
Rebecca Dolphin	Deloitte Real Estate

## 3. Planning authority's views

The outline planning application for UCL East has been approved by the Planning Decisions Committee subject to a Section 106 agreement. Pool Street West will be the first phase of development of UCL East – a reserved matters application is expected to be submitted by mid 2018.

Revisions to the scheme since the review by the Quality Review Panel in April 2017 include: an increased number of rooms for student accommodation; and an additional stair core to each of the two towers. The increased height of the towers which results remains within agreed parameters.

The concept of the 'fluid' zone informing the masterplan for UCL East supports a high degree of permeability between ground, first and second floor levels. The planning authority recommends consideration of how far this is assured by the proposed design, and also the extent to which the design conforms to the design codes included in the outline planning application. The cycle storage strategy might also benefit from further thought.

Proposals for Pool Street West should be considered in the context of Marshgate Plot 1, also in Phase 1, including the public realm that links the two sites.

## 4. Quality Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The Quality Review Panel had previously found much to admire in the proposal for Pool Street West and welcomes subsequent improvements. It offers the scheme its warm support. The proposed architectural expression promises to result in an exciting and distinctive scheme. The character and quality of the central yard has been enhanced by reconfiguration of ground floor uses, including relocation of plant to a separate block. The panel thinks, however, that the scheme's riverside location has yet to be fully exploited – and encourages moves to make the best use of this edge of the site. In this context, questions are raised about the most appropriate location for the café, retail unit and cycle storage. More generally, the panel recommends further thought to the overall cycle storage strategy. Some concern remains about the size of students' rooms, which are now smaller than in the previous proposal. The panel thinks that the landscape design strategy will be successful.



These comments are expanded below and those made at the previous review that remain relevant are repeated for clarity.

### *Scale and massing*

- The panel supports the scheme's scale and massing, including the addition of two storeys to both Tower 1 to the west and Tower 2 to the east, recognising that this remains within the agreed height parameters.

### *Plan and layout*

- The panel commends the design team's care and thoroughness in developing the design of Pool Street West. The strategic moves taken are rational and positive, resulting in significant improvements on the earlier iteration.
- Revisions to the plan and layout at ground floor– including relocation of plant to a separate block in the central yard – enhance the character and quality of the yard by adding active uses to the yard's perimeter. This will become a more inhabited – rather than purely functional – space.
- The panel continues to think that the opportunities presented by the scheme's western edge along the riverside have yet to be fully exploited. There is potential to make much more of the space between Tower 1 and the riverside – which could become a lovely, sunny place (although the actual waterside is inaccessible). The panel therefore recommends further thought to this edge.
- The panel had previously questioned locating the café on the north side of the building at the main entrance on Thornton Street. The café, although small, could make a greater contribution to the building.
- The panel fully supports the concept that various spaces – café, 'urban room', London memory archive and robotics – open directly off the central atrium. Making these as open as possible to the atrium will accentuate permeability of the ground floor and encourage liveliness around the building's entrance.
- A clear hierarchy is established for public, academic and residential spaces. The panel thinks, however, that the arrival sequence for student accommodation appears rather circuitous.
- A question is also raised about the proposed retail unit at the southwest corner of Tower 1 – including how successful it might be in this location. The panel notes that this amenity also has to be considered in the context of Marshgate Plot 1 and the pedestrian circuit envisaged around the two sites.
- Inclusion of enclosed cycle storage to the south of the retail unit could present a blank frontage to this circuit (see below). If cycle storage could be accommodated elsewhere, an opportunity for alternative use – either academic or commercial – might arise. This attractive west facing location could perhaps be better used.



### *Architectural expression*

- The panel supports the interesting and unusual approach taken to the architectural expression of the scheme, which has the potential to be exciting and distinctive. Elevations are well articulated and elegant, and the materials palette and incorporation of a circular motif will work well.
- Further details of the architectural treatment of the enclosed cycle storage would be helpful. If included, it will be important to ensure that it relates successfully to the wider scheme.

### *Student residential accommodation*

- Revisions to the plan and layout of the scheme – notably a reduction in the length of the towers and incorporation of an additional stair core to each tower – has resulted in smaller students' rooms: from 11sqm to 10.4sqm, with a decrease in floor to ceiling heights from 2.8m to 2.57m.
- The tightness of these spaces can be expected to be further tested by incorporation of services.
- Although the design of the interior of students' rooms is highly efficient, uneasiness remains about their size. The panel had, however, at its previous review noted that the experience of students can be expected to be enhanced considerably by the generous communal residential spaces. It will be essential to ensure that these areas are designed to fully meet students' needs.

### *Landscape design strategy*

- The panel supports the proposed landscape strategy, including creating a choice of spaces on the landscaped terrace on the third floor.
- Particularly successful is the inclusion of planting on the roof of the separate plant block – to be linked by a bridge to the Nature Smart Cities laboratory. Interweaving planting into the teaching and learning functions of the building will help to ensure that it is nurtured and maintained.

### *Cycle storage / servicing*

- The panel is yet to be convinced by the cycle storage strategy. While there is generous provision, cycle storage appears to have been included where considered least awkward.
- It may be helpful to re-examine how many cycle storage spaces will actually be required. It may not be necessary, for example, to include the enclosed cycle storage to the south of Tower 1, freeing up this space for other uses, as suggested above.



- The expanse of paving along Thornton Street could potentially be used for cycle parking, taking into account projected pedestrian flows. This would be convenient to use, especially for students and others using the building, rather than residents.
- Careful thought will need to be given to the management and supervision of uses in the service yard – to ensure security and avoid conflict between its various intended uses.

*Next steps*

- The Quality Review Panel encourages the design team to continue to develop the proposal for Pool Street West, in consultation with planning officers, and taking into account the comments above.

