

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL
NOTES OF MEETING of 24 July 2018

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)
- Marcus Beale
- Jason Cully
- Alistair Huggett
- Rachel Jones
- Miranda MacLaren
- Tony Michael
- Andre Sutherland
- Cordula Weisser

Council Officers Present:

- Paul McGarry
- Awot Tesfai (items 1 & 2)

Councillors Present

- Simon McGrath

Members of the Public Present

- Eve Cohen (Item 4)
- Mark Gale (Item 4)

Declarations of Interest

- None

Notes:

Item 1: Pre-Application, 18/P2418, **227 Western Road**, Colliers Wood

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential

Item 2: Pre-Application, No Number Yet, Ravensbury Estate, Morden

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential

Item 3: Pre-Application, 18/P2024, 2 Park Avenue, Mitcham

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential

Item 4: Application, 18/P1921, 59-63 High Path, South Wimbledon

The panel noted the changes made since the previous review. It felt that the axial and long views worked well with the High Path estate and it sits logically into the urban fabric. The building was beginning to fit in with the New London Vernacular style of the estate regeneration. The direction of travel since the first review is good, but there are a number of areas that require further thought and work.

The Panel were concerned with a range of matters, but the underlying concern was that the building should inspire learning and provide a building that would be a 'friend' to the shy kid entering the gates. This was expressed a few times in different ways and the consensus was that the building was not yet sufficiently good or inspiring to achieve this. It was felt it still had an air of impersonal commercial character about it.

The Panel noted that the entrance had been simplified and the library had a large area of glazing. However, are steps still necessary and the practicality of the library was questioned given that it would need bookshelves that could clutter the view. It was also felt that the acoustic fence could be seen as a sterile boundary and didn't integrate well with the surroundings, although admittedly hostile.

Overall, the panel still felt that the building appearance was plain, and there was insufficient level of detail designed into it. This should be evident from a range of distances. The fenestration appeared cheap and further work was needed on this. It was felt that the north and south elevations had completely different environments and therefore this needed to be reflected in the design of the elevations, which currently, were too similar. In particular, the Panel were critical of the eastern elevation – the 'thin end of the wedge' – which it felt was plain and a missed opportunity for better articulation and visual interest.

It was clear a lot more work had been done regarding the design of the undercroft, and this was welcomed, although in general the Panel felt that the internal arrangement could be better. This extended to the light quality of the atrium and vertical separation and circulation. Given the constrained site, the Panel reiterated their previous concern that the roofscape was not being sufficiently utilised for school purposes.

It was agreed that there needed to be more work undertaken to bring the proposals up to the 'next level of detail'. Elevations, fenestration, brickwork and utilising the William Morris and other historical associations were areas that needed to be

covered. It was felt important that a degree of informality or anarchy needed to be injected into the design in places to overcome the relatively rigid overall design approach.

The importance of a robust travel plan to back up parking and drop-off provisions was also reiterated. Overall, the Panel felt that whilst there had been some improvements, there was still much work to do to ensure the building was of a sufficiently high quality for the constrained site and in order to provide an inspiring place for pupils to learn.

Verdict: **AMBER**