



FRAME PROJECTS

## **London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel**

### **Report of Formal Review Meeting: Stratford Waterfront masterplan**

Thursday 7 September 2017

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

#### **Panel**

Peter Studdert (chair)  
Teresa Borsuk  
John O'Mara  
Adam Khan  
Jayne Earnscliffe  
Mike Martin

#### **Attendees**

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Catherine Smyth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Anne Ogundiya	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Richard McFerran	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Sara Dawes	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Sarah Birt	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Leona Roche	London Legacy Development Corporation
Thomas Powell	London Legacy Development Corporation
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects

#### **Apologies / report copied to**

Ben Hull	London Borough of Newham
----------	--------------------------

## **1. Project name and site address**

Stratford Waterfront, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

## **2. Presenting team**

Alex Wraight	Allies and Morrison
Eimear Hanratty	Allies and Morrison
Andrew Harland	LDA Design
Peter Maxwell	London Legacy Development Corporation
Irene Man	London Legacy Development Corporation
Greg Smith	London Legacy Development Corporation
Yuan Sun	London Legacy Development Corporation

## **3. Planning authority's views**

The masterplan for Stratford Waterfront has been revised in response to concerns about the impact of the previously proposed residential tall buildings on views from King Henry VIII's Mount in Richmond Park. Planning officers support this, and would welcome the Quality Review Panels on the amended scheme. Discussions between the planning authority and the applicant team are at an early stage. Further information has been requested on the way people will arrive at and move around the site, including details of the bridge connection to the International Quarter. The programme working towards a hybrid planning application in late 2018 is ambitious. A detailed application will be submitted for the University of the Arts London (UAL) building, whilst other elements including the residential buildings may be submitted in outline. This programme is dictated by the need for the UAL building to open for the academic year of 2022/23. The residential development is likely to be delivered through a public private partnership. A tender process to select a developer partner is expected to take place towards the end of 2017.



## 4. Quality Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The Quality Review Panel is broadly supportive of the revised proposals for Stratford Waterfront, and encourages the design team to create a place that fosters creativity and individuality. The decision to reduce the height of the residential buildings is positive, but the panel recognises the challenge of accommodating the same amount of development at a lower scale. This requires fresh thinking about the character of the place – and there is scope to refine the landscape and site topography to achieve this. Allowing views and routes through the cultural buildings, would also be welcomed. The architectural identity of the cultural buildings needs to be reinvented in response to their new arrangement. The concept of a 'union' between the different cultural institutions could be the basis of designs that create a unique visitor experience. As part of this process, making the activities taking place in the cultural and education buildings more visible would enhance the sense of purposeful civic buildings. It would compromise the quality of place if these uses are concealed behind a veneer of retail units, cafes and restaurants. Equally important will be the design of the London College of Fashion, which will be the main generator of activity at Stratford Waterfront. The panel suggested alternative typologies should be investigated for this building, to maximise natural light and ventilation for studio spaces. Locating it on the site closest to the F10 bridge could also be considered to provide three elevations with open aspect. Finally, the panel identified opportunities to enhance the feeling of a neighbourhood for the residential buildings, and give the spaces between them varied characters and uses.

### *Character of place*

- The revised brief requires the same quantum of development, without creating tall buildings, demanding fresh thinking about the character of Stratford Waterfront.
- Currently, the masterplan framework shows a 'terrace' of cultural buildings, with limited permeability from north-east to south-west. Public space is focused on the waterfront and an upper level plaza to the east of the site.
- There is a risk that this will result in a place that has a 'clean' or 'corporate' character, and the panel asks the design team to consider how the scheme could create the feel of a more organic piece of city.
- This could include exploring ideas of shelter, and opportunities to create more intimate spaces that people can appropriate for their own uses – for example by opening up spaces between party walls, which need not be straight.
- The panel would also encourage efforts to create views and routes through the cultural buildings, rather than a continuous block to the edge of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.



