

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL

[REDACTED]
Development Manager
Berkeley Group

June 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

London Review Panel: Paddington Green Police Station, City of Westminster

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of Paddington Green Police Station on the 8th June 2022. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Philip Graham, Executive Director of Good Growth, GLA

Louise Duggan, Head of Regeneration, GLA

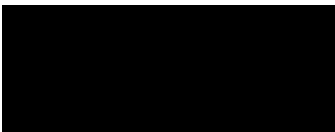
LONDON REVIEW PANEL

Report of London Review Panel meeting for Paddington Green Police Station, City of Westminster

Wednesday 8th June 2022

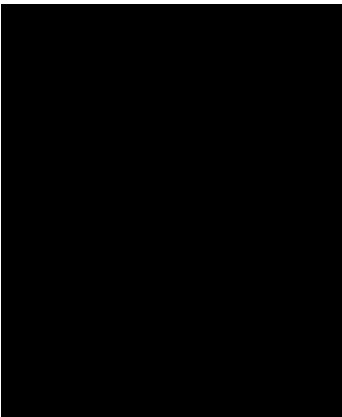
Review held in person. A site visit took place ahead of the review.

London Review Panel



MDA (Chair)
MDA
MDA

Attendees



Berkeley Group
Berkeley Group
GLA Planning
GLA Planning
GLA Planning
GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)
Montagu Evans
Murdoch Wickham
Squire & Partners
Westminster CC

Report copied to

Jules Pipe
Philip Graham
Louise Duggan

Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
GLA Executive Director of Good Growth
GLA Head of Regeneration

Confidentiality and publication

Please note that while schemes are not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review. Review reports will target publication to the London Review Panel webpage six months following the review unless otherwise agreed.

London Review Panel's Views

Summary

The panel commend the team on a clear and thorough presentation that set out the evolution of the design development to date. The panel agree there are lots of positives to be found in the scheme and have confidence that the design team selected have a track record in delivering quality outcomes. The panel agree it is encouraging to see the team's focus on the ground floor and public realm and agree the strategy for servicing at basement level is an ideal solution when building at this high density.

The panel agree the current proposals are too dense and too tall to support quality of life and place while the cluster of four buildings is not working together. The panel advise the team to explore making more of Newcastle Place as a genuine communal park with sheltered play space. The landscape proposals are non-place specific and currently come across as quite controlled. The panel would encourage the team to allow for more wildness, gritty and exciting landscape approaches that address the urban nature and challenges of this place specifically. Including the flyover in the visuals will help this be more convincingly addressed.

The panel advise the team to consider who is going to be living in these high-density homes and what social and community infrastructures they will need to ensure a good quality of living. Spaces for clubs for young people and flexible storage spaces can form part of the brief to make these buildings genuinely work for these residents in this intense part of the city.

Quality of place – does this make a good piece of the city?

Justification for tall buildings

- The panel could not see in the presentation the justification for further tall buildings in this site and therefore the heights shown, and quantum of development has not been justified as suitable for this location in its current form.
- The team set out a rationale for proposing tall buildings in this location as the site is at the junction of two major roads and acts as a gateway location into central London. The site is also identified for tall buildings in Westminster CC policy, though the heights proposed are more than the policy maximum.
- The panel agrees that the existing adjacent tower (on West End Gate) satisfies the justification for a 'marker' building in this location, and the proposals would merely duplicate this townscape function. Therefore, the panel agrees that there was no justification yet presented for the proposals on the PGPS site to also be this tall.
- The panel advises the team to avoid terminology that seeks to minimise the
- proposals, such as avoiding the term 'mansion block' to describe buildings that are more than 17 storeys.
- The panel acknowledges that the previous reason for refusal by Westminster CC focused on the height at the time and these proposals are even taller. The team need to find a compromise between the height they are proposing and the quality of the public realm and residential accommodation.
- The panel could accept some additional height on the corner if it creates better quality spaces in the public realm and improved the daylight and sunlight to the ground and inside homes. However, the panel said that, whilst some improvements to day/sunlight have been achieved to some buildings, there are other buildings where the day/sunlight levels have been made worse and that the general level of non-compliance with BRE standards was poor in any case.

