EIA Quality Mark Case Study

Leven Road Gasworks
London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Purpose of the Project:
Temple worked with St William Homes to help them deliver a part full part outline planning application on the site of the former gasworks at Leven Road in Poplar, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Description of the Project:
The scheme promises to deliver an outline component of a maximum of 195,000 m² (GEA) of floorspace, comprising residential, business, retail, a 6-form entry secondary school, assembly and leisure uses and over 1 hectare of public open space including a riverside park and riverside walk.
The detailed component comprises of 66,000 m² (GEA) of residential floorspace up to 14 stories in height, consisting of flexible office, retail, community and leisure uses.

The 8.3-hectare brownfield site would look to deliver up to 2,800 homes over 5 phases spanning approximately 20 years with the first phase to be delivered in detail.

This complex site is located on the bank of the River Lea and was historically used for both the production of gas and gas storage over its 120-year history. The site lies within the Mayor’s Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area (2007), the Poplar Riverside Housing Zone (2013) and is designated as a strategic housing site within the current and emerging LBTH Local Plan.

Key Issues:
- Challenging delivery timeframe required development of strategies to allow early submission;
- Flexibility required to accommodate changes to the scheme following multiple design changes post design freeze;
- Complex application site which required a variety of detailed assessments, on topics such as ecology, contamination and water resources;
- Partially remediated site, requiring incorporation of remediation activities into the construction assessments;
- Management and coordination of a multi-disciplinary team of technical consultants in order to produce a range of deliverables;
Multiple construction phases and long construction build out (20 years) requiring the development of future years assessment criteria to allow comprehensive assessment of all outline phases; and

Limited site access during survey season required mitigation strategies to be delivered as part of the scheme negating the requirement for further survey predetermination.

**Lessons Learnt:**

- **Agile project management** - the project team needed to react quickly and effectively to accommodate design development iterations and revisions to data at a late stage in the EIA process. To manage this process going forward the team has put in place controls to enable this to be undertaken quickly and accurately so that time sensitive tasks could be managed more efficiently and with added confidence;

- **Defined ecology scope** - establishing clear guidance and agreement on the scope and number of ecology surveys required should have been more clearly defined and approved with the LBTH Ecology Officer. During the review process further surveys were requested which could have been done pre-submission during the optimum season. As this wasn’t clearly communicated further work was necessary post determination;

- **Understanding of parallel consenting process** - delayed completion of remediation of the site led the Applicant to incorporate remediation activities within the main planning application. Agreement of the remediation strategy with the Environment Agency was undertaken in parallel with the preparation of key ES chapters on ground contamination and water and flood risk. Better understanding of how this process worked early in the preparation of the EIA would have reduced abortive work and enabled more informed chapters to be produced earlier in the process;

- **Access constraints** - access to the site was restricted in part due to existing tenants and on-going remediation occurring in certain sections of the site. This had implications for ecology surveys which required full access, but surveyors could not appropriately assess some areas and structures present. A greater understanding of the constraints at the beginning of the process would have allowed greater flexibility for agreement of access, potentially reducing the requirement for added mitigation and conditions placed on the consent;

- **Understanding traffic volumes** - the extent of the remediation activities on site was not clear initially, which complicated the collation of the construction information, especially vehicle movements. This was further complicated by uncertainty as to when future phases could come forward, leading to a number of construction / operational scenarios in order to provide a broad understanding of the impacts over the 20-year construction phase. This inevitably led to an overestimation and conservative assumptions which could have been reduced with more accurate data at an early stage.

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