

Voice 4 Deptford Consultation on Cultural Strategy and Plot 21.

Cultural Strategy

Deptford is a recognised centre of creativity in SE London with a unique culture. Deptford culture includes that of people originating from a number of countries, religions and philosophies, including the current target group for the new housing on Convoys Wharf, namely younger City workers. This is not being recognised in the process underway. The people who are carrying out the consultations and planning the development are themselves coming from a different culture, and it will not be easy to avoid imposing that other culture on the people of Deptford.

The Cultural Steering Group, even after nearly 6 years, is still not functioning as intended. This needs to be taken hold of more than at present. Let us hope it can really start now.

Meanwhile use is potentially a good way to get things moving, allowing people on site. Voice4Deptford will be proposing and supporting meanwhile use. Yet it should not be a distraction from solving the difficulties of the present building plans that are now over 6 years on from the granting of Outline Planning Permission (OPP) and over 10 years has passed in design thinking.

The S106 project Sayes Court Garden would like to provide meanwhile use and begin the process of setting up the new horticultural centre, along with training for all and giving younger children and people the opportunity to experience how things grow, where food comes from and how to prepare it. Existing experienced providers like the John Evelyn Community Garden and others can advise and support this new addition to green and open space in Deptford.

It is certainly time to get the Youth Forum to function. Children and Young People often have their own very clear ideas and can come up with solutions that adults would not have thought of.

Plot 21

Plot 21 is a protected wharf and it should stay that way. For the purpose of commercial and industrial uses along with any potential future strategic national protection at need. It has already been 'reduced' from being 2/3 of the overall site, to a much smaller 'sliver' placed at right angles to the River.

The Convoys Wharf Outline Planning Permission and approvals for Plots 08, 15 & 22 as a redevelopment site is already very highly dense and overcrowded, and is not on a human scale. Adding even more housing at the expense of much needed green and open space along with an overall better environment is not the solution

What is needed is better high quality social rented homes, meeting the highest new environmental standards, within the area where housing has been already approved. It cannot be beyond the wit of the combined forces of the developers, the people of Deptford and other professionals to provide it.

It is time to introduce the calculations of "social capital" into the criteria for viability and make the site a place people will want to make their homes for a lifetime and more.

Voice4Deptford has a wide contact with architects and designers who can contribute greatly, if given an opportunity.

The S106 project Build the Lenox is supported by Voice4Deptford, because along with a heritage ship building project, it will provide much needed training and experience for all in design and construction skills, and in particular it can offer apprenticeships and work placements especially for younger people and should be supported more actively by Hutchison. Also, light industrial space for small businesses and affordable studio space for creatives is to be welcomed. Voice4Deptford can offer ideas that can contribute towards this.

The notion of having a new 21st century public park with open green space, trees and an adventurous children's play area, along with activities for all ages, is a highly desirable option. There is a 'net' shortage of green space in Convoys Wharf, and Deptford overall, and the additional pressure needs to be taken off the surrounding parks which are already well used.

With climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, people more than ever now understand the importance of nature for mental and physical health and well-being and are looking for its presence in their choice of where they want to live their lives.

The present scheme is 'out-of-date' and unambitious in design and planning for Convoys Wharf and is losing out on the latest trend to move to where there is space to breath and have direct contact with nature. Making city spaces welcoming is a challenge to be met.