- There may also be scope to use the level changes across the site to create smaller spaces for inhabitation and performance.
- The panel questioned the extent and type of retail, café and restaurant accommodation at ground level – there is a risk the public realm will be dominated by this.
- Thinking about how cultural and education uses could be brought to ground level, and curating a variety of independently run shops and restaurants, could contribute to the vitality of the place.

#### *Landscape and site topography*

- The way in which the topography of the site is managed through the landscape design will be key to the success of the scheme – accommodating arrival from the F10 Bridge, as well as access to the waterfront at a lower level.
- The panel questions the point at which the upper level plaza steps down to the waterfront – so that the V & A shares the lower level space with the residential buildings.
- An alternative approach might be to use level changes to differentiate between civic public space at the upper level, extended to include the V&A, and public space with a community feel at the lower level next to the residential blocks.
- The panel also questions the proposed ‘grand staircase’ linking the two levels of public space. It notes that this will only have two functions: vertical circulation; and a place to sit.
- The idea of a diagonal ramp through the ‘grand staircase’ is also likely to be problematic. The steepness of this ramp, and the way it cuts across the stairs will make it difficult for some people to use, and a potential trip hazard. Handrails will be essential.
- In general the panel would encourage further thought about the way level changes are handled, and think it would be better if stairs were a less dominant feature.
- One option that could be explored would be to create a continuous slope from the F10 Bridge to the waterfront, with the ground floor of each building set at a different level in response.



### *Cultural buildings*

- The architectural identity of the cultural buildings needs to be reinvented in response to their new arrangement as a continuous 'terrace' rather than separate buildings as in the previous scheme.
- More clarity is needed about the extent to which each cultural building appears separate and distinctive, or part of cohesive whole. The concept of a 'union' between the different cultural institutions provides an opportunity to create a unique visitor experience.
- The idea of a 'terrace' of cultural buildings, each with its own texture and materiality could be very interesting. This could inspire a calm architecture, in contrast with the exuberance of the aquatics centre, and landmark stadium.
- However, it would be an equally valid approach to create highly distinctive architecture for the cultural buildings – reflecting a 'chemical reaction' between the different institutions.
- The panel welcome the idea of the 'back of house' areas opening up to Carpenters Road, and think this could be designed provide welcome interest along this street.

### *University of the Arts London*

- The London College of Fashion is likely to be the main generator of activity at Stratford Waterfront. This could inspire an approach to placemaking that emphasises that this is a student campus, with cultural activities in a supporting role.
- With this in mind, the panel would encourage more thought about the typology of the UAL building, which currently similar to an office, with a deep plan floor plate around an atrium.
- For example, two slim floor plates, more like the residential mid-rise towers, could provide studio space with better access to natural light and ventilation.
- Locating the London College of Fashion on the site closest to the F10 bridge would also provide three elevations with open aspect – more beneficial to academic accommodation than it will be to a performance space.



### *Residential buildings*

- The move from two residential tall buildings to four medium rise blocks is warmly welcomed by the panel.
- However, at the next design stage, the panel would encourage exploration of alternatives to the mid-scale towers now proposed.
- The residential development occupies a pivotal location in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, between the north and south areas of the park, and neighbouring the cultural quarter. Their design should therefore be of the highest quality.
- There would also be an argument for incorporating more public uses in the lower levels of the residential buildings, because of the prominence of the location in the Park.
- Additional community uses at ground level, such as a day nursery, could also help give the feeling of a neighbourhood.
- This might also imply that the spaces between the residential buildings could have different uses and characters, some more private, some more public.
- Although this part of the application will be in outline, it will be important to ensure that parameter plans and design codes are submitted to ensure that it is well integrated with the cultural quarter - even though it is likely to be developed separately.

### *Next steps*

The discussion at this meeting focused on the masterplan principles presented by the design team. The panel would welcome a further opportunity to comment on a more detailed masterplan, once this is available – before reviewing individual elements of the scheme.

