

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY  
Development, Enterprise and Environment

**Mark Gibney**  
Partner - Planning  
BPTW Partnership  
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LONDON SE10 9QX

**Our ref:** D&P/0051c/GC  
**Date:** 17 February 2014

Dear Mr Gibney,

**Convoys Wharf, Deptford, London SE8**  
**Planning application: DC/13/83358**

I write further to our meeting on 7 February 2014, where we received a presentation on recent archaeological findings at Convoys Wharf, and reviewed progress made with respect to accommodating various key heritage-led community projects within the proposed redevelopment of the site.

Following these discussions, I would like to take this opportunity to set out the position of GLA planning officers, and to identify key further actions that should be undertaken. As I am sure you appreciate, the views and opinions expressed below are strictly without prejudice to the Mayor's formal consideration of the application.

**Archaeological findings**

Duncan Hawkins of CgMs presented a number of archaeological findings published within the draft post-excavation assessment report. In particular, the following was noted:

Sayes Court

Whilst some building fabric likely to have belonged to the former Sayes Court Manor was found, this has been incorporated within a later eighteenth century workhouse building, which was built at the same site and also subsequently demolished. No remains of Sayes Court Manor, as such, were found.

Whilst some fragments of garden wall were located, no remains of Sayes Court Garden were found.

Deptford Dockyard

It is clear that the dockyard has evolved continually over time in response to operational requirements and essential maintenance. The layout of dockyard archaeology was revealed largely as expected, however, in a number of cases it appears that dock infrastructure was not delivered to the planned specification.

## **Sayes Court Garden project**

Sayes Court Garden Community Interest Company (CIC) outlined its proposals for a centre of excellence in urban horticulture as a means of expressing the John Evelyn legacy, and celebrating Sayes Court Manor and its historic garden. The National Trust has a fundamental association with the John Evelyn legacy at the site, and strongly supports this proposal. It is envisaged that the National Trust would ultimately operate the centre proposed.

Based on engagement with various key stakeholders, the CIC has identified a need for 1,500 sq.m. of floorspace for the horticultural centre (situated above, and revealing, the Sayes Court Manor/workhouse ruins), and a minimum of one hectare of open space to support the proposed horticultural programme. It was noted that the masterplan would provide 1,600 sq.m. of floorspace with the potential for use as a John Evelyn centre for urban horticulture, and that approximately 0.6 hectares of open space would be delivered adjacent to this centre (albeit a proportion of this space may need to be shared for school playground space). The masterplan approach would also enable the Sayes Court Manor/workhouse ruins to be displayed as part of the John Evelyn centre.

Whilst the John Evelyn centre is currently proposed to be delivered as part of a larger mixed use block at masterplan plot 16, the CIC stated that it was important that the horticultural centre was delivered as a standalone building in order that it: reflects the historic relationship of Sayes Court Manor and garden; benefits from a maximum interface with garden land; and, has a strong presence/identity. The CIC also indicated that a standalone building would give it greater assurance with respect to phasing/delivery timing of the centre.

The CIC presented a study exploring how the parameters of masterplan plot 16 could be revised to allow for two separate blocks to be delivered – therefore enabling the envisaged John Evelyn/urban horticulture centre to be provided as a standalone block (at the site of the former Sayes Court Manor). It was noted that some proposed floorspace would need to be displaced from plot 16 in order to achieve this, however, this space could potentially be accommodated elsewhere within the masterplan.

Whilst it is acknowledged that it would be possible to revise the outline parameters in the manner proposed by the CIC, GLA officers are of the view that breaking up the plot in this way would undermine some important urban design principles of the masterplan. When considering the characteristics of plot 16 as currently proposed, it is important to note that its perimeter block layout provides good definition to surrounding masterplan routes and spaces, and offers clearly defined thresholds between the public realm and private amenity space. This approach focuses public activity on the surrounding streets and public spaces (ensuring that these areas are perceived as welcoming and safe) and provides a clear sense of ownership for private amenity areas (ensuring that these are valued and well-used by residents). The plot 16 block works collectively with adjacent blocks to reinforce these positive principles through the masterplan - providing good definition to Olympia square to the northeast, and the open parkland to the southwest. With these principles established it is clear that the splitting of plot 16 into two separate blocks would be detrimental to the definition of the southwest parkland, and would induce a poorly defined space at the heart of the plot. The perceived role of the latter is likely to be unclear for residents and visitors alike, as it would not be obvious whether the space is intended to operate as an extension of public realm, or as a semi-private amenity space. Ultimately this would have negative implications for the quality and attractiveness of this space, undermining its contribution to the wider network of open spaces in the locality. GLA officers are also of the opinion that the relationship of the standalone horticultural centre to adjacent blocks would be unusual, and

generally at odds with the wider masterplan. For these reasons, the urban design outcome of providing the horticultural centre as a standalone block is not supported by GLA officers. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that a key part of the rationale for seeking the incorporation of the proposed primary school and John Evelyn centre within plot 16 is to promote vibrancy, and to create a critical mass of educational, cultural and community uses. GLA officers are of the view that a community hub of this nature would positively contribute towards the creation of sustainable communities within the scheme, and offer a number of important symbiotic advantages for both the school and the John Evelyn centre, including: educational overlap; future opportunities for shared spaces; increased community/visitor footfall; and, enhanced opportunities for community engagement/outreach. Officers are of the opinion that the proposal to provide the John Evelyn centre as a standalone building would disaggregate these community uses, and fail to take full advantage of the cumulative opportunities and benefits mentioned above.

