



FRAME PROJECTS

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review: Wickside (McGrath site)

Thursday 25 January 2018

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Neil Deely
Adam Khan
Kate Digney

Attendees

Catherine Smyth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Sara Dawes	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Hannah Lambert	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 four pre-application reviews of the scheme for Wickside. Panel members who attended the previous meetings were: Peter Studdert (chair); Neil Deely; Tom Holbrook; Julia Barfield; Ann Sawyer; Adam Khan; Dan Epstein; Peter Lainson; Andrew Harland; David Bonnett; and Tom Lonsdale.

1. Project name and site address

Wickside (McGrath Waste Transfer Station), Hepscott Road, London E9 5HH

2. Presenting team

Frank Green	BUJ Architects, Partner
Guy Forrester	BUJ Architects, Partner
Katie Hawkins	BUJ Architects
Robert Sakula	Ash Sakula Architects
Sven Muendner	Beispiel Ltd
Philip Chadda	TC Developments

3. Planning authority's views

The planning authority considers that the mixed use development proposed for Wickside meets the priorities and policy requirements for this site. Negotiations with the applicant have reached satisfactory outcomes on issues including: the delivery of affordable housing; overall scale and massing; incorporation of new north / south connections; quality of residential accommodation; retention and re-use of buildings of heritage value; and provision of a new canal side park.

Ideally, a decision on the planning application for Wickside would be required in February 2018.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel finds much to admire in the proposals for Wickside and anticipates that they will result in a successful development. In the absence of a review of detailed designs, however, the panel is at this stage able to provide conditional, rather than unreserved, support for approval of the planning application. While the scheme shows much promise and includes many impressive features, the panel would require additional detailed information to be confident of the quality of some aspects – for example, architectural expression, including meeting the requirements of LLDC Local Plan Policy BN.10; and elements of the public realm and landscape design, including access and servicing. These comments are expanded below.

Review process

- The panel had last reviewed proposals for Wickside in September 2015. While designs for this large, complex and challenging scheme had progressed significantly, the panel concluded that much work remained to be done – and that a challenge remained to achieve the high aspirations for design quality.



- The panel also advised that further reviews would be needed to assess detailed design proposals for different elements of the development, before submission of a planning application. The panel therefore regrets that it did not have the opportunity to review detailed designs before a planning submission.

Masterplan

- The panel welcomes the design team's thoughtful and enthusiastic approach to the masterplan for Wickside and repeats its view that it has the potential to result in a successful development.
- It finds much to admire in the proposals for different 'character areas' across the site; these provide the richness and diversity considered particularly appropriate for development of this site.
- More detailed information on the access and servicing strategy – and its impact on the public realm – is required in order to be confident that proposed vehicle and pedestrian routes through the development work well.
- The intention is to restrict vehicular traffic within the development; access to routes other than those designated as vehicle routes will be privately managed. The panel stresses the importance of ensuring effective management of access across the development – so that it responds consistently to the life style and requirements of residents and others.

Architectural expression

- At its previous review the panel had thought that the designs for some of the blocks – then at an early stage of development – appeared rather generic and uninspiring. This applied in particular to the larger scale blocks at the west of the site, including those along Wansbeck Road, such as the proposed brewery. The panel had suggested refinements to the designs to enhance their distinctiveness.
- In the absence of information on the detailed design for blocks across the development, the panel is unable to comment definitively on architectural quality – including of those buildings to which Local Plan Policy BN.10 (Tall Buildings) would apply.
- Aspirations for design quality remain high. In order to achieve those aspirations, the panel strongly recommends that the design team is retained throughout detailed design and construction.

Residential accommodation

- The panel welcomes the planning authority's assurances that the quality of residential accommodation promises to be high – including over 85 per cent dual aspect units.



- As a detailed comment, the panel recommends further consideration of the layout of residential accommodation where bedrooms at ground floor face directly onto the street. Some mitigation, for example, slightly raising the level of bedrooms, should be considered.
- Additional information on, for example, approaches to residential entrances and location of refuse storage would enable the panel to better assess the quality of the environment to be experienced by residents.

Public realm and landscape design

- Generally, the panel supports the approach to the design of the public realm. This benefits from considerable diversity. More detail on, for example, the interface between residential accommodation and the public realm, including defensible space, the approach to play, and sustainable drainage would be helpful.
- The panel expresses some reservations about the proposed 'mountain' – an inaccessible four metre high mound, planted with large poplar trees – that forms a backdrop to the grassed lawn area of the canal side park. It recommends reconsidering how successful this might be. It would cast the semi private residential space, Kelday Yard, behind it into shade, and the concrete wall of the structure would be particularly vulnerable to graffiti.
- The panel strongly supports all interventions to improve the inhospitable environment along Wansbeck Road, bordering the A12, to the west of the site.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel thinks that the proposals for Wickside have the potential to result in a successful development. It offers its support for approval of the planning application but this remains conditional: the panel has not had the opportunity to review detailed designs and is therefore unable to comment definitively on their quality.
- The panel reiterates the importance of ensuring that the high quality aspired to at Wickside is protected and secured, including through the retention of the design team through to detailed design and construction.

