

Meeting: 8 July 2010  
Agenda Item: 3  
Report No.: LTGDC/10/PC33



## **Addendum Planning Committee Report**

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### **London Thames Gateway Development Corporation**

### **Planning Application LTGDC-09-110-REG3**

### **Report of the Director of Planning**

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#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This addendum report is to advise Members of additional information received since the writing of the committee report. This was in the form of an E Mail from Cllr A Curtin of LB Havering in support and 176 pro forma objections with 17 of the pro formas being amplified by letters.

#### **2 E Mail from Cllr Curtin**

2.1 Cllr Curtin is the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns and Communities in Havering. He submitted a detailed and lengthy E Mail of support which was circulated on Tuesday of this week to members of the Committee because of its length. It is also attached for completeness. His comments relate to the design of the scheme and its appropriateness to the Conservation Area.

#### **3 Pro Forma Objections and letters**

3.1 The text on the pro forma is "I object to Planning Application U00018.09/LBHG because I am opposed to any buildings above 3 storeys high in the Rainham Village conservation area." These were organised by the three local councillors, two of whom have spoken at this meeting. The text on the leaflet to which the pro forma was attached explained that they were opposed to the plans "because they set a dangerous precedent within a conservation area and will undermine the fight against a Tower City at Dovers Corner."

3.2 The comments in the individual letters objected because

- the scheme represents over development
- there would be adverse impacts on the Conservation Area and Rainham Village
- whilst a library was needed, flats were not because of parking problems and demands on social and community facilities
- high rise flats had recently been demolished on the Mardyke Estate north of A1306 and yet want to build more
- family homes not flats were needed

- that the existing family centre was better provided for, being on the ground floor and with access for people with disabilities and having a large outside play area and that the existing library and Family Centre are centrally located and only require some basic refurbishment
- the site should be laid out as open space

**RECOMMENDATION:** Remains to grant planning permission, as in the main report.

**CASE OFFICER:** Stephen Allen

**Date:** 8 July 2010

## Peter Minoletti

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**From:** Councillor Andrew Curtin [Andrew.Curtin@havering.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 05 July 2010 17:44  
**To:** Peter Minoletti  
**Cc:** Cheryl Coppell; Cynthia Griffin; Michael White; robert.benham@havering.gov.uk; Roger McFarland  
**Subject:** Firm support for LBH position on Rainham Library.

Dear Peter,

I wish to offer my whole-hearted support for the position of Havering Council on the proposed Rainham library, community space, life-long learning facility and flats which I understand the LTGDC will be considering this Thursday.

I am Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns and Communities in Havering, and also Historic Environment Champion for the borough - a role that I have held since 2004. I believe I am correct in saying that I am one of the longest-standing Historic Environment Champions in London. My Cabinet role also includes heritage and conservation as well as architecture and libraries.

My background is as an art historian. Both my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are in art history, including architecture, and I have worked on aspects of eighteenth and nineteenth century aesthetics in particular. My late father was a conservation architect who, among other things, was a key force behind the gaining of "article 4" protection for Gidea Park Conservation Area in Romford. I have been surrounded by ideas on architecture literally since I was born!

The proposed building for the new library and other facilities in Rainham is, in my opinion, an outstandingly good piece of conservation architecture, which lifts the spirits by constituting an original and creative response to the very significant historic environment of Rainham Village, improving the Conservation Area, ensuring that the space around it in the village is well-articulated and therefore adding to the pleasure which both residents and visitors to the village gain.

My enthusiastic support for this most sympathetic piece of work is founded on two main criteria - both the intrinsic qualities of the scheme and its relationship to the publicly consulted upon, approved and adopted Rainham Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal, which is freely available on the Havering Council website.

Havering has eleven conservation areas, two new ones were declared earlier this year, all of the nine longer-established areas have approved and adopted Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans arising from them, reflecting the central importance of conservation of the historic environment to Havering Council.

In relation to Rainham Village, the Conservation Area Character Appraisal is clear that the site in question is currently a blight on Rainham Village Conservation Area, having a very negative impact upon it both visually and in terms of the setting of the rest of the built historic environment here.

Paragraph 4.3 of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal is clear when it says of this site; "the eastern "gateway" to the village, the approach from the railway station, is marred by neglected or poorly maintained sites".

Paragraph 4.9 re-emphasises the point when it says; "the approach from the east along Wennington Road is the least attractive in landscape terms... The Ferry Lane junction here is wide, the adjoining vacant site unkempt, and the Phoenix's car park no more than functional".

Map 3 in the Rainham Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal particularly picks this area out as one which currently has poor views within the conservation area.

