



**London Borough of Camden Design Review Panel**

**Report of Formal Review Meeting: Murphy's Yard**

Thursday 2 April 2020

Video conference

**Panel**

Catherine Burd (chair)

Eleanor Fawcett

Richard Lavington

Mike Martin

Robin Nicholson

**Attendees**

Bethany Cullen	London Borough of Camden
Richard Wilson	London Borough of Camden
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Kevin Fisher	London Borough of Camden
Alex Bushell	London Borough of Camden
Ian Gracie	London Borough of Camden
Victoria Hinton	London Borough of Camden
Rose Todd	London Borough of Camden
Jonathan McClue	London Borough of Camden
Kristina Smith	London Borough of Camden
Nora-Andrea Constantinescu	London Borough of Camden
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Angela McIntyre	Frame Projects
Kiki Ageridou	Frame Projects

**Confidentiality**

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As a public organisation Camden Council 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.

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## 1. Project name and site address

Murphy's Yard, Highgate Road, London NW5 1TN

## 2. Presenting team

David West	Studio Egret West
Daniel Mahoney	Studio Egret West
Heidi Au Yeung	Studio Egret West
James Berk	Studio Egret West
Stephanos Georgiou	Studio Egret West
Kate Macmillan	Folgate Estates Limited
Paul Brosnahan	Folgate Estates Limited
Andrew Wilson	Folgate Estates Limited
Steven Farthing	Curtins
Sylvia Synodinou	Peter Stewart Consultancy
Jo Drane	Hoare Lea
Alexandra Milne	DP9

## 3. Planning authority briefing

The emerging proposals for Murphy's Yard are for an employment led mixed-use re-development of the site including the provision of industry, residential, office, retail, community and other supporting uses.

The Kentish Town Planning Framework includes the Murphy's Yard and Regis Road sites, as well as areas immediately adjacent.

The site currently contains J. Murphy & Sons Limited headquarters, industrial uses, open yard space and parking. There are three locally listed locomotive sheds. The O2 Forum Kentish Town, which is Grade II listed, is in the developer's ownership and utilises the Greenwood Place for access.

The site lies to the west of Highgate Road and is bounded to the north, west and south by railway lines. The northern part of the site borders Gordon House Road and lies opposite Hampstead Heath. Access is restricted to three entrances, one each on Gordon House Road, Sanderson Close and Greenwood Place.

Surrounding uses include predominately residential to the north; a Council-owned housing estate on Sanderson Close; residential and commercial on Highgate Road; employment as part of Highgate Studios; community uses in the Greenwood Centre; the Regis Road site to the south and residential Gospel Oak.

Policy D1 of the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan includes a view across the site to Parliament Hill from the area adjacent to Kentish Town station. A 'Protected Corridor' and 'Peripheral Corridor' are required to be maintained as far as possible.



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The site is a Locally Significant Industrial Site within the Draft New London Plan. This emerging policy seeks to retain, enhance and provide additional industrial capacity. There must be no overall net loss of industrial floorspace capacity and potential industrial and warehousing floorspace must be accommodated on-site at a 65 per cent plot ratio. The council's relevant Local Plan policies seek intensification of industrial uses, with the inclusion of housing and open space where this does not prejudice the operation of businesses in the area. The site needs to provide 50 per cent affordable housing to comply with the Local Plan.

Planning officers asked for the panel's views on the fundamental elements of the scheme including: connections to the surrounding area; routes; distribution of massing – especially on the northern residential part of the site; and sustainability.

## 4. Design Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The panel is encouraged by the emerging proposals, and welcomes the opportunity to make some strategic recommendations to inform the next stage of design development. The hybrid nature of the planning application requires further clarity, with careful thought about how quality is secured in the outline element. Routes into and through the site will be a key design challenge, given the limited potential access points, for a site surrounded on three sides by railway tracks. The panel supports the concept of a 'Heathline' route. However this is compromised by the layout and massing of buildings to maintain a viewing corridor from Kentish Town Station towards Hampstead Heath, required by the Neighbourhood Plan. Further thought is needed to improve the clarity of the Heathline route, whilst meeting policy requirements. The route across the site from Sanderson Close to Regis Road should be given more significance and requires careful consideration. Shed Three is a key moment within in the scheme but as proposed it lacks clarity both in its form and its impact on the public realm. The three possible routes through / around Shed Three lack hierarchy and in the panel's view amendments should be made to ensure one clear route is created. Across the scheme further thought should be given to public realm proposals and the impact of building form and massing on the microclimate of these spaces. Further consideration should also be given to links into the wider context and the impact of vehicle movements on the public realm. The panel would like to see the landscape design across the site take on the unique character of the five proposed character areas. The way in which the development reinforces and complements the economy of Kentish Town also needs further thought. In terms of scale and massing, further analysis of townscape views, microclimate, and the quality of life created for residents is needed for the panel to give definitive comments. However it notes that the proposed mansion blocks feel oversized and have a challenging relationship with the adjacent mews buildings. These points are expanded below.



