

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL
NOTES OF MEETING – 31 March 2020

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:

- Councillor Linda Kirby (Chair) *Not Present*
- Marcus Beale
- Vinita Dhume
- Tim Long
- Beatrix Young

Apologies

- Rachel Jones

Council Officers Present:

- NA

Councillors Present

- NA

Members of the Public Present

- NA

Declarations of Interest

- NA

Availability of Documentation

This review was for part of an application that is in the public domain. Normally the public are able to be present as observers when the Panel reviews application stage proposals. Occasionally the Panel undertakes an e-mail review for all or part of a proposal following a main review. In this case notes are put on the public file as appropriate and this is normal procedure.

This review falls into this category. Irrespective of the current Coronavirus Pandemic this application was planned to be conducted by e-mail. However, as a point of clarification the process followed was thus: the Panel members were sent an email

requesting comments individually. They were received individually by the Panel administrator and formatted into the notes below verbatim other than regularising them into bulleted form.

No further discussion was had between individual panel members and the Panel administrator. Draft notes were distributed to the panel members for comments and no comments were received. The design code document the Panel were commenting on is available on the council's planning explorer page and can be found [here](#).

Notes:

Item 1: Application, 19/P2383, **Land off Hallowfield Way**, Case Officer: **Leigh Harrington**. Ward: CRICKET GREEN

E-mail review of the Design Code relating to this application.

Outline application for the redevelopment of the whole site for up to 850 new dwellings with flexible commercial space with associated parking, landscaping and infrastructure.

A pre-application for redevelopment of this site was reviewed by the Panel on 24 January 2019, receiving a **RED** verdict. Following changes to the proposals, the DRP held a site visit and workshop on 12 February 2019 with Panel members and officers. This received an **AMBER** verdict. An application was then submitted and reviewed on 30 January 2020 receiving an **AMBER** verdict. The Panel requested they be able to review the accompanying Design Code and this is the subject of the notes below.

It was agreed review the Design Code by e-mail, as had been done a few times in the past for returning applications. Information was sent out to Panel members on 17 March 2020 with a deadline of 31 March 2020. Delays in receiving and publishing the notes are due to the effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Respondent order is not the same as the alphabetical list of reviewers above.

NOTES:

Respondent A

- In summary, these are a series of generic statements with very few dimensions or design speeds to give any real confidence that they will deliver good design.
- P15 Threading to the surroundings. The developers should state that they will not create a ransom strip of land between their site and their neighbours at the Cappagh site (Car Pound) to connect to White Bridge Avenue.
- This will help to maximise east-west movement to the tram stop and elsewhere. These new east-west streets would make the site less isolated as it is

currently a giant cul-de-sac that could have 850 dwellings containing about 2,000 people.

- This makes the single access road very vulnerable to any problems or congestion. For these reasons this site should be a car-free development. Thus there would be no podium parking, which would ensure many more dwellings are dual aspect, increase the SuDs areas and reduce the costs of construction.
- P18 pedestrian and cycle priority is achieved by creating Home Zones with sub 20kph speed limits using vertical traffic calming to the best European standards. All walking routes should be step-free, ie raised crossings and junctions at roads. No podium parking and only on-street drop off.
- P48 the only pedestrian priority crossing in the UK is a zebra. So will you use this therefore zebra crossings at all junctions?
- P48 The reference to appropriate barriers does not include yellow lining, so it is assumed these will not be adopted roads, and so how will parking be managed and enforced by the developers?
- P48 note the reference to shared space, which only works at sub 20kph speeds using intensive traffic calming measures in busy pedestrian spaces.
- P65 to allow almost 2,000 people on this site the movement and access needs to connect into adjacent areas and not just stop at the red line boundary of the site. Thus how will this development provide appropriate routes to the tram stop, White Bridge Avenue, across London Fields Playing Fields, Morden Road, etc?
- P78 and 79 - concern to see the term shared surface. All pavements and pedestrian spaces must be car-free otherwise they will be parked on and blocked, and thus deter walking.
- P90 and 91 should clearly state that physical barriers like bollards will also be provided to prevent any vehicles, except the emergency services, from accessing Baron Walk path from the new development. For example, Broad Walk in Buxton beside The Pavilion Gardens.
- P90 and 91 Who will own and manage this wider Baron Walk path, its paving, drainage, lighting etc? This this will determine the design and materials.
- P114 and 115 show how perpendicular parking requires a two lane road which wastes a lot of space. Instead, a low traffic neighbourhood of parallel parking and one way roads with two way cycling would save a lot of land.
- P124 and 125 You are not creating historic mews, but there does not appear to be enough street furniture to stop drivers from parking. Again why is a two way road required in a mews which is supposed to be a quieter lane. If you want to provide a single surface then how will you make this a shared space with sub 20kph driving, and ensure it is accessible for the visually impaired.
- As a completely new development on a green field site this is a rare opportunity to design in utility trenches to minimise maintenance. Less digging up the roads and paths is especially important in a large cul-de-sac development like this. But no mention is made of the basic infrastructure, including drainage despite lots of talk of SuDs, to support the site. This should be addressed in the design code, the masterplan and any application.