- The panel would question why all three blocks were increased in height. The panel agrees that the previous heights of 18-15-32 storeys are better than the proposed 25-17-39 storeys.
- The panel suggests that the team tries everything they can do to reduce the heights.
- This could be by making the footprints slightly larger (especially towards Harrow Road), swapping unit mix, reducing the number of units, and forming small links at lower levels.

The buildings as a cluster

- The panel agrees that there is a design option that could make a successful cluster of buildings in this location, however the buildings as presented do not work as a cluster from a townscape and massing perspective. The panel agrees that the new proposals do not work compositionally with the existing buildings. They could either be arranged as a family of similar blocks of modulating heights, or they anchor around the existing tall building. Currently they do neither.
- The panel recommends that the team clearly sets out how they justify their proposals as a cohesive cluster and how this is informed by the heights and forms of the existing buildings. There needs to be a simpler architectural diagram that makes a convincing case for this.
- The panel agrees that the proposals are introducing a third architecture to what is already built, weakening the team's argument that this is intended to form a cluster.
- The panel encourages the team to achieve a more varied difference in heights across the composition of proposed and existing buildings.

Stepped Massing

- The panel agrees that the shoulder to the tall building is not providing an elegant form.
- The panel would advise the team to remove this 'backpack' to create a simpler, strong shape on this corner.

Designing for the site versus designing for targets

- The panel questions whether the design team would have generated this massing if there weren't a necessity to achieve an exceptional number of homes. The team needs to find a better balance between the needs of the appraisal and the need to generate a context-sensitive and liveable place.

Newcastle Place

- The panel sought clarification on the status of Newcastle Place, its ownership, red line boundary and the service vehicle access requirements. The presenting team confirmed both sides of the space were in client ownership and currently the road is allocated for taxi drop off, deliveries, and emergency vehicle tender.
- The panel agrees that there is an opportunity to make more of Newcastle Place than is currently being proposed to deliver a meaningful public space for this development. The high density and height of the proposals are putting a large amount of pressure on the ground and therefore the team should make a virtue of every inch of public realm.

- The panel recommends reducing the impact of the service road running through Newcastle Place to make it more of a shared surface. Removing vehicles altogether would be the ideal solution to make this a more genuine oasis in what would otherwise be a very hostile and intense place to live.
- The current proposed drawings for this space make it feel like a separate development rather than part of a whole space that completes the first phase. The panel would encourage a more integrated approach to this space across the completed and emerging phases, and to draw this as one unified space.
- The panel agrees that more should be done to encourage pedestrians to use Newcastle Place as a desire line over the more hostile edge of Harrow Road.

Child play space

- The panel do not believe placing the play space at the junction of the two busy roads is a good idea due to the air quality and noise issues being at its most acute here.
- The panel agrees that a more suitable location for child play space would be in Newcastle Place.
- The panel encourages the team to consider the number of families and their needs to form a community in such a dense development. There could be up to 1500 residents, many with children in the larger homes and who may be here long term due to the nature of their tenure.
- The panel suggests that there are opportunities to use the buildings to create a barrier from noise and pollution and this could create an enclosed and better protected area for children's play space, while achieving decent amounts of sunlight and daylight.

Character of landscape

- The panel challenges the team's assertion that this is a landscape-led scheme, as it appears now to be more a building footprint-led scheme with the landscape occupying the leftover spaces.
- The panel encourages the team to acknowledge the busy roads and flyovers and the air quality and noise challenges they bring.
- The panel suggests that a landscape-led scheme would need to address the gritty nature of this noisy and polluted site beyond layering planting and screens. The panel advises the team to be bolder and tougher in their approach to the landscape that recognises this is a major traffic route into London.
- The panel agrees that the landscape proposals presented feel like fragments from other places in London and not necessarily specific for this location.
- The panel advise the team to carefully consider the public realm on both sides of the site red line along Harrow Road when developing landscape proposals.
- The panel would encourage the team to better connect the various public realm areas as one seamless network of spaces.
- The panel was pleasantly surprised at how well the edge condition with Edgware Road is working, while busy it was pleasant and did not require the buildings in the earlier phase to pull back from the road too much. It may be the proposals can learn from this in their approach to addressing these busy edge conditions.