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## *General approach*

- The panel suggests further clarity is required regarding the specifics of the hybrid application. It emphasises the importance of establishing how quality will be locked into the outline elements of the scheme, whether through design codes, or Section 106 agreements to ensure the delivery of key pieces of infrastructure.
- The southern part of the site will form the detailed part of the application, and the panel would welcome an opportunity to comment on this area at a focused review session – since this first meeting focused on the broad principles of the masterplan.
- The panel encourages the design team to think about the role meanwhile uses can play in placemaking and getting the local community engaged and involved with the site at an early stage.
- The panel would like to see long sections extending beyond the site boundaries, from both from Kentish Town to West Hampstead and Sanderson Close to Regis Road. It will be essential to show the proposals in relation to the wider context to mitigate the risk of the scheme feeling like an island site.
- While the overall diagram for the site for the site has elements that are successful, the panel feels a number of amendments are necessary to provide clarity and legibility both to the buildings and the public realm, these are further detailed below.

## *Heathline*

- The panel highlights that the legibility of the Heathline route through the site from Hampstead Heath to Kentish Town is vital to the development's success, and it feels this is currently being jeopardised by maintaining the viewing corridor.
- The panel emphasises that part of the importance of the view being preserved by the corridor is to signal the proximity of Hampstead Heath to Kentish Town. However, maintaining this view is currently resulting in an unintended consequence of the Heathline becoming a convoluted route.
- Further thought is needed to ensure the Heathline route has clarity and generosity.
- The panel is disappointed with the amount of green space being provided in current proposals compared with the quantum previously shown in the Kentish Town Framework. It suggests that substantial green open spaces are needed, in addition to the Heathline – which although welcome is more of a green corridor.



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- The legibility of the Heathline route is further complicated by the retention of Shed Three, and the new building above it, this point is expanded below.
- The panel also questions the decision to push the cyclist route to the edge of the site, and asks if it would be possible to accommodate this as part of the Heathline.

### *North south route*

- While the panel commends the level of thought given to the Kentish Town to West Hampstead Heathline connection, it would like to see more careful consideration of the Sanderson Close to Regis Road connection and the public realm here.
- The panel emphasises the bridge link from Regis Road and suggests that this might be more successful if it connected to a location where it would link with Murphy's Yard rather than the Heath Cliff.
- In general the entry point from Sanderson Close seems neglected and the panel suggests, given its significance, it requires further thought.

### *Shed Three*

- Shed Three forms a key moment at the heart of the proposals and as a result it must work brilliantly. In the panel's view Shed Three is not yet successful.
- The scale of interventions to Shed Three mean it is likely to 'read' as a new building. The panel encourages further exploration around the scale of intervention to Shed Three including exploring both options to reduce the degree of new construction, or to demolish the existing building.
- The location, scale and form of Shed Three causes legibility issues in the main route across the site. The panel questions the necessity of the bridged area over the central route through the building, and suggests that the design team should either allow for a larger public route between Shed Three and Building I, or remove the southern end of Shed Three.
- There are three possible routes that can be taken through / around Shed Three from Murphy's Yard to the Heath Cliff and as a result the panel feels the public realm at the centre of the site lacks a sense of clarity and hierarchy. The panel suggests main route should be created which gives a clear view through to the Heathcliff.



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## *Public realm*

- The panel suggests that where Building I is located, a large south facing public space could be created, at the connecting point of several routes.
- Given the scale and massing of the proposals the panel has concerns around the quality of the microclimate that will be created. It would like to ensure that public realm spaces are tested in terms of sunlight, daylight and wind. This should inform refinements to building form and massing to ensure open spaces are pleasant and enjoyable for inhabitants.
- The panel emphasises the importance of connecting the public realm at the southern end of the scheme at Kentish Town Gate to the existing high street, and Kentish Town Station.
- The panel would encourage the design team to include a connection from the site via the north side of the nature reserve to Highgate Road.
- There appears to be an issue with vehicle movements and workspace servicing routes cutting across the heart of the site, particularly around Murphy's Yard. The panel would encourage the design team to be mindful of the types of heavy vehicles that will be using these routes, and ensure servicing does not compromise the quality of public realm.
- The panel would like to further understand the quality of the proposed servicing route on the south western edge of the site. It suggests that this route could have an enjoyable quality with the inclusion of greenery and trees.
- The panel understands that three levels of below ground parking are proposed to help ensure the public realm is not dominated by vehicles. Whilst supporting this aspiration, the panel asks if there is an alternative plan for this large basement if the parking is not required in the long term.

