

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: 1 – 2 Hepscoth Road

Thursday 19 November 2015

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Julia Barfield
Neil Deely
Tom Lonsdale

Attendees

Sarah Jones	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Natalie Dobraszcyk	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Hannah Lambert	London Legacy Development Corporation
Tessa Kordeczka	Fortismere Associates

Report also copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Allison De Marco	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Tim Ross	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 1 – 2 Hepscoth Road. Panel members who attended the previous meeting were: Peter Studdert (chair); Tom Holbrook; and David Bonnett.

1. Project name and site address

1 – 2 Hepscott Road, Hackney Wick

Planning reference: 15/00446/FUL

2. Presenting team

Phil Catcheside	Hawkins\Brown
Matthew Ruddy	Hawkins\Brown
Oliver McKay	Nigel Cowling Ltd
Nick Lawrence	Aitch Group
Tim Gaskell	CMA Planning

3. Planning authority's views

The planning authority's main concerns about the revised proposals are: ground floor and mezzanine plans for the commercial space; the roof design; and parking provision.

The proposed massing in the Hackney Wick Masterplan for this location had envisaged a stepping down of the elevation at the junction of Hepscott Road and White Post Lane to respond to the locally listed former Lord Napier public house opposite.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel broadly supports the proposal for the scheme for 1- 2 Hepscott Road. It welcomes modifications to the design that allow 100% re-provision of employment space. This results, however, in a building height exceeding planning policy for this location. The design of the roof storey adds considerably to the architectural character and interest of the building; the panel suggests, however, refinements to the building's geometry to improve the relationship of the roof to street elevations. It also thinks that the rear elevation is overly complex and would benefit from simplification. These comments are expanded below, and earlier comments that remain relevant are repeated for clarity.

Mix of uses

- Two options – either a stand alone building or part of an urban block – had earlier been considered by the panel. It had supported this approach as a response to the emerging – but not yet finalised – Hackney Wick Masterplan. The option of a stand alone building was subsequently taken forward.
- The panel had expressed concern that only 50% of existing employment space would be provided by this option.

- It therefore welcomes modifications to the design – an increased ground floor to ceiling height and introduction of a mezzanine level – that enables 100% re-provision of employment space.
- The panel notes that the private yard created at the rear of the building is included in the total employment space area.
- As a general principle, the panel would expect all development in this area to meet policy requirements for affordable housing.

Building height

- Raising the ground floor to ceiling height and introducing a mezzanine level to accommodate additional employment space has resulted in an increased overall building height, exceeding the 22m building height parameter by 1.6m.
- Although set back, the roof storey – which provides residential accommodation – increases the building to seven storeys. The panel observes, however, that the building will generally be perceived as six storeys.
- The panel notes the proximity of the locally listed former Lord Napier public house – which is two storeys.
- In terms of planning policy, the panel suggests that further justification may be required for exceeding height parameters in this location – to ensure that this does not set a general precedent for departing from planning guidance on building heights.

Architectural expression

- The panel thinks that, generally, the architectural expression of the development – which draws inspiration from warehouse buildings in the surrounding area – is successful. It could, however, be improved by some refinements.
- The sober brick façades of the street elevations – which are lightened by the fenestration – work well.
- The panel broadly supports the modified roof design. This makes a strong architectural statement in a building with simple street elevations, adding to its character and interest.
- The silvery, reflective effect of the roof storey has the potential to be successful. In terms of materials, the panel recommends that a lighter colour – silver or light bronze – be used in order to achieve the desired light, reflective quality; grey or dark bronze could be too dark.
- The panel questions, however, how well the design of the roof storey relates to the rest of the building. This relationship appears particularly awkward at the chamfered corner on Hepscott Road / White Post Lane.

- The panel recommends further thought to resolve the geometry of the building, especially where the roof storey turns the corner.
- In particular, the sharp fin of the roof storey sits uncomfortably with the softer character of the chamfered corner. This relationship could be improved if the roof storey at this point were set back further.
- The panel supports the extension of the reflective material used for the roof storey down onto the rear elevation in the form of columns. This introduces an element of consistency which the panel thinks could be made more evident through the detailing.
- Generally, however, the panel thinks that the rear elevation is less well resolved.
- While supporting the principle of deck access – which is well suited to the narrow plan depth – the panel finds the design of this elevation overly complex.
- For example, it questions whether the overhanging canopy supported on columns is necessary.
- It also thinks that the brick ‘bookends’ at either end of this elevation may appear rather dark and sombre and could benefit from a lighter treatment.
- The panel stresses that, for the scheme to be successful, the quality of materials and detailing must be exceptionally high.

Landscape design

- The option of a stand alone building provides a gated working yard at the rear of the building which is primarily for the use of occupants of the employment space.
- Given that this will be a working yard, including service vehicle access to commercial units, materials used in the landscape design must be suitably robust.

Access and parking

- The panel had not thought it acceptable to rely on existing on-street parking to accommodate Blue Badge parking. It therefore welcomes the provision of one off-street Blue Badge parking space at the rear of the development with access from White Post Lane.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel encourages the design team to refine the proposals for the scheme at 1 -2 Hepscott Road in the light of its comments.

- If the issues raised are satisfactorily resolved, in consultation with planning officers, the panel would be pleased to support the planning application for this development.