

North Woolwich and Silvertown (NW+ST) Neighbourhood Forum

Asta Community Hub,

14 Camel Rd, London E16 2DE

Email: info@rdcv.org.uk

Web: www.rdcv.org.uk

7th April 2017

Sent to: The Council at localplan@newham.gov.uk

Commentary on LBN Local Plan 2017 - Local Plan Review

Issues and Options Part 1: Policies

Having Our Say

North Woolwich and Silvertown (NW+ST) Neighbourhood Forum welcome this Local Plan Review (LPR) consultation as an opportunity to comment on the issues, options and sites that LBN's planning team have identified relating to our neighbourhood area in the Royal Docks, and to respond to the options you are proposing in terms of appropriateness and their ability to capture all opportunities for enhancement of this locality.

Content Summary

We commend the rigour and structure of the draft Local Plan with the clarity of its 8 inter-related policy themes drawn from the existing Local Plan: Core Strategy. Our response focuses on the major opportunity being unlocked by the designation of three new strategic development sites in the NW+ST area of the Royal Docks and takes the heading of each of theme and considers what else might usefully be added needs to the LPR, the issues that have been identified, potential policy options, and additions to the set of consultation questions relating to the approach taken.

Overview

We concur with the sentiments expressed in the LPR regarding concerns and areas to be addressed via the plan, and make the following observations:

- The scale of the development sites being released is a once in a lifetime major opportunity to address long established and structural issues of poor connectivity, lack of access to amenities, low levels of active businesses, in the NW+ST neighbourhood stemming from a pattern of long term industrial decline, coupled with large scale disruptive infrastructure elements, both new and old.

- The vision has been too much about homes and not enough about the new jobs that are essential to making the locality a thriving place once again. Ensuring local access to things people need and want as part of their work and lifestyles, including adequate space for small businesses, evening and cultural activities
- The vision needs to be recalibrated and supported by a more detailed set of parameters, which paints a clear picture of the major moves and key infrastructure that will capitalise on the innate qualities of the area and guide development to unlock the latent value.
- Investing in a common interest model for the neighbourhood that stakeholders can buy into and that crosses individual ownership interests to form a bigger mutually beneficial vision.
- Promotes site masterplans only within a pre-dating neighbourhood parameter plan to engender and control market expectations on land values with a corresponding understanding of the immediate benefits of contributing to the delivery of that plan.
- Improving connectivity, particularly north-south crossing the new 2km long barrier of the Crossrail line, and including providing continuous public access to the riverside in line with all other boroughs in London
- Creating access to the dock basin—unlike all other areas of the Royal Docks, the NW+ST area has no access to this water.
- Valuing, retaining enhancing the limited existing small green spaces in the area rather than permitting building upon.
- Making early plans to avoid ‘them and us’ divisions opening up as large development sites set their own inward looking agendas rather than considering how they interact with the wider neighbourhood and what parallel investment projects are needed to ‘stitch’ together what could be two very different communities separated both physically by the railway and economically by the types of residential development likely to be sought by the investment market.
- Seizing the opportunity of scale and planning leverage of change of use/density levels to trial some more innovative housing and employment development models that might widen accessibility to both working and living in the area. Where are the CLTs, custom build opportunities, new riverside industries, water-based activities to capitalise on LBN’s hidden but precious river-frontage?
- Importance of retaining a strong, affordable and credible business component to all site development that can provide a critical mass for new creative industries to take root in and build an identity for the area beyond that of a city dormitory zone.
- The Mayor has touted the area as a Green Enterprise and Arc of Opportunity area. How can LBN and the GLA work together with the local community to capture that ambition rather than let site owners just cash in on the demand for mass market housing?