Respondent B

- Great document, well presented and easy to read.
- Very positive approach to open spaces and addressing massing and scale.
- Concur with pedestrian and cycle priority
- Entrance plaza – not enough information about this.
- Character areas – struggling with one building falling into 3 character areas. This could be defined better especially as the character areas are essentially the same with the main variant being scale rather than materiality. There are really only three

character areas. (1) Conservation, (2) Edge – or buildings that have an outward relationship and (3) Inner - buildings that are internal to the masterplan. Simplifying these might bring a bit more coherence and less repetition to the narrative. It might also help with the word Boulevard in terms of a suburban Mitcham Context. It then may not be needed and a park route could be used instead.

- The Conservation Edge character area could work a bit harder. The section on page 78 shows a 3 storey house next to a an 8 storey building – a set-back should be brought in at 6 storeys here to help with the transition of scale. There should be something in there about park side buildings not being allowed to overshadow the park. 8-10 storeys to the west of the park especially along the top half of Baron Walk might impact on the quality of the open space. It might be that the buildings need to step back more, or use inset balconies to minimise their impact on the open space.
- P25 - First mandatory clause seems to contradict itself. The second sentence should be removed. Are Merton happy with an 8 storey shoulder in Mitcham or would they prefer more ability to influence this going forward? Perhaps it could say the set-backs and roof treatments are required to the top of all buildings over 3 storeys? This is also mentioned on p30 & p64 (Also if you look at the precedent images on p92 they have set backs at 5th floor). The last point should be mandatory.
- P26 - Meanwhile uses have not been addressed sufficiently. Meanwhile uses do not need to be pop up bars – they can be pop up playgrounds and a corner shop to serve the first residents. This requires more thought and should be covered by a mandatory clause.
- P32 - At 3.2.7 the code should clarify that minimum distances between buildings should reflect best practise (18m distance between habitable rooms).
- P33 - If balconies are allowed to project over the building parcel then there is potential that are overshadowing pavements and public realm. This should not be mandatory and each scenario should be assessed on a case by case basis so that it can be assessed at detailed submission if this is detrimental to the street enclosure etc. It will be so GEA can be maximised on each plot which is understood, but it might not be relevant everywhere. Merton should have some influence over where.
- P34 - Para 3: Can you have 'highly recommended' in a mandatory clause? Suggest this needs rewording. Last para: They should not excluded brick slips as that would rule out some MMC which a developer may want to use.
- P35/36 - These pages are too prescriptive and are then repeated in each character area section.
- P38 - Floor to ceiling heights etc - shouldn't these be the LHDG minimums. The DG's should not be so prescriptive when there is already prescriptive legislation out there for designers to comply with. This whole page could be removed with a mandatory clause at the beginning of the doc that requires all designs to comply with current legislation.
- P49 - The precedent image does not reflect the clauses. It looks like a very urban small courtyard whereas these are surburban blocks.
- P55 – The ground floor defensible space at the front of a building should be larger than 1.5m – ideally between 1.8 and 2.5m to allow for a planted privacy barrier for the GF resident. 1.5m is more of a balcony dimension.
- P58 - Para 5 should be mandatory. Para 6 should be reworded to say no north facing single aspect units are acceptable and also made mandatory.
- P78 - Column 1 last para – should be mandatory. Column 2, 3rd para contradicts diagram. Is the ratio the mandatory requirement? In which case where the street width goes down to 19m would the height of the building also? Needs a bit more clarification.