## *Landscape design*

- The panel would like to further understand how landscape proposals are related to the five character areas created across the site. As proposed the landscape design for each area shows little variation in character.
- The panel commends the involvement of an ecologist from the early stages of development to ensure the proposals will make a positive contribution to biodiversity.



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## *The Heath Cliff*

- The panel enjoys the innovative solution to the change of site levels at the Heath Cliff.
- Views showing the Heath Cliff should include the northern edge of Shed Three to help understand the dynamic between the two towers of Building J on the podium and Shed Three. It looks as though the public space here is likely to be significantly overshadowed.

## *Murphy's yard*

- While the panel finds the space comparisons in the presentation helpful, it notes that the public realm at Murphy's Yard is not comparable to Pancras Square, either in terms of its size or its nature, given that it will be overshadowed and have service vehicle traffic.
- As proposed the public space feels more like a street than a square. The panel encourages the design team to think carefully about how this piece of public realm will work, and how it will be framed by the design of surrounding buildings.
- The panel would encourage further thought around food hall and other destination type uses, and if they create competition with the centre of Kentish Town and the uses already provided there. It would encourage the applicant team to think about proposed uses as an extension of what already exists at Kentish Town Road.
- Similarly the panel suggests the industrial uses to the south of Murphy's Yard should reinforce rather than competing with the well established uses at the heart of Kentish Town.
- The panel encourages the applicant team to discuss with both Camden Council and the GLA the site which is coming forward on Regis Road. It suggests that some of the industrial uses proposed on this site may sit more comfortably at the Regis Road site.

## *Warehouse living*

- While the panel welcomes the provision of affordable workspace, it is concerned with the nature of the proposed warehouse live / work spaces. It supports retaining the existing buildings as affordable workspace, but thinks adding a living component risks diluting this offer.
- Further thought is required around how the live / work spaces are managed to avoid them turning into purely living spaces.



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- Tethered leases could be explored, which connect a living space and a working space within the same building or neighbourhood, but not in the same physical space. This creates less scope for misuse of live / work accommodation.
- Alternatively, the live / work spaces could be included as a meanwhile use, bringing vibrancy to the emerging development, without creating long term management difficulties.

## *Murphy's Mews*

- The panel would like to look at the residential proposals in detail at a separate future review.
- Whilst the panel understands the two and three storey mews houses at the northern edge of the site are proposed to maintain the viewing corridor, it feels they sit uncomfortably in relation to the scale of the wider proposals.
- The panel is also concerned with the scale of the proposed mansion blocks. It suggests the rationale for the residential building heights would be clearer if these were lower in comparison to the two towers at Building J. If the mansion blocks were reduced in height they would relate more comfortably to the surrounding context.
- The panel notes there are some north facing single aspect flats in the proposed towers at Building J and would encourage the design team to avoid single aspect north facing homes across the proposals.
- In the panel's view the Health Centre is in the wrong location and would be better located at the centre of the scheme, with residential accommodation taking its place on the northern edge of the Murphy's Mews.

## *Scale and massing*

- Further analysis of townscape views, microclimate, and the quality of life created for residents is needed for the panel to give definitive comments on scale and massing.

Across the site the panel finds the scale of some of the proposed buildings overly large, and is concerned that the public realm adjacent to these buildings could end up being inhospitable.

- The panel is concerned with the impact of the scheme when viewed from Parliament Hill, and would encourage the incorporation of some reduction in height and gaps in the massing to ensure the proposals appear less solid.





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## *Stacked industry*

- While the panel is supportive of the idea of stacking industrial uses it questions if the proposals are realisable and would like to further understand their viability.

## *The Forum*

- The panel thinks the service yard proposed for the Forum could work but feels that the nature of this yard is not being accurately conveyed. The design team should consider the daily and weekly routines of servicing a venue like this, and how bins etc. can be hidden?

## *Climate emergency*

- The panel would like to understand how the proposals have developed in response to Camden Council's declaration of a climate emergency. It would encourage the design team to articulate what is different about the masterplan and buildings as a result of climate change?
- The design team should be conscious that in five years' time designers will be accountable on a whole life carbon basis and this development has a 30 year build out process.
- How are designs suitable for a net zero carbon world?
- Current approach to sustainability, appears quite generic and the panel would encourage a more site and use specific approach.

## *Next Steps*

The panel would like to review proposals again to allow them to comment on individual aspects of the scheme in further detail.