Paragraph 7.0 of the Character Appraisal particularly picks out the negative effect which the Ferry Lane/ Broadway area has on the historic fabric of the village when it says; "The "gateways" to the Conservation Area at all approaches give a poor impression, particularly at Ferry Lane/ Broadway..."

These observations on the damage currently done to the historic environment of Rainham Village by the site in question are picked up in the Management Plan for Rainham Village Conservation Area which flows from the Character Appraisal. This specifically identifies the land in question as an "eyesore".

It is clear, therefore, that the site in question as it currently stands has a very negative impact on this important historic setting, and has been identified in the Conservation Area Management Plan as being a place where there should be improvements. The Management Proposals at paragraph 9.1 of the Character Appraisal make it plain that, from a conservation point of view, the aim for those sites which have a negative effect such as this one is to encourage "the improvement or re-development of sites which detract from its character".

The site as it stands therefore, from a conservation point of view, has a very negative impact on the historic landscape of Rainham Village and has been earmarked as part of a public process for improvement.

I am firmly of the view that the proposed building is that improvement, and improves the historic environment of Rainham Village in a most sympathetic and thoughtful way, which adds greatly to the environment around it.

In this joint project between LTGDC and London Borough of Havering the architects, who are highly thought of in conservation architecture, have taken the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan as their starting point in producing a design resolution for this specific site and a valuable conservation assessment to go with it.

The proposed building is particularly welcome for the thoughtful way with which it handles space, ensuring that the relationship between this building and the other structures and spaces around it are clarified and made more legible.

It often seems to me that we should view the village environment much as we would a sentence - a particularly happy allusion for a library I hope. The articulation of space is required to punctuate and bring legibility to the village environment, without which the impression of breathlessness or excessively sharp contrast is created.

This scheme responds to this requirement excellently, creating a gently curving line on the street when viewed from the east which gradually leads the eye round. Before the building there is high-quality public space which adds greatly to the impression of space and lack of clutter within the village while also beginning to address streetscene and street furniture issues identified in the Character Appraisal. This also enable the building to be an effective link between the village and the station, something which is currently unresolved and to be a most sympathetic gateway site to the village, working with (rather than overpowering) the historic environment adjacent to it. It also creates a successful and visually very graceful link between the village and the residential area beyond it to the east, which is currently lacking in the village. This absence currently has a detrimental effect on its historic fabric.

The articulation of the roof on the Village elevation of the library in the scheme adds visual interest to the built form in a most considerate way, preferring gentle suggestion rather than brash "bling" to give interest - something which is most welcome here. Equally the gentle use of colour within the brickwork to give visual interest to this end of the building is welcome and most appealing.

In terms of built form and materials, much work has gone in to producing a light and uncluttered response to the materials and forms of the village, which is easy on the eye without resorting to banal familiarity, an approach which will be very positive for the richness of our culture and our thought on the built environment in Rainham and in Havering beyond that. The subtle articulation of door and window openings and the cross references between materials used and those predominant in the village and its detailing are a joy to see, and wholly in accord with the aspirations of conservation planning policy.

The positioning of the residential block near the station is well-handled from the point of view both of the form of the village and conservation practice, positioned as it is at a transport interchange and also forming a subtle visual reference point for the village from Rainham Marshes. This is also a link which is particularly emphasised as being important in the Area Character Appraisal.

At the level of streetscene, the visual permeability of the building at street level by use of windows allowing passers by to see in and through the building is very welcome and prevents blind walls and tunnels being created in the village environment. This is in keeping with best-practice in design, from a community safety and general environment point of view as well as from that of heritage.

The way in which materials and form create a gentle backdrop to the historic environment, forming charming new views from the village and approaches to it, and also of the village and historic surroundings from the building, must make this one of the most perfect small projects in a village historic environment to have been proposed in the nation in recent years.

Architecture helps us to better feel the spaces and places around us, to inspire us with our history and enthuse us with the hope that the future can offer. As well as its intrinsic value it also has an important part to play in promoting mental health, supporting and valuing an educated approach to life, and creating an environment which is more valued and therefore less prone to anti-social behaviour as well as many other things.

This proposal is for a beautiful small building, which will bring hope and inspiration to all those who see it. I was glad to include it as an example of outstanding good practice in my annual Historic Environment Champion's Report to Havering Council for the 2009/10 year, and am glad to whole-heartedly support the position of Havering Council on this application.

Yours sincerely,

Clr. Andrew Curtin.

Cabinet Member - Culture, Towns and Communities, London Borough of Havering.  
Historic Environment Champion, London Borough of Havering.

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