

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Wednesday 26th July 2017

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 John Bowcott (Chair)
- Marcus Beale
- Tim Day
- Tony Edwards
- Sir Duncan Michael
- Andre Sutherland
- Beatrix Young

Apologies

- John Fyfield
- Tony Michael
- Terry Pawson

Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett
- Paul McGarry

Councillors Present

- Councillor David Dean

Members of the Public Present

- Sara Sharp
- Eve Cohen

Declarations of Interest

- Tony Edwards declared he had in the past worked with the architects for Item 2, but had no current connections with them. No objections were raised.

Notes:

Item 1: Application, No Number Yet, Merton Hall, 78, Kingston Road, South Wimbledon

The Panel were very impressed with the progress and evolution of the design of this proposal now that it was looking to the character of the original building for its inspiration. It was felt that the new addition had got to the point where it was now enhancing, improving and lightening up the existing building, the modern extension complementing the original. The asymmetry of the original building was picked up well with the asymmetrical cross in the new frontage. The panel liked the brick sides and waveform use of the projecting bricks. The set back entrance was better and allowed the building entrance space for congregations to linger and disperse without causing issues of pavement crowding.

There were a few pointers of advice given on design detail that the Panel felt could further improve the design. Where the new building met the ground, it seemed to 'float' and really needed to meet the ground in a clear manner. The junction of the old and new could be further improved in relation to the eaves overhang, brick string course and the stone surround to the side door.

The Panel felt that the stone needed to be limited to the front of the building and supported the suggestion that the side elevation of the entrance should be brick rather than stone. A suggestion was made that the stone cornice/edging/corbelling of the new building could include some brick and could be made to have a more refined feel/profile.

The proposed landscaping was welcomed as an improvement from the previous design. However, the Panel felt that the parking area deserved a far better quality surface material than just tarmac, and should give a sense of a more shared space. To the front it was stressed that care was needed in ensuring that the sub-surface works were properly designed to ensure the trees survived and thrived. These needed to be suitably semi-mature from the outset. The Panel also encouraged the applicant to have outdoor seating and parasols for the café to introduce some informality into the well-ordered frontage.

VERDICT: **GREEN**

Item 2: Application, 17/P1957, 188-194 The Broadway, Wimbledon

Overall, the Panel were concerned that this proposal was not designed to sufficient detail to enable meaningful comment on a design, and they were surprised it was considered to have sufficient detail to be validated as a planning application. Consequently, there were a range of issues that the Panel had serious reservations about.

The Panel questioned the level of 3-dimensional form on the front elevation and the rationale for this. They felt the building elevation did not relate to the surrounding buildings. These were set-back and the proposal was sitting forward of this. The effectively complete site coverage of the building and its height envelope seemed to be driven by maximising the floorspace, rather than responding to any other

contextual cues to inform a design approach. There seemed to be little or no reference to what the Wimbledon context was and consequently the building could quite as easily fit in anywhere.

The Panel were concerned that these issues and others of detailed design would mean that the product would not be of high quality and other offices in Wimbledon were cited as an example of poor design. The floorplate was very deep. This combined with the screening to the north elevation for privacy reasons led the Panel to believe the internal light quality would be poor and offer a poor working environment. The Panel were concerned that the interface with the residential properties to the rear was poorly resolved and had not taken into account issues such as scale, presence, visual impact and light. There were a range of design tools available to address this interface, and mitigate impact, which seemed not to have been explored. This issue could not be ignored and a meaningful engagement was needed with residents.

The building was offering nothing to the local townscape and taking no cues from surrounding buildings, layouts and forms. The Panel was clear that there was a lot of positive local contextual information in the town that could inform a design – particularly from buildings prior to 1950 – but the applicant seemed not to have used any of this in arriving at what seemed to be a rather randomly generated appearance and materials palette. The building would be overbearing to pedestrians and offer a very poor quality public realm, giving nothing back to the street. This was not an issue of height, but of how the building was designed at the human scale of the first few floors. The Panel noted the materials. The application was not clear about the quality of the materials or their appropriateness to Wimbledon. No convincing answers to these concerns were attempted by the applicant.

The Panel were clear in their view that the design was not sufficiently developed to be a coherent proposal suitable for the planning application stage, and was currently a concept that needed a few more months work to develop the design. A range of examples were given to demonstrate this.

Fire requirements do not seem to have been considered at all. Plant is not co-ordinated between roof and basement. It is not shown and there is no parapet on the roof to conceal it. Roof PVs and how they are to be fitted are not shown. The basement has no layout shown re. what plant is envisaged and where it should go. The basement roof height appears insufficient. Details of doors and stairs seem not to have been considered. The floorplate is very deep and daylight levels to desks in the middle of the building should be checked for BCO guidelines. Cooling, heating and sustainability is insufficiently considered nor co-ordinated. Heating & cooling methodology needs to be linked to the sustainability strategy to ensure appropriate carbon offsets. Drainage is not co-ordinated. There is no co-ordinated strategy for refuse and servicing and how it will work with the new floorplates and increased capacity. There is no detail in the elevations or sections showing raised/dropped floors/ceilings to accommodate services. At ground floor the building steps out leaving an easy place of concealment. This needs to be reviewed with the secured by design officer.

The Panel were also concerned that a lack of certainty regarding potential development of adjacent sites was being cited by the applicant as a reason for not properly taking into account the contextual issues. This was not accepted by the Panel. If the applicant was not prepared to do this then it was recommended they wait until proposed guidance had been produced by the council. The Panel felt that the proposal would have benefitted from review at the pre-application stage.

Proper visualisations were required of the front and rear of the building, at the level people would experience the building and it was recommended the applicant produce a physical model of the proposed building and its context. Overall the Panel felt the proposal was poor and insufficiently developed for a planning application.

VERDICT: **RED**