

Planning Board 27 May 2025	Agenda Item: 7 Reference No: 24/0848/R Doc Link: Link
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Applicant: Berkeley Homes (East Thames) Ltd
Agent: Stantec

Site Address: The Ropeyard, Royal Arsenal Riverside, Plots D & K, Land between Duke of Wellington Avenue and Beresford Street, London, SE18 6NP	Ward: Woolwich Arsenal Application Type: Reserved Matters
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3rd Addendum Report

I. **Recommendation**

- I.1 That reserved matters approval be GRANTED (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Design) pursuant to Condition 2 of planning permission reference I6/3025/MA, dated 17.03.2017, for residential units and non-residential floorspace within Plots D and K3, K4, K5, along with public / private landscaping details, car / cycle parking, refuse / recycling facilities and play provision.
- I.2 Subject to:
- (i) The satisfactory completion of a deed of variation to the Section 106 (S106) Legal Agreement (obligations set out in Section 28 of the main Planning Board report); and
 - (i) Conditions set out in Appendix 2 of the main Planning Board report and any addendums.
- I.3 To authorise the Assistant Director (Planning & Building Control) to:
- (i) Make any minor changes to the detailed wording of the recommended conditions as set out in the main report (Appendix 2), its addendums and the minutes of this Planning Board meeting, where the Assistant Director (Planning & Building Control) considers it appropriate, before issuing the final decision notice
 - (ii) Finalise the detailed terms of the section 106 agreement (including appended documents) and form of the planning obligations as set out in the main report (Section 28), its addendums and the minutes of this Planning Board meeting

- (iii) Consider, in the event that the deed of variation or Section 106 Agreement is not completed within three (3) months of the date of this Planning Board resolution, whether consent should be refused on the grounds that the agreement has not been completed within the appropriate timescale, and that the proposals are unacceptable in the absence of the recommended planning obligations; and if the Assistant Director (Planning & Building Control) considers it appropriate, to determine the application with reasons for refusal which will include the following:
- In the absence of a deed of variation to the existing s106 legal agreement to secure the necessary obligations regarding affordable housing, transport and highway works, public realm environment, and sustainability the development would fail to demonstrate compliance with affordable housing requirements and mitigate its impact on local highways and provide for the safety of road users and pedestrian, cycle infrastructure, and environmental sustainability contrary to Policy D8, Policy H4, Policy H5, Policy H6, Policy H7, Policy SI 1, Policy SI 2, Policy SI 3, Policy T2, Policy T3, Policy T4, Policy T5, Policy T6, Policy T6.1, and Policy T9 of the London Plan (2021) and Policy H3, Policy H5, Policy EI, Policy IM(a), and Policy IM(b) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (Adopted July 2014), and the Planning Obligations (s106) Guidance SPD (July 2015).

I Introduction

- I.1 In December 2024 an application for the following was heard at Planning Board:
- “Reserved Matters (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Design) pursuant to Condition 2 of planning permission reference 16/3025/MA, dated 17.03.2017, for residential units and non-residential floorspace within Plots D and K3, K4, K5, along with public / private landscaping details, car / cycle parking, refuse / recycling facilities and play provision.”
- I.2 Planning Board voted unanimously to approve the development subject to:
- (ii) The satisfactory completion of a Section 106 (S106) Legal Agreement (obligations set out in Section 28 of the main report); and
 - (iii) Conditions set out in Appendix 2 and any addendums.

- 1.3 Within the recommendation it is acknowledged that the Assistant Director (Planning & Building Control) is able to make any minor changes to the detailed wording of the recommended conditions before issuing the final decision notice. In this case, the applicant wishes to amend the wording of one of the conditions which is considered to fall outside of this scope and hence is being reported back to Planning Board.

2 Condition 16 amendments.

- 2.3 Condition 16 requires the details of the materials to be used on the external facades of the building to be submitted to the Council for approval. The current wording of the condition states that the principal material to be used shall be full brick and not a brick slip system. The applicant would like this wording amended to allow for the possibility of using a brick facing system which may not be full bricks.

