



FRAME PROJECTS

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: UCL East – Marshgate Plot 1

Thursday 17 May 2018

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Catherine Burd
Mike Martin

Attendees

Hilary Wrenn	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Esther Everett	London Legacy Development Corporation
Gwenaël Jerrett	London Legacy Development Corporation
Susie Hamilton	London Legacy Development Corporation
Tessa Kordeczka	Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

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

1. Project name and site address

University College London East – Marshgate Plot 1

2. Presenting team

Alan Stanton	Stanton Williams
Gavin Henderson	Stanton Williams
Richard Wardle	Stanton Williams
Martijn Slob	Vogt
Michelle Ineson	Vogt
Keith Butler	UCL
David Parkinson	WSP
Richard Maung	Deloitte
Phil Wright	Deloitte

3. Planning authority's views

The planning authority has had several meetings with the design team. There is strong support for much of the proposed design. A further meeting to consider the public realm is envisaged. The planning authority is particularly interested to receive the Quality Review Panel's comments on: the building's architecture, including the treatment of the façades and especially the balconies; the north façade and activation of that frontage; the legibility of the public's journey through the building, including the location of stairs and lifts; the landscape design; and how well the building sits within the wider landscape context.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel offers its warm support for the proposed design of UCL East – Marshgate Plot 1. This is a scheme of exceptional quality that fully meets the requirements of LLDC Local Plan Policy BN.10 on tall buildings, including 'outstanding' architecture. The panel suggests some minor refinements to the design of the balconies and lecture theatre. It repeats its strong support for the materials strategy – including the way in which it reinforces the concept of a 'fluid zone'. While the building's internal organisation results in exciting spaces, the panel suggests that access for the public could be made more obvious. The panel repeats its support for the landscape and public realm strategy. It suggests that there may be scope for making Thornton Street more hospitable, despite its considerable constraints. These comments are expanded below and those made at the previous review that remain relevant are repeated for clarity.



Architecture

- The panel commends the design team for the clarity of its presentation, helpfully supported by a model.
- The architecture proposed for UCL East – Marshgate Plot 1 is exceptional. The panel has no hesitation in concluding that it will meet the requirement of Policy BN.10 for ‘outstanding’ architecture.
- The architecture excels in its proportions and details, for example: the rhythm established by the windows; an impressive main entrance; and well considered corners to the façades.
- A minor reservation is expressed about the scale of the lecture theatre and the columns supporting its projection on the north façade. The panel thinks that this could appear a little whimsical in relation to the rest of the building and suggests some further thinking around its design.
- The projection of the lecture theatre, and its columns, could possibly draw people towards that façade, rather than the entrance on the east façade (see also comment below).
- The panel also suggests that enclosing the projecting balconies on the south and east façades, by incorporating a roof, arguably makes them look smaller and detracts from their impact.

Materials

- The panel repeats its support for the materials strategy, including a layering of materials that recalls the story of the local geology. Where the coarser material is proposed for the lower levels of the building, it will be important to ensure that, while rough, it is still of high quality.
- The way in which the landscape and public realm design is refined into the design of the fabric of the building is inspired. The continuity of materials (exposed aggregate concrete paving) flowing seamlessly through the scheme – from outside to inside – is a strong concept that promises to work particularly well.
- The panel points to the importance of ensuring that there is a warmth to the materials – to avoid any perception of the building being austere or unwelcoming.

Plan and layout

- The concept of the ‘fluid zone’ developed for the masterplan of UCL East has been skilfully interpreted for Marshgate Plot 1.



- The building's internal organisation is both interesting and exciting. The panel suggests, however, that the route for the public from ground to first floor could be made more legible. While the main escalator for use by students is obvious, the stairs and lift for the public appear less so. More thought should perhaps be given to identifying more clearly what will draw people up to the first floor and how it can be reached.
- The building provides delightful, generous spaces. It will be important to ensure that there is ample storage space in order not to compromise their quality.
- The acoustics of these spaces will also need to be carefully considered; the panel welcomes assurances that the acoustic performance of the building is being tested.

Public realm and landscape design strategy

- The panel repeats its support for the proposed public realm and landscape design strategy.
- It poses a question about the way in which the boulevard in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and its avenue of trees ends at the northeast corner of the building. Pedestrians may not be purposefully guided by the landscape design towards the building's entrance on the promenade. The panel suggests that tree planting proposed for UCL East could reinforce the route to this entrance.
- The panel acknowledges the constraints posed by Thornton Street – existing utilities, anticipated crowd flows, and Blue Badge parking – and that control over the public realm is limited. It suggests, however, that there may be scope to make this road more hospitable. A simple strategy of ground plane and large trees is proposed. The panel suggests that there may be potential to incorporate other elements such as drainage, for example a rain garden, into areas of the ground plane that might be permeable.
- While supporting inclusion of bold, large scale benches, the panel suggests that some furniture in the public realm might be designed and positioned to create more social spaces.
- The panel recommends careful thought around effectively combining photovoltaic panels with green / brown roofs to support biodiversity.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel commends the design team for a scheme of exceptional quality – which will set the standard for UCL East buildings to be brought forward in later phases. It looks forward to seeing the passion and conviction evident in the design followed through to construction.

