

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: Vittoria Wharf, Stour Road / Beachy Road

Thursday 8 October 2015

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

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)

Catherine Burd

Attendees

Allison De Marco

Hannah Lambert

Tessa Kordeczka

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions

London Legacy Development Corporation

Fortismere Associates

Report also copied to

Anthony Hollingsworth

Rachel Gleave

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from a pre-application review of the proposal for Vittoria Wharf, Stour Road / Beachy Road. Panel members who attended the previous meeting were: Peter Studdert (chair); Martin Stockley; Mark Brearley; and Neil Deely.

1. Project name and site address

Vittoria Wharf, Stour Road / Beachy Road
Planning application reference: 13/00280/FUL

2. Presenting team

John Leetch	Kruszelnicki Leetch Architects
Luke Kruszelnicki	Kruszelnicki Leetch Architects
Tim Gaskell	CMA Planning

3. Planning authority's views

The planning application for the scheme for Vittoria Wharf, Stour Road / Beachy Road – with a revised plan and additional information – had only recently been submitted. The planning authority is awaiting the report by its environmental consultants reviewing the applicant's daylight and sunlight levels for this dense development.

Some questions remain around the affordability of the studio spaces to be provided by the scheme; further discussion on this is required.

There is concern that, following amendment of the development's red line boundary, the planning application for Vittoria Wharf no longer includes provision for the kitchen area of neighbouring Stour Space. This could therefore have an impact on the future operation of Stour Space. The planning authority is seeking to ensure that Stour Space remains viable.

Progress continues on the proposal for a bridge to connect Fish Island to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (Bridge H16) – and to link this to the Vittoria Wharf development. A development partner has been appointed but a timeframe for implementation has yet to be finalised.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel repeats its previous broad support for this scheme – but regrets that Stour Space is no longer included in the development's red line boundary and that demolition of its kitchen is envisaged. This risks jeopardising the long term viability of Stour Space. In general, the panel thinks that amendments to the design respond well to its previous comments. It finds much to admire in the architectural treatment of the development – while stressing that high quality materials and sophisticated construction detailing will be essential. It recommends raising floor to ceiling heights on the ground floor to the maximum compatible with connection to the planned H16 Bridge. It also welcomes the additional amenity space provided for residents. More detailed comments on these issues, and also on the central yard, cycle storage and sustainability, are provided below. Comments made at the previous review that remain relevant are repeated for clarity.

Affordable workspace / housing

- The panel repeats its support for provision of workspace over several floors of a purpose designed building. This is likely to provide more desirable workspace than that delivered only through ground floor units across the site.
- It will be essential that workspace is secured in perpetuity, with genuinely affordable rents. Using Section 106 controls alone may not be sufficient; a possible means of ensuring this would be management by an appropriate charity.
- The panel notes that, although not initially planned, the scheme now includes seven affordable housing units, out of a total of 34.

Stour Space

- Stour Space had initially been included in the red line boundary of the planning application – although no alterations to this existing studio space were proposed. The panel welcomed the protection that this afforded to Stour Space – an important community asset.
- The panel therefore regrets that this protection has now been removed and that the scheme will result in demolition of the kitchen area serving Stour Space. This risks prejudicing the viability of Stour Space.
- An assessment of the design quality of the proposed development must include its impact on the assets of neighbouring properties.

Architecture

- The panel repeats its support for the scheme's form, massing and materials – as well as the clarity and simplicity of its architectural treatment.
- It thinks that the arrangement and layout of the scheme, and design details including fenestration and brickwork, are successful.
- The panel continues to think that increasing floor to ceiling heights in some areas of the development could enhance its quality and future flexibility.
- It recommends in particular that the floor to ceiling height of the ground floor be raised to the maximum – 3.5m – compatible with connection of the café to the planned bridge.
- Although the residential component of the scheme now more readily reads as residential accommodation – including as a result of its balconies – the panel suggests that this distinction could be strengthened further.

- Careful detailing of balconies will be essential so that they appear well integrated into elevations.
- Brickwork has replaced timber in the revised design of the elevations; the panel supports this but notes that the quality of bricks used will be essential to the scheme's success.
- More generally, high quality materials and sophisticated construction detailing throughout – and a generous budget – will be required to achieve the high standard sought.
- In this context, the panel would encourage retention of the design team throughout detailed design and construction stages.

Residential accommodation

- While broadly supporting the arrangement and layout of residential accommodation, the panel thinks that the plan is quite tight and that the quality of accommodation could be improved by a little more generosity.
- Although residential accommodation is arranged around two cores, access is along corridors without daylight.
- While corridors may be necessary for access to refuse storage, the panel asks whether it might be possible to introduce daylight through stairwells.
- Although all apartments will benefit from a canal view – and this is a significant asset – the panel thinks that long, narrow living spaces with a single window could be slightly gloomy.
- This may particularly be the case for ground floor units, with over sailing balconies above.
- The provision of private amenity space at 4th floor level, with access from both cores, is welcomed.

Connection to bridge

- The panel supports the intention to link Vittoria Wharf to planned Bridge H16 which will connect Fish Island with Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.
- Allowing the proposed café at Vittoria Wharf to spill out onto the bridge would animate the bridge, and also provide natural surveillance.
- The panel welcomes the adaptation of the design for Vittoria Wharf to allow integration with the bridge.

- The panel continues to encourage the LLDC as the planning authority and developer to bring the bridge forward as early as possible and to collaborate with the design team to secure its successful integration with Vittoria Wharf.

Central yard

- The panel thinks that the central yard has the potential to be successful – but that it would be helpful to be clear whether it is conceived primarily as a ‘working’ yard or as a café courtyard.
- The panel accepts that in the short term, until the bridge is complete, it may be desirable for the café to have tables in the yard. Further thought, however, will be needed to accommodate this successfully alongside other uses.
- The yard will be used by vehicles. Durable paving, such as granite, resistant to heavy traffic and sump oil staining will therefore be required.

Cycle storage

- Cycle storage space for residents is planned to open directly onto the public yard.
- The panel thinks that it would be preferable for residents to gain access to cycle storage from a semi-private, rather than public, area; access from the two cores would be a better option.

Sustainability

- Although the scheme should aspire to performance equivalent to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, the panel thinks that this may be difficult to achieve.
- Photovoltaic panels are envisaged but may not be great in number and it has yet to be determined whether it will be possible to connect to CHP.
- The panel therefore recommends that further thought be given to achieving the desired level of energy efficiency.

Next steps

The panel supports approval of the planning application for Vittoria Wharf, subject to successful resolution of outstanding detailed points, including concerns relating to Stour Space, through consultation with planning officers.

- Planning officers will also need to be satisfied that daylight and sunlight levels, including to residential accommodation, are acceptable.