

## DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

### NOTES OF MEETING 30 July 2020

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Agenda and notes (where appropriate) can be viewed at the Council's website at:

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/living/designandconservation/designreviewpanel.htm>

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#### Panel Members Present:

- Councillor Linda Kirby (Chair)
- Marcus Beale
- Vinita Dhume
- Dipa Joshi
- Tim Long
- David Nossiter
- Isabella Percy
- Andre Sutherland
- Ayca Vural-Cutts

#### Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett: Note Taker
- Paul McGarry: Zoom Meeting Manager
- Jourdan Alexander: Planning Officer

#### Councillors Present

- Daniel Holden

#### Members of the Public Present

- Item 1 recorded and uploaded to Council YouTube page

#### Declarations of Interest

David Nossiter and Marcus Beale raised historical relationships that were deemed to have no bearing on the review.

Notes:

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**Item 1:** Application, 20/P1388, **Melrose School**, Mitcham

The Panel were generally positive towards the proposals but felt that there was definitely need for further thought regarding a number of aspects of the design and layout that could improve the proposal to make it more flexible, user-friendly and

bring more joy to the school experience for its special needs pupils. The Panel welcomed the general low-key subtle approach to the design, and the materials were appropriate to this.

The Panel were concerned that the layout was not as flexible and permeable as it could/should be. This was in relation to access between the MUGA and green space on the south of the site – independently by the staff, and independently from each classroom by providing doors rather than windows and generally for visitors. The whole site had the opportunity to be more permeable in its layout and the ease with which people could move around it. The new southern block needs to address this in particular

One key factor in this was the positioning of the hall. As this was intended to be publicly accessible outside school hours, then it was important that it had easy and convenient access without having to pass through other operational parts of the school. It was noted that the school layout should be robust in its ability to deal with Covid type situations without having to close down. Thus, the Panel felt it was important to investigate the possibility of positioning the hall close to the new site entrance.

The Panel also felt that the school lacked a good and welcoming entrance foyer, or orientation space, which would be welcoming for users and visitors alike. This also had implications for the positioning of services like toilets. Currently they were grouped together and would be better spaced around the school, to create better access by pupils, and easier public access relating to the hall. Revising the proposed location of toilets could also work better to deal with social distancing and managing the effects of coronavirus.

In terms of the general site layout, the Panel noted the new build occupied a high proportion of the available space and suggested that a two storey element might be feasible in order to maintain more open space and improve the general site layout. This also may take pressure off tree loss. It was felt further work was needed to ensure any tree re-planting was done in a way that was effective, noticeable and beneficial.

Whilst the tone of the architecture was welcomed, it was felt that the way the new building, hall and existing building met, was not as well executed as it could be, and that further work was needed to resolve how the pitched and flat roofs and taller hall all came together harmoniously. There were also cut-outs to the form for the plant room and canopy which began to compromise strong forms of the design

Contextually it was felt that the proposal did not look thoroughly enough at the immediate surroundings – massing diagrams would be useful. Also important was how the proposal linked with the adjacent council development site and how people accessed the site. The whole journey from Church Road needed to be assessed. In this context crossing Church Road and the journey along the access road for pedestrians was important.

It was important that there should be a traffic free route, from Church Road to the school, consisting of a separate footway and suitable crossing of Church Road. The

Panel felt that the number and purpose of the parking provision spaces needed to be re-assessed as it was no longer necessary to provide parking spaces for all staff. The need for an improved foyer extended to the need to provide a generous external space at the school gate. The narrow strip of land along the eastern boundary did not contribute well to this.

Whilst the Panel understood the site constraints and that there are primary and secondary elements to, it felt it was worth considering whether the existing and new accesses could be combined to create a one-way in-out access for the site to overcome some of the physical constraints. The Panel also felt that further explanation was needed on the approach to environmental sustainability as well as the long term flexibility of the use of the site.

VERDICT: **AMBER**

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**Item 2:** Pre-Application, 20/P1247, **St. George's East**, Wimbledon

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential