



FRAME PROJECTS

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review: 55 – 69 Rothbury Road

Thursday 18 May 2017

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Russell Curtis
Andrew Harland

Attendees

Russell Butchers	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Steve Tomlinson	London Legacy Development Corporation
Tessa Kordeczka	Frame Projects

Report copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Jerry Bell	London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from a pre-application review of the scheme for 55 – 69 Rothbury Road. Panel members who attended the previous meeting were: Peter Studdert (chair); Julia Barfield; Russell Curtis; Kelvin Campbell; and Tom Lonsdale.

1. Project name and site address

55 – 69 Rothbury Road

Planning application reference: 17/00112/FUL

2. Presenting team

Adrien Vick	GML Architects
Richard Fitter	Entran
Jan Donovan	Rolfe Judd Planning
Chris Brown	Rolfe Judd Planning

3. Planning authority's views

The strategic masterplan for Hackney Wick anticipated access to a shared service yard to the side of the building, adjacent to the consented scheme for 1 – 2 Hepscoth Road. This is not included in the planning application for the scheme at 55 – 69 Rothbury Road. The planning authority continues to recommend inclusion of a service yard, with access from Rothbury Road.

At its previous review, the Quality Review Panel had suggested that there may be scope to apply a different treatment to the upper storey of the building. The planning authority would welcome the panel's comments on the revised design in response to this suggestion, including the proposed materials.

The scheme for 55 – 69 Rothbury Road will be required to meet the provisions of LLDC Local Plan Policy BN.10 on tall buildings.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel finds considerable merit in the proposal for 55 – 69 Rothbury Road, including its development solely for commercial use. It regrets, however, that the provision of the Hackney Wick masterplan for a service yard between this development and that of 1 – 2 Hepscoth Road has not been reinstated. It would support all efforts to achieve this. The panel questions whether the current servicing strategy will be adequate for a commercial building of six storeys. It also repeats its reservations about extensive glazing to the south facing elevation along Rothbury Road. This risks jeopardising the environmental quality of workspaces. The panel thinks that the revised design – where a different architectural treatment is applied to the set back upper storey – is successful but may be strengthened by a more solid expression of the parapet.

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



Response to context

- The site for development at 55 – 69 Rothbury Road constitutes part of Block K2, within Plot K of the Hackney Wick masterplan. The consented scheme for 1 – 2 Hepscoth Road, to be developed by Aitch Group, includes a permitted boundary fence. The building proposed for 55 – 69 Rothbury Road extends up to that fence, incorporating the entire site.
- This precludes the possibility of providing the shared service yard between these two developments anticipated in the Hackney Wick masterplan. The panel regrets this and repeats its view that this is a lost opportunity – especially in the context of a masterplan that emphasises yards and through routes.
- Excluding a service yard will have major implications for servicing the development at 55 – 69 Rothbury Road. There will be no off street servicing – all servicing will be from a service bay on the other side of Rothbury Road.
- Given the nature of anticipated uses in workspace distributed over six storeys – basement and five upper storeys – the panel questions whether the servicing strategy proposed will be adequate.
- The panel repeats its recommendation that every effort be made to explore a workable servicing strategy with all relevant parties. It would strongly support the planning authority in initiatives taken to revert to and implement the original intention of the masterplan.
- If it proves not to be possible to deliver the service yard, the panel is satisfied that the revised plan and layout of the scheme for 55 – 69 Rothbury Road are the best options. It welcomes the relocation of refuse and cycle storage.

Commercial use

- The panel repeats its strong support for the strategic decision to develop this site solely for commercial use. This is an appropriate response for this location in Hackney Wick and Fish Island. It will be important to encourage those already working in Hackney Wick and Fish Island to remain, as well as attracting others from outside the area.
- Supporting creative / ‘making’ industries is considered particularly appropriate. This has implications for both the design and servicing of the building. The panel remains concerned that both design and servicing currently suggest an office building rather than workspaces for more practical uses.
- Flexibility and adaptability of workspaces will be important. For example, the lifts shown in plans appear principally to be designed to accommodate people. Given the nature of the uses that it is hoped to encourage, larger service / heavy good lifts will be required.



Architectural expression

- The panel repeats its view that the scale of the building is appropriate for this location. While generally supporting the aesthetic sought for the building – in part derived from Hackney Wick’s industrial heritage – it questions the balance between glass and masonry. Glazing is predominant.
- The extensive glazing of the elevation along Rothbury Road could convey the impression of an office building rather than more creative / ‘making’ workspaces. The large amount of glazing could also have implications for the environmental quality of those spaces (see below).
- The panel thinks that the revised design of the top of the building, with a set back upper storey expressed differently from the lower storeys, is an effective response to its earlier suggestion to celebrate the top of the building and perhaps introduce a richer roofscape. The revised design will read well in oblique views of the building from Rothbury Road.
- The panel thinks that the contrast between the brick of the lower storeys and the stone of the upper storey works well. It thinks, however, that the distinction between the more solid expression of the lower storeys and the lighter expression of the upper storey would be reinforced by increasing the height of the parapet.
- With further refinement, the panel thinks that the scheme proposed for 55 – 69 Rothbury Road has the potential to meet the requirements of Policy BN.10.

Quality of workspace

- The panel repeats its concern that the extensively glazed south facing elevation risks resulting in overheated, uncomfortable workspaces. It seeks assurances that the environmental quality will be acceptable and recommends that the planning authority examine this closely.
- If problems of overheating are encountered by those using the workspaces, this could lead to potentially unsightly efforts at mitigation – for example scruffy blinds – which would detract from the building’s otherwise attractive and coherent appearance.

Next steps

- While the Quality Review Panel broadly supports the proposal for 55 – 69 Rothbury, it repeats its disappointment that it does not deliver the shared service yard between this development and that of 1 – 2 Hepscott Road envisioned in the Hackney Wick strategic masterplan. It therefore encourages all parties to continue to explore the feasibility of incorporating a service yard.
- If this proves not to be possible, the panel thinks that the proposed plan and layout represent the best option.



- The panel also recommends further refinement of the architectural expression of the building – including reconsidering the extensive glazing of the Rothbury Road elevation and strengthening the parapet.

