

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Neptune Wharf

Thursday 17 October 2013, 10.00 – 11.30

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)

Martin Stockley

Attendees

Anthony Hollingsworth

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Allison De Marco

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Eleanor Fawcett

London Legacy Development Corporation

Deborah Denner

Fortismere Associates

Apologies / also copied to

Vivienne Ramsey

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Tim Ross

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Lyndon Fothergill

Greater London Authority

1. Project name and site address

Neptune Wharf, Wyke Road, London E15

LLDC PPDT application reference: 12/00210/OUT

2. Presenting team

Monica Coffey

Stock Woolstencroft

Owen O'Carroll

Stock Woolstencroft

3. Planning authority's views

LLDC officers welcome the submitted amendments to the planning application for Neptune Wharf. Several elements of the hybrid application are now seeking outline approval: the school, the landscape design, the residential tall building next to the A12 and the Lofthouse. It is intended that both the Lofthouse and residential tall building should be brought forward through an architectural competition, and intend to secure this through a S106 agreement. Confirmation of the commercial strategy and percentage of affordable housing has not yet been provided. However, overall LLDC officers are pleased with the way the design team has responded to their comments, and comments from the Quality Review Panel at a pre-application stage.

6. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel supports the revised planning application for Neptune Wharf for approval. A scheme of appropriate scale and massing, mix of uses, and architectural expression is now proposed, promising successful development of the site. However, this design has evolved through a highly unsatisfactory process of submitting a scheme for planning approval of wholly unacceptable scale, with amendments now proposed to reduce this. Some elements of the application have been submitted for outline approval, including the landscape design, residential tall building next to the A12, Lofthouse and school. Some comments on these elements of the scheme, and on the mix of uses, detailed design, and potential involvement of the Peabody Trust are provided below.

Landscape design

- The panel supports the creation of several new public routes through the site, including access to the waterfront on the Hertford Union Canal. These include north south routes that could connect to a future bridge link across the Hertford Union Canal.
- Play facilities are well distributed around the scheme, on the Canalside, in Ripboth and Wansbeck Yards, and Smeed Gardens.
- The landscape design for Neptune Wharf is submitted for outline approval, which will allow for further refinement of the detailed design.
- As this work continues, clear briefs will be needed to make the most of the different characters of Neptune Yard, Ripboth Yard, and Lofthouse Square.
- In the detailed design of the streets at Neptune Wharf, the panel would encourage the design team to avoid designing street corners to reflect vehicle turning circles. Laying out paving in a simpler orthogonal arrangement should be both cheaper to build, and more likely to signal that pedestrians have priority.

- The public realm of Neptune Wharf will be subjected to intense pressures from servicing and parking, and paving materials will therefore need to be of the highest quality. For example granite sets are likely to be the most appropriate material for areas where vehicles will have access and where sump oil would stain cheaper concrete paving.
- A clear strategy for on-going management and maintenance will also be essential to the success of the landscape design.

Residential tall building and Lofthouse

- The panel supports the planning authority's intention to require architectural competitions as the basis for the design of the residential tall building adjacent to the A12, and the Lofthouse, which is envisaged as a special element of the scheme.

Primary school

- The location of the primary school site next to the A12 means it will suffer from noise and pollution.
- If this is the only viable location for the school, great care will be needed in its design to mitigate the challenges of its site.

Mix of uses

- The mix of uses proposed at Neptune Wharf is a strength of the scheme, including commercial units and workspace as well as residential accommodation.
- The panel have previously supported the use of the Lofthouse as managed workspace, and would encourage this use to be reinstated, to support the creative economy characteristic of the area.
- Any planning approval should secure this mix of uses, for example by restricting permitted development rights to prevent conversion of office to residential use.

Detailed Design

- Good quality construction materials, and robust construction detailing, creating shadow and depth would be essential to achieving high quality buildings.
- Quality of materials and construction will be equally important for public spaces at Neptune Wharf.

- Any planning approval should safeguard the quality of construction for this site through conditions requiring submission of typical construction details, material samples and site inspections.
- The panel would encourage the client to retain Stock Woolstencroft through the construction phase of this project, to ensure that the architectural concept is followed through in the construction detailing, and not compromised by a Design and Build process.

Peabody Trust

- The potential involvement of the Peabody Trust as client / developer for the first two phases of development is encouraging. Their track record of delivering high quality housing would give confidence that the design, construction and management of the scheme will be successfully resolved.
- Peabody have also offered a higher proportion of affordable housing. The panel would support the planning authority in seeking legal confirmation of the involvement of the Peabody Trust, as part of any planning approval.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel would welcome an opportunity to comment on the reserved matters proposals for the residential tall building next to the A12, Lofthouse, school and landscape design, at a pre-application stage.