- 2.4 This change is detailed below with the strikethrough sentence to be deleted and the sentence in italics being the replacement wording:

“Notwithstanding the details shown on the plans hereby approved, prior to commencement of works above ground:

- A. A detailed schedule/specification (including an on-site sample panel) of all external appearing materials should be provided, including walls, roofs, windows and doors, sills and lintels, balconies, balustrades, visible pipes, grids and louvres, outdoor pavements, stairs, gates, boundary walls and fences (where required) to be used for the external surfaces of the buildings and hard surfaced areas shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; and
- B. Details of the following features and elements of the scheme must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:
- i) Brick bonding and bricks, including banding and crown detail (annotated plans at a scale of not less than 1:20).
 - ii) External windows, spandrel panels, balconies, doors, screens, louvres, grilles and balustrading (annotated plans at a scale of not less than 1:10).
 - iii) Depth of window reveals and soffits (annotated plans at a scale of not less than 1:20).
 - iv) Rainwater goods (annotated plans at a scale of not less than 1:10).
 - v) The details should show all joints between different materials and components, including walls, roofs, doors, windows, sills, lintels and fasciae, balconies, soffits and balustrades, external ramps, steps, pavements, boundary walls, gates, and fences.

- vi) Sections of the landscaped areas of the scheme, showing how the interface between soft and hard surface would work, the rainwater drainage strategy and associated technical solutions, and the interface between different pavements, the street, and the designed buildings. No visible water plant, pipes or gutters are acceptable, which were not included in the submitted drawings for this planning application, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

C. Notwithstanding the drawings hereby approved, prior to the commencement of any construction works (including piling works) plans and elevations showing the balcony placement for block K3-K4 (as shown on plans Z429- PRP01- KZ- ZZ- DR- A880-482 Rev P03 Proposed Building K3 K4 South East Elevation, Z429-PRP01-KZ-01- DR-A-880-461 _P01 - Proposed Building K3 K4 Level 01 Floor Plan, Z429-PRP01-KZ-ZZ-DR-A-880-481 _P01 - Proposed Building K3 K4 South West Elevation, final façade and floor plans shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Council.

~~The principal material shall be full brick; brick slip systems will not be accepted as these are considered to be of a lower quality and durability.~~

The principle facing material shall be brick or a brick facing system and details of the bricks or brick facing system shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval

The development shall be constructed and retained for the lifetime of the development in full accordance with the approved details above.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority may be satisfied as to the external appearance of the building(s) and to comply with Policy D4 of the London Plan (2021), and Policies DH1 and DH(a) of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014) and in order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of designated heritage assets and preserve the setting and character of designated heritage assets in accordance with the NPPF (December) 2023, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy HCl of the London Plan 2021, Policies DH3, DH(h) and DH(i) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies 2014.

3. Alternative material

- 3.1 The amendment to condition 16 allows the applicant to consider the use of alternative facing materials for the buildings. More specifically, Berkeley Homes are proposing to use a product called 'Sustainabrick'.
- 3.2 'Sustainabrick' is a lightweight product which is an alternative to a traditional brick façade system. It is a brick panelised system, which integrates a strong mesh webbing which holds a panel of twelve bricks together so they can be installed together. They do not have to be laid on top of one another individually like a traditional brick and mortar approach. The bricks themselves are generally composed of modern materials rather than traditional materials and do not undergo the traditional kiln firing or oven process.
- 3.3 The applicant has set out a number of advantages of 'Sustainabrick' over the use of traditional bricks and these are explained below:
 - 3.3.1 It is 30% more cost effective than a traditional brick and cavity wall system which improves viability and therefore deliverability of schemes. This is a 8e-yhkey factor in the current economy where many traditional housing developments are struggling to commence due to viability issues.
 - 3.3.2 It is more thermally efficient, thus reducing energy costs for occupants
 - 3.3.3 It is 90% more water resistant than traditional bricks.
 - 3.3.4 It has the same 60 year lifespan as a traditional cavity wall system.
 - 3.3.5 The product is 33% lighter than traditional masonry. This reduces buildings loads, concrete and steel volume and foundation depth which all helps improve the sustainability credentials of a project.
 - 3.3.6 There is flexibility in the colour and pattern of the bricks so they can be made to match any natural brick colour. The depth of the panels can also vary between 13-30mm with the deeper ones having an appearance more akin to traditional brick.
 - 3.3.7 They can be installed quicker than traditional bricks with up to 60sqm more installed per day, per installer as opposed to traditional bricks. This helps accelerate delivery timetables and provides homes in a shorter timeframe.
 - 3.3.8 As the bricks can be made to size there is less waste than traditional bricks.
 - 3.3.9 Due to the way Sustainabrick is produced it uses 22% less embodied carbon per sqm than traditional bricks.
 - 3.3.10 As the product is lighter (as highlighted at 3.3.5) it requires less energy to transport to site. For example 6,500sqm of Sustainabrick would

require seven lorry loads to transport it but the equivalent amount of bricks would be 39 lorry loads so this is an indirect environmental benefit of the product.

