

Critical Appraisal of proposals for The Millennium Mills Site

London's Royal Docks are located in Newham, East London and have been subject to vast and long-term redevelopment. Developments around the Royal Docks include London City Airport, The Excel Centre and The DLR which runs through the area. The Site of Interest within the Royal Docks is Millennium Mills located in Silvertown which includes Millennium Mills itself, Rank Hovis and Silo D. Silo D has a grade II listing status from English Heritage stating in terms of concrete grain silos "This is a Particularly good example" (English Heritage p.1 2021).

The Royal Docks own website speaks about how they opened in 1905 and was a thriving industrial site in London until the 1960's when the Docks became unable to handle the needs of modern shipping activities. This subsequently caused the closure of the Docks in 1982 leaving industrial buildings such as Millennium Mills and Rank Hovis derelict for the last 39 years. The collapse of industry in the area subsequently caused job losses and poverty causing a need for area wide regeneration.

The Royal Docks: Unlocked 2037 economic vision produced by the Greater London Authority and the London Borough of Newham outlines that the current plan for Millennium Mills is its redevelopment into what it describes as a "High spec Mixed use Space" (GLA, LBN, p.18, 2016) also putting emphasis on the value of The Mills for its architectural value referring to it as "Iconic" (GLA, LBN, p.18, 2016). While the mill isn't listed, its regeneration is largely favourable of conservation in complementing Silo D in the historic industrial landscape of the Docks. The approach to Millennium Mills seems to be market growth led with the view to use it for commercial space which may be an effective approach in attracting investment into what is currently a brownfield site for many years. The only risks in doing so could revolve around the question of will any significant alterations to the mills lead to any loss of character through loss of its identity as a landmark and significant industrial heritage site within the docks.

Silo D is recognised for its value in creating character in Silvertown with the plan stating "Silo D brings character to the development and offers a plethora of opportunity for iconic placemaking projects" (GLA, LBN, p.18, 2016) showing an intent within the policy to retain the structure suggesting the policies remain in favour of conservation. The Planning (Listed buildings and conservation areas) act 1990 states that any development that surrounding listed buildings must be assessed in terms of their impact on the setting of the

structure in question. This would suggest that the planned regeneration of millennium mills although not listed could be seen as favourable for conservation in terms of retaining the original industrial landscape.

Silo D seems to have a more community led approach which as previously stated is good for creating character which is probably the best approach to this a redevelopment proposal for a Silo may be difficult to execute due to the nature of the structure and options may be limited due to the structures listing. Also, to note is that any significant alteration to the structure would be detrimental to the Docks surviving industrial landscape.

In terms of the Broader area The Royal Docks are also Located within London's only enterprise zone as outlined by the Royal Docks enterprise zone Delivery Plan showing a current effort to use Market Growth led regeneration. This Entails a £315.4m investment into the Royal Docks with a view to stimulate economic growth in the area with the plan stating "(Investment) will support transport infrastructure, connectivity, economic development, placemaking, estate management and Creative projects" (GLA, p.1, 2018). The Delivery plan also mentions that the business rates made through the commercial properties will be used to fund the project.

A London Inheritance speaks about The 1976 strategic plan for the London Docklands focussed on trying to use the abandoned industrial Brownfield sites for redevelopment into property as well as focussed on reducing decline to improve the area for the existing local community with proposals including 600 acres of public open space. it was devised with great focus on Public Consultation and representation of the local community with 2 members of the Docklands forum appointed to the Docklands joint committee.

This took more of a Public Sector Led approach to regeneration and sought to address needs of Locals while the current approach to the regeneration of the Docklands takes more of a Market growth Led Approach with a view to attract investment into the area by external Businesses. This may be deemed a more effective way of driving investment into the Docklands which could stimulate its continued regeneration at a much faster rate due to alleviating the financial restrictions that the GLA have on how much they can fund themselves which is what previously restricted the Docklands Committee in 1976.

The strategy also states "(the Docks) They offer the crucial space for Housing Growth, new schools, community facilities and transport Links to other parts of Newham" (GLA, LBN, P.6, 2016) and further addresses a local need for housing with a plan for 20,000 new homes by 2037 showing recognition in the

plans for the existing community as opposed to straying mostly towards the demands of investors.

However, this may be detrimental to the local community with the risk that investors seeking to make big returns on investments may push up the cost of housing and segregate access to certain facilities within complexes causing a divide in the local community as they aren't affordable to existing residents in the Docks. Other issues may arise with issues around having outside investment with the risk that most of the money generated by these developments leaves the area as economic leakage.

In conclusion, the Current strategy to the development of the Docks is for the most part effective in its market growth led approach to regeneration through attracting external investment to drive change in the area. It addresses the need for Community facilities, Housing and employment through the drive provided by outside business investment into the area. However, the current plans seem to be either not beneficial or harmful to the community in the area with the risk that developers create unaffordable housing and restricted areas within complexed and estates which consequently causes class divides within the community. The plans for Silo D have few issues and largely look to utilise it as a landmark to create character which will help with legibility with its Identifiable industrial appearance. The Approach taken towards the Mill itself provides great opportunity to utilise another central Landmark in Silvertown while creating employment. A suggestion for the Mills would be to remain a mixed used development but allocate Exhibition space to educate the local community on the importance of the site to the Docks Historically and ensure that the Mills don't become too far detached from their heritage. This may create a sense of interest and significance for locals.

In terms of policies surrounding the broader Docklands, it could be wise to approach regeneration with a more bottom up approach in terms of prioritising needs of existing Locals rather than trying to attract outside investment which feeds into new high value developments which are mostly unaffordable to locals or even completely inaccessible. This is likely to cause a class divide in the community. Alternative approaches may include trying to gain more investment into public facilities or requiring in policy to have a higher volume of affordable housing.

Bibliography

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GLA – Greater London Authority

LBN – London Borough of Newham