Consultation Documents and How to Comment

The LPR document was published exclusively online on 24th February 2017 for a 6-week consultation period with comments permitted only by email by midnight today 7th April 2017. No public engagement occurred and we wonder how the narrow visibility of this important document has affected its ability to meaningfully reflect local sentiment or opinion? We understand the LBN is

facing major cuts in its funding year on year so this has limited what can be done beyond the statutory, but this is a lost opportunity given the work put into the drafting of the plan and the benefits to all communities that could arise through their involvement in the future. NW+ST hope to play its part in realising the ambitions of the new Local Plan through it's intended status as a designated Neighbourhood Forum for the area.

Issues and Options Part 2: Sites

New Strategic Sites: Royal Docks – Silvertown and North Woolwich

Connaught Riverside

Vision & Spatial Policies: Site boundary would be better placed contiguously with the adjacent safeguarded wharf area. This could offer the concept of two sites opening for use, subject to agreement on a new public access roadway to the waterfront benefitting both owners and the community at large.

Successful Places: Identification of an open wharf-side zone as development condition would be key component of changing the identity of the area and allowing the animation of the river to commence by considering the mooring of vessels, floating jetties and shoreline access.

Jobs, Business and Skills: Area is currently an industrial estate and home to multiple small and medium businesses. How can the plan be set to retain and sustain this rich of uses whilst building over with new development? Offer increased density for re-providing two levels of light industrial/creative office accommodation?

Homes: Current new developments on the riverfront sterilise the ground level with car parking and privatised space. Homes on upper levels make sense given the floodplain risk. Promotion for establishing a new ground level datum to river-wall height would allow basement parking without blighting street level?

Sustainability & Climate Change: Green innovation label applied to the area gives credence to the idea of setting particular environmental criteria for development of sites and home for the heat grid by plugging into the Tate and Lyle refinery as a clean energy source to power and heat the area.

Social and Physical Infrastructure: Severance of Silvertown and City Airport from the site might fruitfully be addressed by bridging studies and the establishment of a north-south route to the DLR stop.

North Woolwich Gateway

Vision & Spatial Policies: The move to create a single strategic site with such a disparate array of ownerships and uses is essential to bring forth some coherent vision of this identity defining riverfront location now commencing on a path to major redevelopment now that the Crossrail works are completing.

Successful Places: The area is heavily blighted by the infrastructure of road rail and river, all set to change over the next 15 years. Without the ferry traffic the whole south facing frontage could become the new public face of North Woolwich, but is the current major site ownership operating to a planning brief that sees that far ahead or will it be a missed opportunity to make a major new public space on the river?

Jobs, Business and Skills: The site appears to be designated as purely residential, but this will kill any future public spaces and not fill the deficit of business accommodation and leisure activities in the neighbourhood. Can the lower two floors not be set aside as non-residential as a starting point?

Homes: Comments as per Connaught Riverside.

Sustainability & Climate Change: The neighbourhood has an opportunity to turn the old railway sidings, passenger pier and abandoned river walk into designated green spaces that showcase how old infrastructure can be repurposed into valuable pocket parks built into the fabric of an overall site development logic. Include Victoria Park so that it is part of the investment and renewal initiative. This could become a stronger synergy with the potential closure of the road from the riverside.

Social and Physical Infrastructure: For a community so closely linked to the water it is ironic that the last vestige in the car ferry is slated to go in the near future. This risks further isolating the already cut off corner of LBN. What are the plans for the reuse of both the ferry piers and can any new passenger ferry connection be established and planned for to animate the site?

Galleons Lock

Vision & Spatial Policies: Innate value as access to water frontage of the docks denied elsewhere to the Community in North Woolwich and Silvertown

Successful Places: Any provision for public access to site or linkage through from river to dock basin

Jobs, Business and Skills: Only accessible area of non-tidal water in the area indicates significance for basing related activities

Homes: Comments per Connaught Riverside

Sustainability & Climate Change: Potential part of nature trail following the water's edge around the neighbourhood

Social and Physical Infrastructure: Important public footway and cycle route link in the neighbourhood between riverside and dockside. Is there any intention to have a dockside footpath as indicated? This is present in all other areas of the docks.