

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

### **Report of Planning Application Review Meeting: International Quarter Masterplan, Landscape Design, Plot N05 and N06**

Tuesday 3 March 2015, 13.00 – 16.00

Lend Lease Marketing Suite, Celebration Avenue, East Village, Stratford

#### **Panel**

Peter Studdert (chair)

Neil Deely

Tom Lonsdale

#### **Attendees**

Rachel Gleave

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Deborah Denner

Fortismere Associates

#### **Report also copied to**

Anthony Hollingsworth

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Allison De Marco

LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team

Kathryn Firth

London Legacy Development Corporation

James Bolt

London Borough of Newham

Christopher Paggi

London Borough of Newham

#### **Note on process**

The Quality Review Panel comments below follow on from two pre-application reviews of the reserved matters proposals for the International Quarter. Panel members who attended the previous meetings were: Peter Studdert (chair); Adam Khan, Tom Lonsdale and Liam Bond.

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

The International Quarter, Stratford

Planning application references: ZMP 15/00005/AOD;15/00002/REM;  
15/00003/REM and15/00004/REM

## **2. Presenting team**

Scott Anderson	Lend Lease
Kevin Bundy	Lend Lease
John Dawson	RSHP
Martijn Slob	Vogt
Tomas Degenaar	Vogt
Sean Bashforth	Quod

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

Planning applications have been submitted for: amendments to the zonal masterplan for the International Quarter; landscape design of International Square and Olympic Promenade; and Plots N05 and N06. Discussions are continuing to resolve concerns that the masterplan is moving away from the approved parameters – particularly in terms of connections with the future bridge to Stratford Waterfront / Olympicopolis. Planning officers would also like more information on service access from Westfield Avenue, and how this will impact on proposed improvements to this street. Planning officers also have some reservations about the design development of Plots N05 and N06, where external brise soleil have been replaced with louvres integrated into the façade.

## **4. Quality Review Panel's views**

### *Summary*

The Quality Review Panel finds much to admire in the proposed amendments to the zonal masterplan for the international quarter, landscape design proposals for the International Square and Olympic Promenade, and reserved matters applications for Plots N05 and N06.

The masterplan and landscape design together create a series of distinctive spaces, accommodating a variety of use. The panel supports the detailed proposals for the International Square, and looks forward to further information on the pavilion and 'mound' which are still in design development. Carpenters Square is not yet the subject of a detailed planning application, and the panel thinks there is scope to improve its design. Further information on the way this scheme could contribute to the proposed improvements to Westfield Avenue would also be welcome.

The panel applauds the commitment of both the Financial Services Authority and Transport for London to high quality architecture for their new offices in the International Quarter. The reserved matters submissions for both Plots N05 and N06 promise to set a high standard for this new business district. Whilst having every confidence that these buildings will be well executed, visualisations showing their impact on long distance views would be helpful in support of the planning application. Some further detailed comments are provided below, and comments made at the previous review, which remain relevant, are repeated for clarity.

## **TIQ (south) masterplan and landscape design**

### *Landscape and masterplan strategy*

- The landscape strategy developed by Vogt for the International Quarter, has a romantic natural quality, which the panel thinks will be successful in contrast with the clean elegance of the Rogers Stirk + Harbour architecture.
- The panel also broadly supports the masterplan approach, which has been refined to improve its relationship with Westfield Avenue, and create a characterful series of routes and spaces.
- However, the route across the site towards a future bridge into the Park should be strengthened, and that the design of Carpenters Square, and the interface with Westfield Avenue require further thought, as discussed below.

### *Routes through the site*

- A decision has been made by the masterplan team to offset the routes from north east to south west through the site, and the panel supports this.
- It is intended that these routes will alternate between being attractive public routes, and more utilitarian service routes. The panel supports this strategy, whilst noting that careful management of the service routes will be essential.
- The cross routes will also need to respond to the potential future bridge into the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which may be brought forward as part of the 'Olympicopolis' development. The panel thinks the scheme should give greater emphasis to this important future desire line.
- As design work continues on future phases, it will be essential for the landscape and architecture to reinforce key pedestrian routes through the site, and connecting to the wider area.

