

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Vittoria Wharf

Thursday 17 October 2013, 15.45 – 17.00

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)

Martin Stockley

Mark Brearley

Neil Deely

Attendees

Rachel Gleave

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Deborah Denner

Fortismere Associates

Apologies / report copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Eleanor Fawcett

London Legacy Development Corporation

Shay Bugler

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

1. Project name and site address

Vittoria Wharf, Stour Road / Beachy Road, London
Planning Application reference 13/00280/FUL

2. Presenting team

John Leetch John Leetch Architects
Tim Gaskell CMA Planning

3. Planning authority's views

LLDC planning officers confirm that the scale and massing of development proposed at Vittoria Wharf is in accordance with the 4 – 6 storeys recommended by the Fish Island Area Action Plan. They would welcome the Quality Review Panel's views on the detailed design, architectural expression and materials for the scheme. This will be important to the success of the scheme in relation to the adjacent conservation area. Planning officers are also not clear why the Stour Space, which is an existing building is included in the red line area of the application.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel finds much to admire in the development proposals for Vittoria Wharf, and is pleased to recommend the scheme for planning approval. John Leech Architects have successfully responded to the character of Fish Island, in the scale and massing, architectural expression and mix of uses proposed. They have also identified an exciting opportunity for connection with a bridge that is proposed alongside Vittoria Wharf, to provide access to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. In the context of offering support to this application, the panel makes some detailed comments on the affordable workspace, architecture, yard and bridge below. The panel thinks Vittoria Wharf has the potential to become an exemplar scheme, if the design team can respond to these detailed points, and if the affordable workspace it offers can be secured through a planning agreement.

Affordable workspace

- Inclusion of the Stour Space in the red line boundary of this application, although no alterations to this existing studio space are proposed, will allow for this valuable facility to be protected through a S106 agreement, which the panel would support.
- The panel also applauds the decision to provide workspace over several floors of a purpose designed building. This is likely to provide much more desirable workspace than could be delivered through ground floor units spread across the site.
- No affordable housing is proposed as part of the development, with affordable workspace being put forward as an alternative planning gain.

- If the planning authority accepts this approach, it will be essential that this workspace is secured in perpetuity, with genuinely affordable rents.
- One possible means of achieving this would be to hand over the workspace to a charity experienced in managing such facilities. It would be more difficult to secure the future management of the workspace using S106 controls alone.

Architecture

- In general, the panel thinks that the architectural approach to the design of Vittoria Wharf is very strong, with a particularly interesting roof scape.
- In some areas, there may be scope to make the architecture more robust, for example by substituting metal cladding for the timber proposed at upper levels.
- If timber cladding is used, the quality of its material and construction detailing will be critical, and this will require a generous budget.
- Expansive glazing is shown facing the canal, and again, high quality materials and sophisticated construction detailing will be required to deliver the quality of architecture that the visualisations promise.
- The panel also questions whether the large fixed window, and small high level opening lights currently shown are the right approach. Whilst there are doors leading from these living spaces onto their balconies, there may be times when occupants would prefer to open a window for ventilation – for example if a baby or toddler lives in the flat.
- Increasing the floor to ceiling heights in some areas of the development could enhance its quality and future flexibility – for example, the café would benefit from at least 4m floor to ceiling height.
- Residential living spaces are currently arranged to face east over the canal. Whilst this will provide fantastic views, living spaces facing west onto the courtyard could also be attractive, and benefit from evening sun.

Yard

- Visualisations of the yard at the centre of the site suggest that this will be a high quality space.
- Placing more active uses around the yard could make the most of this space as a social heart for the scheme. For example, giving the café a greater presence in the yard could enliven this space, as well as creating potential for sheltered west facing outdoor seating.

- However, the yard will be used by vehicles, for deliveries and potentially also for disabled parking. Durable paving, such as granite, which can stand up to heavy traffic and sump oil staining, will be required in this area.
- The panel is also not convinced this yard is the right location for trees, which may be in the way in a busy yard.

Bridge

- The panel supports the proposition that this development could link to the bridge which is planned by the LLDC alongside the site, to connect Fish Island with the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.
- Whilst construction of this bridge is not imminent, it should be possible for the LLDC to bring forward design work, to support this strong idea.
- Allowing the café at Vittoria Wharf to spill out onto the bridge will bring fantastic life and animation to the bridge.
- The panel would encourage the LLDC as planning authority and developer, to support the aspiration for Vittoria Wharf to connect to the bridge, through design collaboration.