

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL
NOTES OF MEETING 29 October 2019

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

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

Panel Members Present:

- Najeeb Latif (Chair)
- Marcus Beale
- Clare Murray
- Andre Sutherland
- Cordula Weisser
- Michael Whitwell

Apologies

- Alistair Huggett
- Juliette Scalbert

Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett
- Paul McGarry (as client for Merantun Development Ltd)
- James McGinlay (as client for Merantun Development Ltd)

Councillors Present

- Nigel Benbow

Members of the Public Present

- Sarah Sharp (recording)

Declarations of Interest

- None

Notes:

Item 1: Application, 19/P0907, **Farm Road Church**, Farm Road, St. Helier

The Panel felt this was a well-designed and accomplished proposal that generally fitted well with its surroundings, was of an appropriate scale and used good quality

materials. It was felt that tile hanging went well with the proposed timber frame construction. The Panel felt that most of the previous review comments had been taken on board.

A number of comments and suggestions were made by the Panel it felt the applicant should consider further. The typology on Combermere Road was felt to be different. It was suggested that a different brick colour could be used on the town houses on this street, although there were mixed views on this. This point related to the view that there were large expanses of blank brickwork on flank walls. It was suggested that the applicant look into ways of giving relief to these as well as introducing side windows where possible. This could help introduce more light into the accommodation.

The window screens added to address potential overlooking at the rear were felt not to be successful and it was recommended that the windows themselves needed to be angled. The panel also questioned the quality of external space for ground floor flats, given that amenity space of flats would be facing the street. It was suggested that more attention needed to be paid to ensuring this was as useable as possible. Ensuring there was robust boundary treatment such as fencing/walls rather than just hedging, and bringing the gates/threshold to the back of the footway to maximise the space and defensible space, was suggested.

The detail of the bronze coloured metal panels was queried, as the CGI did not show a realistic detail. It was important this worked well in terms of quality and that the reality and CGI were honest in showing the reality of the effect. Overall, the Panel noted that the applicant needed to work to ensure that the quality of the scheme was not eroded as it passed through the planning and construction process. The size and impact of the feature dormers was questioned and whether the scale was reflected internally with a higher ceiling height – which it was.

The Panel queried the individual Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) approach taken for heating and hot water, and how this would affect likely household bills. The stated u-values for double glazing were also queried. The Panel also queried whether the size of the flats was to standard, as no measurements had been given for areas etc.

VERDICT: **GREEN**

Item 2: Application, 19/P0901, **Elm Nursery Car Park**, London Road, Mitcham

The Panel felt this was a really successful scheme in a harsh environment. The architecture was commended and the building addressed each side positively. It was felt the applicant had successfully addressed comments from the previous review. The design exhibited elements of past eras of public housing and built on them positively. The darker brick and bronze glazed tile were felt appropriate for the harsh and likely polluted environment.

The faceted upper floor was well liked though slightly disappointing that this was not evident internally. It was felt that careful attention to detail was required in order to ensure quality was maintained throughout the planning and construction process.

The join between the two types of brick needed to be carefully executed, as did the balcony detail.

The roof was the only disappointment for the Panel. This was seen as a missed opportunity as it was a simple plain roof that has no roof garden, green/brown roof design or photovoltaic/solar panels. Therefore the high parapet was seen as an unnecessary extension in height. However, the Panel's preference was to retain the parapet and put the roof space to good environmental use.

On the ground floor it was suggested that the flats would benefit from triple glazing the windows and the panel sought clarification on separation distances at the rear, which it had no issue with. Overall the Panel were very positive about the proposal.

VERDICT: **GREEN**

Item 3: Application, 19/P0904, **Raleigh Gardens Car Park**, Mitcham Town Centre

The Panel felt that this design had improved since the last review, with a number of previously raised issues being taken on board, mostly successfully. Again, the Panel commended the architectural quality with the caveat that this needed to be seen through the planning and construction process to completion.

The design consisted of large volumes and expanses of brick in the same colour. It was therefore very important that a high quality brick was used. There was some suggestion that this needed some relief. The Panel liked the form of the elevations, the two-building elements the window forms and the keeping of as many trees as possible – particularly to the rear

The clear division between the two parts of the building was more successful but it was felt that the appearance and materiality needed further refinement. The through access here and the rear layout had been improved with respect to security and overlooking and the re-siting of the cycle store was liked, though this did lead to new issues of dead frontage around the main entrance.

Internally the Panel felt that the ground floor layout was not working as well as it should. The wheelchair accessible unit had its bedroom facing the street and this was felt to be poor layout. The communal storage area seemed to be inhibiting a better layout. Where bathrooms faced external walls, opportunity should be taken to insert windows.

The Panel discussed the rear of the building and its proximity to Glebe Court. There was a general feeling that this was a constrained space with little communal value and a somewhat canyon feel. This led to the suggestion of having a lower boundary wall or no wall at all – implying sharing the existing communal space of Glebe Court, although in separate ownership.

This led the Panel to air its main concern regarding this scheme. This was that they felt that the site was over developed. This was reflected in the reiteration of the suggestion of exploring a U or L shaped building form to maximise the amount of

communal space to the rear. It was also expressed in the feeling by the Panel that the building was either slightly too tall or, at the very least, the pitched roof was unnecessary. This, the Panel felt, was anomalous and there was little precedent for it in the immediate vicinity. Removing the pitched roof and recessing the top floor was seen as a possible way of addressing this.

The Panel were concerned there were no sectional drawings provided to show the proximity of the building to existing buildings – notably Glebe Court. It was felt that the roof form did not future-proof for PV panels as they were facing the wrong way. Although there had been some positive developments, a few more fundamental issues still needed to be resolved.

VERDICT: **AMBER**

Item 4: Application, 19/P0906, **Land Adjacent to 15 Madeira Road**, Mitcham

The Panel saw the proposal as being of good architecture with good detailing, particularly the fronts of the mews houses. The level of private and communal open space was good and it was felt the communal square with buildings grouped around it would work really well. It was a good composition. There had been a number of improvements since the previous review.

It was felt there were a few issues that required further work. Although a heritage statement had been submitted as part of the application, the Panel had not seen this. It was therefore important that the proper procedure and assessment had taken place to conclude the level of harm and what the mitigation and public benefits were, that would outweigh this. There was some scepticism from the Panel regarding the rather emphatic conclusion reported in the review material.

In general, although the design was commended, the overall feel was that the development felt too harsh and clunky. This was most notable at the rear of the mews houses. This elevation seemed to have too much going on in terms of its volumetrics, with an array of different forms and planes. This made it seem too busy, intense and slightly military in feel. The Panel's advice on this was that the solution was an architectural one, which did not require a fundamental rethink, but which needed to be cuter, quieter and more rural in feel, to better relate to its historic surroundings. In contrast, the front of the mews was considered quite successful.

The flats block was considered to have similar issues – they needed to relax and breathe more - but not to the same degree as the mews houses. The access road felt like a road and needed softening to feel like a space. Again, the Panel felt that the roof was being under-used, lacking sustainable measures or access for roof gardens. Flat roofs were questioned in an area where pitched roofs generally prevailed, but was not necessarily considered essential.

Whilst internally the house layouts were liked, the entrance areas were considered impractical and cramped, with no storage for essential items such as coats, shoes etc. This area would benefit from a redesign. The headroom for the under-stairs WC was also questioned. Whilst one Panel member expressed the view 'I'd love to

live there' the Panel as a whole felt that the issue of the feel and appearance of the news houses just prevented them from giving a Green verdict.

VERDICT: **AMBER**