



WDCO Board Response to the Third Masterplan

Application Ref 2024/2817

Hackney Planning Services
1 Hillman Street
London
E8 1DY

Dear James Bellis,

I am writing on behalf of Woodberry Down Community Organisation (WDCO) to submit our comments on the 2024 Masterplan proposals.

The WDCO Board recognises that this is an outline planning application for Phases 5–8 of the Woodberry Down Estate regeneration. Consequently, most elements remain reserved for later approval, including the detailed design of the residential components, landscaping, open space, play provision, public realm and servicing arrangements.”.

These plans ask for permission to build up to 3083 homes in phases 5-8 which would create an overall total of 6495 units. In reaching this figure the Masterplan has been subjected to a viability assessment, however, given the uncertain market conditions pertaining at the moment WDCO fears that the total number of homes will be subject to change as the timeline lengthens over which the later phases are constructed.

The WDCO Board broadly supports this application and agrees with the overarching aspirations of creating an ‘open, welcoming place for people to live’. We do, however, have serious reservations over some aspects of the Masterplan which we feel could negatively impact the lived experience of future residents and additionally reduce the area’s attractiveness.

Key Concerns

‘Affordable’ Housing

The Board notes that some current residents find the new social rented and shared ownership homes financially unaffordable.

We therefore urge that going forwards strenuous efforts are made at all stages of the future design and development process to mitigate the escalating affordability issues associated with the new ‘affordable’ homes

Social Housing for Rent



It is evident that Hackney is experiencing a severe housing crisis, with thousands of residents currently on the waiting list for accommodation. WDCO is therefore deeply disappointed that this third iteration of the masterplan, despite tripling the total number of homes on the estate, still fails to deliver a like-for-like replacement of social homes for rent, resulting in a shortfall of approximately 200 such homes across the regeneration. We strongly urge an increase in the proportion of social rented housing and recommend that the tenure mix within the affordable housing allocation be reconsidered.

Density of the Development

It is projected that on completion of the regeneration there will be three times original number of homes. This dramatic increase in the density of dwellings has hence, given the Board cause for concern over the quality of lived conditions.

Comparison of Total Envisioned Homes (2009-2025)			
Masterplans	2009	2014	2025
Projected totals	4667	5557	6495
The original estate pre-2000 comprised ~ 2000 homes			

In view of this the Board would like to suggest a limit (6495) placed on the number of homes that can be constructed on the estate without recourse to further scrutiny and consultation, including with WDCO, over the possible adverse effects on the residents.

Provision of Podiums

The new Masterplan envisages that podiums will be used in the construction of all the blocks in the rest of the development, with the result that much green space will only be visible to residents of a particular block. The Board asks that podiums are evaluated on merit on a case-by-case basis and for horseshoe shaped blocks fronting the reservoir that ground level gardens should be considered. This would be in keeping with all other blocks along the new river path.

Winds caused by High Buildings

The Masterplan is proposing many new blocks of 10 or more storeys, creating taller buildings. As a result, the increased height will create lower-level atmospheric disturbances and channel air between blocks, leading to wind problems and small vortex effects. We would like convincing wind calculations to be made for future phases and mitigating measures to be undertaken to prevent the issues of vortex effects that affect older and more infirm pedestrians in all phases. As the wind assessments carried out so far have not been able to accurately replicate the wind conditions caused by the existing new blocks, residents have little confidence in any further wind tunnel assessments or their results.

Public Open Space, Amenities and the Ground Floor Strategy

It has been estimated that at present the areas of phases 5-8 include 43,000sqm of existing open space. This represents roughly 48% of the site area of 8.82 hectares. The new Masterplan provides for 13,185 sqm of Public Open Space which is welcomed but is only 14% of the site area. Private podium gardens which are not for public view are estimated at



10% of the site area. Also, not available for public view are the 1.4 hectares of green roof space, which would represent 15% of the site area.

The Board would ask that any proposed landscaping should work hard to ameliorate for the loss of open space and achieving the Biodiversity Net-Gain required of 10%. A Climate Change Adaptation Plan should be produced to identify further ways that the proposed development can be more resilient to climate change throughout its lifespan.

In the Cultural Strategy consultation for phase 4 there was a strong desire for spaces where community could come together. Among the suggestions were for more nursery provision, safe spaces for young people and a public library. These ideas should be developed alongside spaces for retail offerings into a coherent Ground Floor Strategy.

Conclusion

The WDCO Board appreciates the efforts of the Delivery Partners in making the regeneration to date so successful. Our concerns are not raised to obstruct progress but to ensure that the final result will enhance the development for all residents.

The Board trusts that the planning committee will take our points seriously in its deliberations, weighing up the proposals of the Masterplan and the needs of the community in the round.

Your sincerely,

Woodberry Down Community Organisation