### *International Square*

- The design proposals for the International Square include a pavilion building, and a 'mound', both of which are currently in abeyance. Both elements will play an important role in defining the character of this important space.
- At a previous review, the panel supported the concept of creating a 'mound' in the centre of International Square, to create a focus in what might otherwise have been a somewhat 'leaky' space.
- The panel also welcomes the proposal that seating would be designed into this feature.
- An alternative approach might be to create a sunken area in the landscape, which could also provide a focal point for the square.
- The panel is equally supportive of the proposed pavilion, which occupies a fantastic site, with the bustle of International Square on one side, and south facing views over the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on the other.
- The panel understands that both the 'mound' and pavilion are to form the basis of an architectural competition, and would encourage a relatively open brief, to allow creative ideas to emerge.
- The remainder of the International Square, for which detailed approval is sought, includes a mixture of formal lines of trees, and informal clumps, which the panel thinks could be successful.
- Where the use of large format paving is proposed, the panel notes that this could be susceptible to breakage, in areas where there will be vehicle movement. Construction to provide a solid base will be essential.
- The detailed designs for Plots S5 and S6, which maximise activity and openness at ground level, also give confidence that International Square will be a success.

### *Carpenters Square*

- Carpenters Square is not yet the subject of a detailed planning application, and the panel think its design requires further thought.
- There is a risk that the long narrow proportions of this space will give the character of a broad street rather than a square.
- Currently, a route of constant width is proposed to the centre of Carpenters Square, with planting either side – which is likely to give vehicles the impression they have priority.

- The panel would encourage Vogt to explore ways of designing Carpenters Square that emphasise it is a space with occasional vehicle access, rather than as a street.
- For example, focusing movement along one edge of the space could leave a wider area for creative landscape design.
- The panel also questions the extent of tree planting in a space that will be shaded, given the height of buildings around it.
- Where the route to the future bridge crosses Carpenters Square, there may be an opportunity for a special element, such as a sculpture or fountain.
- The panel would also encourage the creation of public routes through the buildings around Carpenters Square to bring dynamism to the scheme at street level.

#### *Balcony Route*

- The scheme creates a new route alongside the railway tracks with vistas across the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and south-west facing aspect. The panel think this has the potential to become a sunny and special place.
- The masterplan and landscape design together create a route in this location, punctuated by a series of small spaces, nestled between office buildings.
- Some vehicular access will be required along the balcony route, and the panel think that a shared surface approach could successfully accommodate this.
- Careful thought will be needed in the detailed design to reconcile service access with pedestrian use.

#### *Westfield Avenue*

- A reconfiguration study is underway to propose improvements to Westfield Avenue, making it a more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Although funding for implementation of this scheme is not yet in place, the panel thinks it should influence designs for the International Quarter.
- For example an improved environment on Westfield Avenue could make Carpenters Square a less important pedestrian route, than is currently envisaged – allowing greater freedom in its design.

## Plot TIQ S5 and TIQ Plot S6

### *Architecture*

- The panel finds much to admire in the Rogers Stirk + Harbour designs for Plots S5 and S6, and thinks these will set a high standard for future development of the International Quarter.
- The relative massing of these two buildings, with the smaller scale office to the south-east, will help maximise sunlight in International Square.
- It is a great benefit to the development that pre-lets have been secured for both these plots, allowing the specific requirements of their occupants to influence and enrich the designs.
- A recent design development has been to replace external brise soleil with louvres integrated into the façade – although with external shading to the atrium. The panel supports this change.
- As a detailed comment, the panel wonders if canopies could help identify the office entrances, as well as mitigating wind conditions.

### *Activity at ground level*

- The panel welcomes the open, social character of the designs for both buildings.
- It is particularly positive that one of the entrances into the building on Plot S5 opens onto Westfield Avenue, contributing to activity along that road.
- The panel recognises the efforts that have been made to maximise the extent of active frontage for both these buildings, despite the requirements of TfL for parking spaces at ground level.
- Public rooms at first floor level overlooking the square will also help bring life and activity to this space.
- External staircases are beneficial in maintaining clear floor plates, but the way in which they meet the ground requires careful thought to avoid creating corners that are awkward to secure.

### *Long distance views*

- The offices on Plot S5 and S6 are likely to be visible in long views, because the railway tracks create a zone where there will be no development.
- Long distance visualisations of the scheme would be helpful to explain its townscape qualities, and how service plant at the top of the buildings will appear, silhouetted against the sky.

### *Next steps*

- The panel supports the revised zonal masterplan, subject to further detailed design work to strengthen routes across the site, the design of Carpenters Square and the interface with Westfield Avenue.
- The panel supports the detailed design proposals for the International Square, and would welcome a further opportunity to comment on the areas of this space excluded from the current application.
- The panel thinks that the design of Plots S5 and S6 will be successful, and looks forward to seeing them built.