- 3.4 The product also meets the requirements of the Building Regulations in respect of fire safety.

4. Policy context

- 4.1 Policy D4 of the London Plan promotes good design within development. The supporting text states “The scrutiny of a proposed development’s design should cover its layout, scale, height, density, land uses, materials, architectural treatment, detailing and landscaping.”
- 4.2 As this development consists of a number of tall buildings, policy D9 of the London Plan is also relevant. Part c of this policy states the following: “architectural quality and materials should be of an exemplary standard to ensure that the appearance and architectural integrity of the building is maintained through its lifespan”
- 4.3 The Greenwich Core strategy at policy DH1 sets out that all developments are required to be of a high quality of design and to demonstrate that they positively contribute to the improvement of both the built and natural environments. It sets out that the quality of the materials used are one of the key attributes to achieving a successful scheme. It also acknowledges the need for materials to be sustainable with part xii stating that “wherever possible, ensure building materials are responsibly sourced and minimise environmental impact;”
- 4.4 London Plan Policy HCI and Core Strategy Policy DH3 state new development should preserve or enhance the character and setting of heritage assets, including listed buildings, locally listed buildings and conservation areas. The site does not contain any listed buildings, however the northern extent of the site does fall within the Royal Arsenal conservation area. The buildings would also be visible from the Woolwich conservation area so are considered to be sensitive in heritage terms.
- 4.5 The following comment was made by the conservation officer in respect of the Reserved Matters application: “The proposed architectural treatment is considered to be of high quality and reflective of the 'history' of the locality, they are well integrated within the established architecture of the Royal Arsenal and the Woolwich Conservation Area in the nearby designated

heritage assets. It is agreed in heritage terms that the proposed changes to the approved scheme has a 'beneficial effect' to partially mitigate any undesirable visual harm created by the scale of the buildings on the surrounding heritage assets and the Royal Arsenal conservation area (and Woolwich Conservation Area)."

- 4.6 The architectural treatment would be unaffected by this amendment and the scale and massing of the buildings remain as per those approved by Planning Board in December 2024.
- 4.7 The amendment to the condition will still allow for officers to review the exact details of the materials being proposed. In the last few months, officers have made several site visits to view mock up panels of the proposed brick facing system. The appearance of the 'Sustainabrick' product is very similar to traditional bricks and given the sustainability advantages it is considered that this option would also comply with policy D4, D9 and HCI of the London Plan along with policies DH1 and DH3 of the Core Strategy.
- 4.8 Policy H1 of the London Plan sets out that housing supply in the capital needs to be increased. Table 4.1 of the London Plan set an annual target of 28,240 net new houses for Greenwich over a ten-year period up until 2028/29, and requires Boroughs optimise housing and mixed-use developments on appropriate sites. This is supported by Core Strategy policy H1 which states that the majority of new housing is expected to be developed in Royal Greenwich's six Strategic Development Locations, including within the Woolwich Town Centre.
- 4.6 This development includes 663 homes, including 306 affordable homes, 90 of which would be for social rent, 101 for shared ownership and 90 for Discount Market Sale. 70 of the total homes are three bedroom homes which is also an advantage of the scheme. The developer has put forward the case that if alternative materials are not possible for these buildings it is likely that the scheme will not go ahead due to viability concerns. Officers have been unable to verify this information as this is not a viability tested scheme, however it should be noted that the Council's supply of housing is currently only at 2.03 years, which is significantly below the 5year housing land supply (5YHLS) that it is required to demonstrate.
- 4.7 The proposed amendment is considered to be acceptable, however it should be noted that if Members do not consider the amendment appropriate in the circumstances where the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5YHLS, under footnote 8, the presumption in favour of sustainable development in

accordance with paragraph 11d of the Framework applies – ‘the tilted balance’. The tilted balance refers to the presumption in paragraph 11d(ii) of the NPPF that, where the presumption applies, planning permission should be granted unless there are “adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole”. As set out above, the use of an alternative to traditional brick is not considered to cause significant adverse impacts that would outweigh the benefits of delivering this substantial housing scheme.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 It is recommended that the revision to condition 16 as set out in paragraph 2.4 above is agreed.

Background Papers:

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

National Planning Practice Guidance

The London Plan (2021)

Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014)

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