

Outer London Commission

“Outer London: Realising its potential – First Thoughts”

Response of Quintain Estates and Development Plc, May 2009

Quintain Estates and Development welcomes the opportunity to respond to the initial questions of the OLC.

About us

Quintain was founded in 1992 and floated on the London Stock Exchange in July 1996. The company’s current landbank exceeds 2.7 million sq m, 2.1 million sq m of which is in London.

Quintain operates in three areas: urban regeneration, fund management and asset acquisition / management. It creates large, complex and sustainable urban environments, instigates and manages investment opportunities; and creates and manages funds in sectors with high barriers to entry.

It is driving forward two of the UK’s four largest regeneration schemes at Wembley and Greenwich Peninsula, as well as projects in Bristol, Birmingham and North Yorkshire.

Comments to the Commission

We welcome the establishment of the Commission, and believe that its work has the potential to significantly enhance the London economy as a whole.

We want to focus our response onto Questions (5) and (6) relating to the nature and choice of the ‘super-hubs’.

It is noted that the super-hub is a conceptual idea for debate. Figure 2 of the paper identifies a series of possible criteria to define hubs of regional or greater significance. Wembley is identified as one of six, initial choices but the “proposition for discussion” is that Brent Cross / Cricklewood (BXC) is the north London hub. We are unclear why BXC appears to have been selected over Wembley, and believe that the Commission is undervaluing Wembley’s potential contribution.

It may therefore be useful to set out some of the key points underpinning the development of Wembley, and its potential regional influence.

The vision for Wembley

The spectacular new National Stadium is at the centre of the Wembley Regeneration Area, 600 acres stretching from the High Road in the west to the North Circular Road in the east. Much of the area is low grade

industrial hinterland and well established strategic policy seeks major new development over the next 15-20 years, making better use of the land and capitalising on Wembley's excellent transport accessibility.

LB Brent has published a series of 'vision' documents for the area (the latest, from 2007 is attached). The fundamental thrust is to deliver a 'new' Wembley, which by 2020 will be the vibrant heart of Brent, a key contributor to the London economy, and a national and international destination.

Quintain is the major landowner in this area, owning some 85 acres immediately surrounding the Stadium. Planning consent was granted in 2004 for a 6.2 million sq ft mixed use development on 52 acres, including 4,200 new homes (incorporating a substantial number of affordable units) 6,200 long term jobs, a range of shops and leisure facilities and new public realm ('Stage One' summary document, 2003 attached).

The objective is to create a new and vibrant district including an eastwards extension of the town centre. The diverse range of uses would draw more people to Wembley for longer from near and far, actively encouraging better dwell time in the local area, leading to a substantial increase in available consumer expenditure and local economic activity.

Work on Stage One is now well under way, beginning the biggest transformation of the area since the 1920's. Wembley Arena has been refurbished, fronted by a new public square. The first residential block is complete and some 250 people are now living there (see attached update document, 2009).

Additional development is planned on the remaining Quintain land to the north, estimated to have the potential for 6,000 additional dwellings, further retail and office development (see attached April 2008 consultation document). This land also been selected by Brent as the location of its new civic centre, due to be completed by 2013.

LB Brent is completing its work on an updated masterplan for the regeneration area, and a number of other landowners are preparing their own proposals beyond our landholding.

In short, there are very ambitious plans for the development of Wembley. The comprehensive regeneration of the area is fully supported by the regional and local policy framework, and implementation of the vision, led by the Stadium and the Stage One development, is well under way.

Wembley and BXC compared

Clearly, the current proposals for BXC are also significant. The March 2008 planning application proposes a mixed use development of some 1.422 million

sq m (of which roughly 50% is residential), with the overall aim of creating a new town centre by uniting the areas north and south of the A406. This is clearly a 'transformational' project when completed.

But Wembley is also transformational and of a similar sub-regional scale. In terms of capacity, the 2009 LB Brent masterplan identifies a potential of 1.145 million sq m for its masterplan area, not appreciably less than BXC.

Figure 2 of the "First Thoughts" paper already acknowledges that Wembley exhibits 7 out of the 10 criteria by which hubs of sub-regional or greater are defined (by comparison BXC and Kingston only exhibit six).

However, we suggest that Figure 2 is incorrect regarding Wembley in two respects; it appears to dismiss the potential for an office cluster (a significant element of the emerging proposals and the wider masterplan which has underpinned by Brent's decision to locate its civic centre here). We also suggest that, with the combination of Stadium, Arena and conferencing / civic ambitions, Wembley has an important role in respect of sub-regional culture, and that this is also a strong part of the wider vision.

Figure 2 also appears to suggest that sub-regional accessibility to BXC is not as good as it is to Wembley. Certainly Wembley benefits from excellent public transport accessibility as a result of the close proximity of three underground lines, as well as mainline railway and this must be considered one of the primary criteria for determining the location for super hubs.

Furthermore, Wembley is considerably more advanced in terms of delivery. Planning permission has been granted for a substantial element of the development, and implementation has commenced. The first new residents are now living there, some site wide infrastructure has been installed and the significant local and sub-regional economic drivers forming part of the wider vision are starting to be implemented. In contrast, BXC is at an embryonic stage of delivery with outline planning permission still to be granted.

Conclusions

We welcome the establishment of the Commission, and want to limit our response to the nature and choice of the 'super-hubs'.

We are unclear why BXC appears to have been selected over / instead of Wembley.

The overall Wembley project is transformational and arguably of a similar scale to BXC.

Figure 2 appears to be incorrect in respect of Wembley's potential as an office cluster and cultural contribution. It would also appear to have better sub-regional accessibility than BXC.

Wembley is further advanced than BXC in terms of both planning and delivery.

We therefore believe that the Commission may be undervaluing the potential contribution of Wembley to the super-hub concept.

We would welcome the opportunity of engaging with the Commission to discuss the above issues and to agree an appropriate way forward.