

SOUTHWARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL
AGENDA: 12 APRIL 2022



Chair: Christian Male

Panel Members: Shi Qi Tu; Honore van Rijswijk; Oscar Wokowu

Architects: Maccreanor Lavington

Clients: British Land

Planning Consultants: DP9

Project description:

Plot G1 is within the Central Quarter Character Area of the consented Canada Water masterplan.

It is an intentionally large plot intended to rehouse the supermarket. Plot permeability is limited.

The height parameters allow for two taller buildings that contributes to the cluster.

The plot fronts onto the new pedestrian high street Park Walk and helps to frame

Printworks Park. It will provide a new civic street frontage to the existing Surrey Quays Road and Redriff Road.

The Reserved Matters Application is subject to the Masterplan Parameter Plans,

Development Specification and Design Code.

The programme includes:

- Circa 420 Homes
- 8,000 sq. m of Communal Amenity space
- 12,500 sq. m Superstore
- 542 Car Parking Spaces

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this important scheme and thanked the Applicant for their clear and detailed presentation. The presentation had been circulated to the panel in advance and included, in addition to the detailed design, an analysis of the context including the emerging context of the Canada Water Masterplan, the constraints of the site, landscape, 3D visualisations from various approaches as well as a summary of the sustainability strategy for the site.

The Panel investigated further:

- The frontages along towards the street
- The design of the podium-level housing facing the communal podium gardens

- Programme and uses for the podium garden
- Materials for the landscaped courtyard
- Whether the design had been tested for wind – this was not presented to the Panel
- How will the allotments be allocated and can there be more?
- Lighting to the podium garden
- Maintenance of the podium garden
- Zoning for the podium garden to engender a greater sense of ownership
- Safety audits for traffic
- The location of the towers
- How the views have informed the tower design
- Street frontage of Park Walk
- Location of sprinkler tanks
- Canada Water Masterplan aims for a cinema and social infrastructure
- Architectural typologies tested
- Access strategies tested especially in respect of the Redriff Road frontage
- How the design has responded to the historic area
- How cyclists will access the site – provisions for residents and visitors
- Electric charging points
- Basement lighting
- Basement ventilation
- Parking for disabled residents
- Façade design of Redriff Road frontage
- The terraced spaces on the Surrey Quays Road frontage – access and use
- Natural light provision for flats – no information presented
- The design of the gaps between buildings
- The architectural identity of each block

The Panel generally supported the direction of travel and welcomed the involvement of the architects on this scheme. They acknowledged that this plot in the Masterplan presented a number of complex issues coupled with a challenging brief from the retailer. Notwithstanding this the Panel raised a number of concerns and observations about the proposal which they asked the designers to address before they consider submitting it for Planning.

Urban block and typology

The Panel recognised the design principles that the designers have set out to achieve. The typology of a superstore integrated into a podium block has been successfully delivered at the Decathlon site nearby. In this case there was a difference of opinion among the Panel about how successful the substantial upscaling of the Decathlon model has been.

The Panel felt that the current proposals need to do more to introduce hierarchy and legibility between the blocks. In this respect the gaps between the blocks play a vital role in giving primacy to the residential blocks. The Panel endorsed the designer's instinct to bring the blocks down to ground and they encouraged the designers to consider recessing the "linking" elements between the main housing blocks so that they are not of a similar status to the main housing blocks.

The set-back linking element between Blocks D and E appears to do this with some success. There is a similar set-back feature between Blocks D and A at podium level. The Panel felt this articulation, carving into the 'Decathlon' massing typology should be explored further which would not only give greater emphasis and identity to each block, but also potentially enhance the public realm around the plot with pockets of green space around the edges of the plot.

Active frontages

The Panel highlighted the sheer scale and substantial proportions of Plot G and recognised the efforts of the designers to activate the edges of the plot. However, they raised significant concerns over the Redriff Road frontage which is almost entirely dominated by blank frontages and service entrances which extends to both the ground and first floors.

They felt this prominent elevation at the southern edge of the Masterplan was unacceptable in its current form and could benefit from further consideration and meaningful, functional activation. They asked street elevations of all four frontages to be presented to them.

Podium Gardens

The Panel welcomed the approach to landscape and were encouraged by the potential of the podium garden which will be a wonderful space for residents to enjoy. They highlighted the scale of the garden which is similar in size to the park nearby.

In such a large scale garden the challenge will be to ensure that residents feel they can find a space that they can enjoy. The Panel felt the design could benefit from greater differentiation, with distinct zoning linked more closely to each residential block.

They wanted to see more detail about how the space could be designed, finished and maintained in the longer term. They enjoyed the potential of the main garden space, with areas for play-space for children and young adults, allotments, and the potential for greenery and tree planting.

They wanted to see more detail and to understand how this space would be used by future residents. For example, they wanted to see how the edges of each block would be designed – how residential frontages would be buffered from the communal gardens – and how each zone would be managed and maintained in the longer term.

Quality of accommodation

When they considered the housing typologies the Panel generally supported the approach across the site. They questioned the uniform approach to deck-access blocks and felt this was a missed opportunity to develop this typology further and explore different ways to enrich the experiences of residents at Blocks A and E. They suggested the designers investigate this further and explore the possibility of including places to dwell or opportunities for further greening, along the deck access corridors.

The Panel highlighted particular concerns with the north-facing single-aspect apartments in Block B. This affects three apartments on each floor including 2-Bed 4 person flats which is a concern for a scheme that should be of exemplary design standard.

Wheel-chair accessible provision

The Panel did not get a chance to explore the provision for wheelchair housing in detail. However, they raised significant concerns about the provision for parking on the podium garden level for people with disability. This parking space is accessed by a large car lift. The Panel raised significance concerns over this in practice, the accessibility of these car park spaces and the maintenance and usability of the platform lift. They encouraged the designers to review this and consider alternative options.

Car Park ventilation

The Panel noted the proposal to ventilate the basement car park from the Park. This is likely to affect the design of the Park – an aspect of the scheme that was not presented to them in detail. The Applicants mentioned that they were still developing the design for the ventilation scheme in detail and had planned an architectural competition for this.

Notwithstanding this, the Panel felt this is an important aspect of the design which had not been addressed and should have been incorporated within the confines of the plot – not passed on to a neighbouring plot – certainly not the Park. They asked for more detail about the ventilation of the car park and the options considered before this is finalised.

Architectural detail

The Panel enjoyed the architectural potential of the two towers and three residential blocks forming this perimeter block. They were not able to investigate the architectural design of each block in detail but they felt the detailed design of each block could benefit from further development.

There is the potential for a dialogue between the two towers and for these two buildings to give the plot its architectural identity. These should be exemplary by design and could benefit from a richer palette of materials and architectural features. Beyond that the lower blocks appeared generic with a common aesthetic, with common window types and a reliance only on the colour of the brick to define each block. In this respect the design of the lower blocks was disappointing.

The Panel highlighted the rich and varied architectural identity of the Canada Water peninsula and encouraged the designers to be more ambitious with the architectural design of each block.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Panel supported many aspects of this proposal including the potential for place-making in this important part of the Canada Water Masterplan.

They raised a number of questions and concerns especially about the Redriff Road frontage, the car parking provision and ventilation, as well as the lack of

architectural identity across the plot and invited the Applicants to return to the DRP before the scheme finalised. They offered to reconvene if necessary to ensure consistency.