- Overall, it's good to see well explained illustrations. Good to know that this will remain a live document so design elements – especially the character area sections will be updated through the reserved matters stage. However, even within that section some elements need to be fixed now, so quality is guaranteed.
- Within the concept design, there is much explained around critical placemaking layers but there also needs to be a narrative around the urban block configurations (pages 14-17)
- Uncertain why an **overarching section for design principles** is applied here – many of the principles explained in this section could be directly demonstrated on the blocks within masterplan – these principles are around entrances, facades, built form and design code needs to show how these generic principles should be applied to individual built form – massing of the urban layout. For example: balconies, entrances and particular facades treatments – these shouldn't be generic guidelines but shown as how they are applied to the masterplan blocks – balcony strategy, entrance and access strategy diagrams applied to the masterplan layout will be useful.
- Stress again on point 2 even more is the last section of the **overarching principles** - buildings layout (residential properties and dual aspect units) – it is critical that this is demonstrated on the blocks itself – the code stresses on maximising dual aspect units, it will be good to see how this is and can be achieved on the blocks. A lot of the blocks on the masterplan look like double stacked blocks, so worth understanding within the Code how a large quantum of dual aspect is achievable on these blocks.
- Similarly for the landscape and sustainability section – it will be good to apply the hierarchy and elements explained to masterplan layout – and not generic section like diagrams.
- Parameter Plans – these are light touch parameter plans, are these acceptable? Although this is an outline with everything left to reserved matters, it will be good to define an external and internal envelope for the parameters – picking up from the overarching principles section (particularly page 49 on shared amenity spaces and courtyards), Diagrams on pages 64-68 could show internal loosely defined courtyards to blocks (this again shows how much is meant to be single aspect and dual aspect on wings of the blocks).
- Pages 79, 89, 99, 109 have explanatory diagrams which look at character areas through streets and facades – it will be good to show how block prototypes link in with these streets to show entrances, built form edges to blocks etc – all of the principles explained in overarching principles could be explained nicely in this section – landscape, sustainability measures, layouts of dual aspect units, balcony strategy etc
- Overall there's a lot of thought into design elements These comments are more around the strategy than the details - what needs to be specified to show that which is sacrosanct in layout and that which isn't.
- The study of block typologies and how they are put together to achieve the various design elements is missing – it does need to be embedded properly into the code.

Respondent D

- Well set out & professionally prepared document.
- Question about canyonisation, good light and air quality to the residential accommodation. See diagrams e.g. on pages 98, 102. This depends on orientation - detailed daylight and ventilation analysis would ensure dwellings are sustainably ventilated and are healthy to live in.
- Single aspect dwellings. London plan calls for them to be normally avoided. The Code states in a few places the following: p24 "The new development should maximise the provision of dual aspect dwellings and normally avoid the provisions of

single aspect dwellings.", p39 "Typologies of apartment blocks that maximise dual aspect should be explored." And p58 "North facing single aspect units will be avoided where possible." There seems to be a trend here? New build start from scratch and create a living community C21 development. There should be no single aspect dwellings at all, or it will have to be remodelled or redeveloped in future.

- Environmental sustainability. SUDS and landscape, but nothing much on energy and renewables, maybe this is elsewhere. Would be good to have a reference to local materials where possible, and low embodied CO2, renewables, passive systems, etc.
- Materiality. It steers towards brick, 'London Vernacular', which is OK, don't hold their cursor for them. Maybe emphasise environmental more. Its funny Bill Dunster's development is not a precedent. With this omission precedents etc. are OK. Notice plant pots in front of the mews houses as defensible space, a lot will depend on sense of community and sense of place.