- The panel agrees that the team should look at ways of incorporating the existing police station relief sculptures as part of the history of the site and set them within the landscape.

Quality of life – is this a good place to live?

Wind

- The panel sought clarification on what work has been undertaken to date to assess the proposal's impact on public realm microclimate including wind studies. The team confirmed that wind tunnel analysis had been undertaken for the submitted scheme though this would now need retesting for the taller proposals. Mitigation for areas needing improvement has been included in the landscape proposals for shelter.
- The panel was surprised that such a tall proposal would result in such good results. The panel was surprised that such a tall proposal would result in such good results from the wind testing and this should be reviewed to see if this is still the case when tested again for the taller proposals.

Air quality and noise

- The panel recognises that this site is very noisy with issues of poor air quality due to the two major roads and flyover on the east and south boundaries.
- The team presented a MVHR with NOX filter solution to noise and air pollution for internal spaces, using lessons learnt from the previous phase. There are also triple glazed windows at the lower-level homes most impacted by noise.
- The panel questioned the effectiveness of the green planting buffers and screens to act as a natural filter to the noise and air pollution from the roads.
- Whilst the panel accepts some pollution will reduce in the transition from fuel to electric vehicles, there will always be particulate pollution derived from busy roads due to brake pads, tyre, and road abrasion.
- Acoustic baffle solutions should be considered which allow opening panels for fresh air without having to open windows.

Sunlight & Daylight

- The panel would encourage the team to demonstrate the typical and worst times for overshadowing across the year, not just on June 21st.
- The panel agrees that cutting off the bullnose of the west building has improved the daylight and sunlight, however this has increased the height of the buildings elsewhere. This results in issues around height, townscape and overshadowing in other locations.
- While this composition of tall buildings may work in lower latitudes such as New York, in London the penetration of sunlight to the lower-level accommodation will make habitable rooms unacceptably gloomy at these levels.
- The panel notes the work done by the team to minimise single aspect homes but would encourage them to work to reduce them further and suggest additional cores could help achieve this.

Sustainability approach

- The panel would encourage the team to ensure they have a robust sustainability strategy that addresses the carbon credentials and energy cost issues.
- The panel advises the team to avoid decorative use of concrete to reduce unnecessary carbon intensive materials.

Living at density

- The panel agree this is a super dense scheme and that the team must ensure that there are sufficient communal amenities and social infrastructure to support those living here.
- Many families will be housed in the affordable tenures and so will likely make this place a home for a long time. Therefore, the proposals should be of sufficient quality to reflect this long-term residency where residents will not have a choice to move if they find the environment challenging.
- The panel agrees with utilising the basement for servicing to free up the ground floor for critical social and commercial infrastructure.
- The panel advises that families should not be housed above the seventh floor if possible, and that the amount of family homes in any one building should be
- optimised to ensure that the numbers of young people are not overwhelming.
- The panel would suggest a podium or larger ground floor garden for the expected large numbers of children to play is required. By not providing sufficient play space and communal amenity, these activities may be pushed into communal corridors, stairwells, lobbies, and basements. This is especially important at the densities the team is proposing.
- The panel suggests that the space allocated to bike storage should be made more flexible to allow residents to store other things like buggies and other large items only infrequently used. This will free up much needed space in the apartments and improve the quality of life for residents living at this high density.

Next Steps

The panel thanks the applicant for its clear presentation of the scheme and is available to review the scheme again if requested to do so by the GLA.