#### Actions for applicant team

Officers would suggest that the applicant team presents solutions for school playground provision to allow for open space adjacent to masterplan plot 16 to be maximised and delivered as a coherent whole. In particular, opportunities for green breakout space that interfaces with the John Evelyn centre should be maximised. Potential school sport/recreation studies should include an option that would utilise 'Evelyn Gardens' (between masterplan plots 16 and 18) for playground.

Officers would suggest that the applicant team makes a formal offer to Sayes Court Garden CIC and the National Trust setting out the terms under which the applicant is willing to make the proposed John Evelyn centre available for the Sayes Court Garden project, i.e. handover of the building shell with a long lease and rental agreement - to include an introductory rent-free period.

Having had regard to the cultivatable open space requirements identified by Sayes Court Garden CIC, it is apparent that supplementary open space would be needed in order to enable delivery of the horticultural programme envisaged. GLA officers are of the view that Sayes Court Park represents a suitable location for a coherent and meaningful extension of the project beyond the boundary of the application site. It is further considered that such an extension could significantly enrich the character and quality of the existing parkland, whilst offering new opportunities for interactions between the proposed programme and existing Deptford communities. Accordingly, the applicant is strongly encouraged to propose a financial contribution towards landscaping enhancements for Sayes Court Park. This contribution would be justified as a planning obligation, and could be used to support extension of the horticultural programme as part of a robust business plan for the Sayes Court Garden Project. Where such a business plan is not forthcoming, the contribution would default to Lewisham Council, who will deliver landscaping enhancements to its own specification as required.

#### Actions for Sayes Court Garden CIC

Officers would suggest that the Sayes Court Garden CIC advances its business plan, and makes its response to the applicant's offer and terms for use of the proposed John Evelyn centre.

### **Build the Lenox project**

The Lenox group presented its emerging proposals for ship construction within the Olympia building. It was noted that English Heritage support this proposal in principle, however, there is still much feasibility work to be undertaken before the potential for harm to heritage assets (including the Olympia building itself, and the archaeology beneath it) may be fully understood.

English Heritage made clear that a robust business plan will be a key part of the feasibility study – and that such a plan is critical to ensure that the potential public benefits of the project would be realised. It was nevertheless noted that the Lenox group seeks assurance with respect to an agreed construction site, before developing a detailed business plan.

The applicant stated that it would prefer a multi-use proposal for the Olympia building, on the basis that a more diverse range of activities would help to promote vibrancy and encourage return trips. The applicant also raised concerns regarding the proposal to reinstate waterway access from Olympia to the Thames, citing that the approach would sever a key masterplan route, and necessitate works to the existing fixed Jetty. It is also not clear how such a connection is proposed to be funded.

The applicant presented its own proposals for Lenox construction at the wharf part of the site. It is understood that this approach would be more cost effective in terms of providing Thames access, and would enable the project to commence considerably earlier in the development programme. The applicant also indicated that it would be willing to offer support in terms of infrastructure delivery - to enable the Lenox to be constructed and launched at the wharf site.

Whilst it is recognised that ship construction within the Olympia building is very much the preferred option for the Lenox project team, the community group did not rule out the option for ship construction at the wharf site. The group also indicated that it would be willing to consider an associated offer for infrastructure delivery (comprising a dry dock) to support wharf-based ship building. Notwithstanding this, the Lenox group identified a number of concerns associated with the wharf construction site including: the need for legible and direct connections to Maritime Greenwich; the time limited/temporary nature of the site offer; and, weaker links with the traditional sites for ship building at the former dockyard.

GLA officers fully support the further exploration of both the Olympia-based and wharf-based shipbuilding options. However, given the detailed feasibility work sought by English Heritage with respect to the Olympia scenario, and being mindful of the expected timeline for determining the outline masterplan application, it appears that the wharf option is likely to be the only site that could be reasonably secured at this stage of the planning process. Accordingly, the Lenox group is encouraged to review its position carefully, and to consider the benefits of greater certainty, and timelier project commencement, associated with the applicant's offer for the wharf site. Having regard to the position above, the following actions are proposed:

#### Actions for applicant team

Officers would suggest that the applicant team explores how the phasing and construction logistics strategies could be configured to allow for wharf site based Lenox construction (and associated public access for workers and visitors) to be provided for the duration of the ship building programme. Also, having regard to phased delivery timings, the applicant team is encouraged to set out how legible and inviting public links between the wharf shipbuilding site and Maritime Greenwich would be achieved.

Officers would suggest that the applicant team makes a formal offer to the Lenox project team setting out the terms under which the applicant is willing to make the wharf available for the project, i.e. duration of temporary use (with options for extensions if required) and rental agreement - to include an introductory rent-free period.

Notwithstanding the envisaged future role of the wharf for river freight, the applicant should set out its offer for the delivery of enabling infrastructure to facilitate temporary shipbuilding at this location - to support the aims of this heritage-led community scheme as part of a robust business plan for the Lenox project. Where such a business plan is not forthcoming, the contribution would default to the funding pool for river freight enabling works at the wharf.

Actions for Lenox group

Officers would suggest that the Lenox group advances a business plan for both an Olympia-based and wharf-based shipbuilding project; engages with the applicant in order to discuss viable options for an enabling section 106 offer; and, makes its response to the applicant's offer and terms for use of the wharf site for construction and launch of the Lenox.

Yours sincerely,



**Colin Wilson**

Senior Manager - Planning Decisions

cc Dr Edmond Ho, Hutchison Whampoa Properties (Europe) Limited  
John Miller, Lewisham Council  
Rt Hon Dame Joan Ruddock MP, Labour MP for Lewisham Deptford  
Julian Kingston, Build the Lenox Project  
Roo Angell, Sayes Court Garden CIC  
Mark Stevenson and Richard Parish, English Heritage  
Nic Durston, National Trust