

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Neptune Wharf Design Enhancements

Thursday 14 May 2015

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)

Alex Ely

David Gilpin

John Lyall

Attendees

Sarah Jones

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Sarah Birt

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Hannah Lambert

London Legacy Development Corporation

Deborah Denner

Fortismere Associates

Apologies / report copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Allison De Marco

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Esther Everett

London Legacy Development Corporation

Shay Bugler

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

1. Project name and site address

Neptune Wharf site comprising land bounded: to the north Hertford Union Canal; to the east Roach Road; to the south Wyke Road, Remus Road, Monier Road; to the west Wansbeck Road

2. Presenting team

Vanessa Coetzee	Peabody
Graham Haworth	Haworth Tompkins
Ken Okonkwo	Haworth Tompkins
Charles Moran	CMA Planning

3. Planning authority's views

Peabody acquired the Neptune Wharf and Monier Road sites in April 2014 with Planning Consent to deliver 578 homes. Haworth Tompkins Architects have been appointed to enhance the design of phases 1 and 2 of Neptune Wharf, excluding Block A, which will be the subject of an architectural competition. The proposal is for minor material amendments (section 73 application) which are intended to improve residential quality and deliver more commercial space.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel is pleased to offer its support to the proposed amendments to the planning approval for Neptune Wharf, designed by Haworth Tompkins. These promise to enhance architectural quality and additional floorspace, designed to maximise flexibility for a variety of uses. The panel understands that the landscape design for the scheme will come forward as a future reserved matters application. Whilst the evolving landscape designs were not presented at this review, the panel offers some comments on this at a strategic level. Further detailed comments are provided below on: scale and massing; workspace; architectural expression; and landscape design.

Scale and massing

- The panel is happy to support an increase in the scale of development of approximately 1m, on the basis of the improved workspace accommodation this creates.

Workspace

- The proposed amendments to the application include the creation of double height workspace at ground level. This offers scope for either additional mezzanine accommodation, or double height workspace.

- The panel welcome this change to the approved scheme, which not only maximises the amount of workspace provided, but also increases its flexibility for a variety of uses.
- For example, double height space will provide the ability to accommodate people who make large things, such as sculptors.
- The panel has previously raised a concern about the appropriateness of fully glazed ground floor units for use by creative industries, which may prefer greater privacy and enclosure.
- The panel would encourage Haworth Tompkins to design a variety of different ground floor facades that can fit within the structural grid, providing openness or enclosure, as required by occupants.

Architectural expression

- The panel welcomes the variation in architectural character between different blocks, described as ‘frame’, ‘wharf’, ‘surface’ and ‘stacked maisonettes’.
- Each of these block types has a different architectural expression, but all use the same material palette of brick and pre-cast concrete.
- The panel supports this approach, and on the basis of the information presented, thinks that characterful, high quality architecture, appropriate to the context of Fish Island will be achieved.
- The panel particularly admires the proposed roofscape, with set back top floor units confidently elevated in brick, and articulated roof modelling to the stacked maisonettes
- At a detailed level, the panel welcomes the intention to use thermally broken concrete frames. However, the panel notes that this could either appear thin and insubstantial, or solid and robust, depending on its detailing and construction.
- The quality of bricks used in construction will also be crucial to the success of this development, given the welcome simplicity of the architecture.

Landscape design

- The panel has previously commented on the first iteration of the landscape design, and would welcome a further review to discuss this in more detail. However, the following strategic comments were made at this review.

- The panel would encourage collaboration between the Neptune Wharf team and the LLDC, to develop the design of the footbridge landing in Lofthouse Square.
- The potential for a new bridge adjacent to the lock to the west of Neptune Wharf has also been discussed. Similarly, the panel would encourage collaboration with the McGrath's team to ensure this is successfully integrated into both schemes.
- The panel has previously commented that the distinctiveness of each open space could be further developed. For example, Ripboth Yard will be mainly for residential and community use, including children's play. On the other hand, Neptune Yard will be almost exclusively an amenity for those using the workspaces.
- The scheme also creates large public spaces on Smeed Road and towards the canal. Further detail on the design of these spaces, including the potential for tree planting would be welcome.

Next steps

- The panel would be happy to support minor amendments to the planning approval for Neptune Wharf, based on the information presented at this review.
- A further opportunity to comment on the landscape design would be welcome at a future review.