

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: Strand East Plot R6

Thursday 29 October 2015

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)

John Lyall

Tom Lonsdale

Attendees

Will Steadman

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Natalie Dobraszcyk

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Deborah Denner

Fortismere Associates

Tessa Kordeczka

Fortismere Associates

Report also copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

Allison De Marco

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Eleanor Fawcett

London Legacy Development Corporation

Pippa Gueterbock

London Legacy Development Corporation

James Bolt

London Borough of Newham

Ben Hull

London Borough of Newham

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from a pre-application review of the reserved matters proposals for Strand East Plot R6. Panel members who attended the previous meeting were: Peter Studdert (chair); Catherine Burd; Lynne Sullivan; Tom Lonsdale; and Mark Brearley.

1. Project name and site address

Strand East / Sugar House Lane redevelopment: land to south of High Street, Stratford, east of River Lea Navigation and west and north of Three Mills Wall River

Planning application reference: 15/00435/REM

2. Presenting team

Michiel van Soest	Vastint UK B.V.
Hilary Boyle	Vastint UK B.V.
Alex Ely	Mae Architects
Isabel da Silva	Mae Architects
Antony Nelson	Planit-IE
Christopher Schiele	GL Hearn
Jennie Bean	GL Hearn

3. Planning authority's views

The planning authority's main area of concern is the interface between ground floor residential accommodation and the public realm. Specifically, it thinks that locating bedrooms at ground floor level fronting directly onto streets around the perimeter of Plot R6 is not best practice. It strongly recommends that this be reconsidered, for example by raising the level of ground floor bedrooms, considering duplex apartments, or flipping the layout of apartments so that living rooms front the street and bedrooms the courtyard gardens. This last option would have the added advantage of animating the streets.

The planning authority is particularly concerned that, if this configuration is approved, it may be perceived as acceptable for the wider development, compromising privacy for residents, and the quality of streets.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel welcomes modifications to the scheme that respond to some of its previous comments. Despite some interventions to mitigate the disadvantages of bedrooms in the perimeter blocks fronting onto streets, however, the panel agrees with planning officers that such an arrangement is unsatisfactory.

Raising bedroom floor levels above street level has helped to mitigate the problem to an extent, but ground floor bedrooms facing Sugar House Lane will suffer from noise from buses and refuse disposal, as well as general street noise. Switching bedrooms to face the courtyards would improve the situation but would reduce the amenity value of the courtyards. The preferred solution would be duplex units on the ground and first floors ensuring bedrooms are always at first floor level, although this would alter the mix of the development. The problem stems from the over-ambitious parameters plans for this plot which do not allow enough width in the site to resolve these issues in a satisfactory manner. A compromise solution may be to retain ground

floor bedrooms on the quieter western side of the development, maximising their floor height above street level, but exploring duplex solutions on the eastern frontage onto Sugar House Lane.

The panel suggests introducing some colour to the façades of the mews houses, and also some planting, which could enhance the currently rather austere character of the mews street. Efficient management across the Strand East development of the underground refuse system will be essential. These comments are expanded below.

Perimeter blocks

- The panel had previously expressed concern that bedrooms in the perimeter blocks front directly onto the pavements of Hunts Lane and Sugar House Lane – with minimal protection from noise and overlooking.
- This could present a particular problem for residents in apartments along Sugar House Lane which will be a bus route – and where waste containers will now also be located (see below).
- It had therefore suggested reconfiguring the internal arrangement of the perimeter blocks, including, for example, duplexes.
- The alternative suggested by planning officers of switching the bedrooms to the courtyard side would also deal with the problem, but at the expense the amenity value of the shared courtyards.
- The panel notes that the design team has sought to resolve this issue by proposing raised rooms facing the street – to create split level ground floors – and translucent shutters.
- It thinks that, internally, this could result in an interesting layout giving a higher ceiling height in the living areas and that the raised floor level, together with shutters, will help to increase privacy.
- However, while the panel acknowledges that the design team's modifications have improved the situation, it remains unconvinced and repeats its advice that bedrooms facing onto streets would generally be unacceptable.
- It would be particularly reluctant to see this model repeated for other plots in the Strand East development.
- Bedrooms facing onto the street – and the measures proposed to enhance privacy – would also have negative consequences for the character of streets, although the width and generosity of the perimeter entrances will to a certain extent help animate the street.
- The panel notes that the problem stems from the over-ambitious parameters plans for this plot which do not allow enough width in the site to provide any sort of privacy buffer to the ground floor rooms facing the street, together with

a mix that contains a high proportion of apartments, although it accepts that the parameters are already enshrined in the outline permission.

- A compromise solution may be to retain the ground floor bedrooms on the quieter western side of the development, maximising their floor height above street level, but exploring duplex solutions on the busier eastern frontage onto Sugar House Lane.

Mews houses

- The panel repeats its support for the design of the mews houses and finds much to admire in the clarity and simplicity of the architectural treatment of the mews houses.
- It thinks, however, that the uniformity of the houses might appear austere, and some permanent planting should be introduced to soften its appearance.
- It also suggests that some variation in the tone and colour of the façades could add to the rhythm and personality of the mews street. Touches of applied colour could be introduced, for example, to reveals.

Materials

- Precast concrete is proposed for both the perimeter blocks and the mews houses; careful construction detailing will be essential to ensure that it weathers well.

Landscape

- The panel thinks that the landscape design of the private shared courtyard gardens between the perimeter blocks and mews houses is well thought through.
- The courtyard gardens will provide good amenity spaces for adults and smaller children – but perhaps less so for older children. It is noted, however, that there are additional facilities for this age group close by, for example, the riverside park, the ‘hub’ space at southern point of Strand East and Three Mills Green.
- The panel questions the location of vents to the underground car park – integrated with communal tables. These occupy those areas enjoying the most sunlight which will become the most popular spots.
- This arrangement appears counter-intuitive – but the panel accepts that it may be dictated by other factors.
- The panel suggests that the character of the pedestrian street between the mews houses could be improved by some planting. Particularly if there is no variation in the colour of facades, some planting to soften the street will be essential.

- Some encouragement for residents to initially introduce their own planting may be needed, for example raised beds.
- High quality paving should be a priority – to provide an attractive palette to the ground surface as well as the façades.
- The quality of the mews street should encourage residents to create their own environment – one where, inside, they feel connected to the outside.

Refuse storage and collection

- The panel welcomes in principle the decision to incorporate a site wide strategy for an underground waste system. This has allowed more generous entrances to residential accommodation and inset building lines in Plot R6.
- Careful consideration will, however, need to be given to effective management of this system across the development in order to minimise potential nuisance, notably from noise late at night. This might include, for example, time locks on lids of refuse containers.
- This will particularly important for those streets – Hunts Lane and Sugar House Lane – where apartment bedrooms may front onto the street (as discussed above).

Cycle storage

- The panel fully supports the approach to cycle storage at below ground level.
- The provision of secure lockers, able to accommodate two cycles, for each residential unit is an excellent solution.

Next steps

- The panel recognises the creative thought that has gone into responding to the challenging brief for Strand East Plot R6.
- It repeats its concern, however, about bedrooms in the perimeter blocks fronting onto the street, which is not best practice, and suggests a compromise solution to the problem.
- The panel also emphasises the need for efficient management across the Strand East development of the underground refuse system.