

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Wednesday 29th May 2013

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)
- Tony Edwards
- Jon Herbert
- Rob Heslop
- Tony Michael
- Terry Pawson
- Tim Day
- Andre Sutherland

Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett

Apologies

- Victoria Perkins
 - Sally Warren
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Item 1: Application, 247 The Broadway

The Panel were generally positive about the proposals and felt they were an improvement on the previous review of this scheme, which received an amber verdict. Whilst it was felt that the applicant was trying to put a lot of development on the site, it was felt that overall, the massing, form and height of the development was acceptable. It was clear that a lot of work had gone into how the site could be successfully redeveloped and intensified.

Particular positive elements that were noted were the retention and development of the courtyard and the responsiveness of the elevations to the different environmental conditions found on each side of the site. It was felt the architectural solution was quite robust and that the office block looked good – notably the corner facing west and the courtyard setting.

The fact that there were no single aspect flats was noted and welcomed. Also considered an improvement were the changes to the balcony screens, which were lower and created a lighter and more open feel to the balconies but retained privacy in both directions by use of the proposed fritted (opaque) glass.

The Panel raised a couple of points of concern where it felt more work would be beneficial. However, even combined, it was felt they did not warrant a less positive verdict. Whilst noting the improvements to the rear and balconies it was felt that the proposed tree boundary could be made more easily manageable from within the site by use of a more vertiginous tree species.

It was also felt that the balconies on the west elevation were where the density of development was most obvious and less well resolved. Here the balcony glazing was still very high, enclosed and very restrictive in view. This was less to do with it not meeting standards relating to amenity and light, but more with the quality of the outlook from the flats. This would benefit from further work. A question was also raised regarding how side windows to the development may affect future redevelopment of adjacent sites.

Secondly, the Panel commented on the design of the courtyard and felt strongly that more work was needed to ensure it's design was robust to potential anti-social behaviour. This meant that it had to feel like a courtyard rather than an access route to a car park. Getting the lighting, vegetation and materials right was considered very important, and that in this case quality may be paramount over some environmental factors such as paving porosity. The gate needed to be positioned so as to prevent people entering into the undercroft. It was also considered that the cycle parking was substandard and needed to be increased in quantity and possibly quality as well.

The Panel noted that applicant's willingness to make further changes and felt that it was a good quality proposal.

VERDICT: **GREEN**

Item 2: Pre-Application, 18 Commonsides West

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential

Item 3: Pre-Application, Layton House, 152-154 Worple Road

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential

Item 4: Application, Rose Cottage, 101 Hamilton Road

The Panel had a number of concerns with the proposed development. These ranged all the way from the fundamental site layout to matters of detail. The

Panel felt that the drawings mitigated against a full understanding of the context and that this was reflected in the design.

Regarding the site layout the Panel felt that the courtyard was the wrong way round. It had what are effectively single aspect flats facing north. These faced onto a courtyard where the layout had not been well thought through. The paths did not reflect likely desire lanes and there was no privacy between the perimeter path and front windows. Cycle parking was in the least visible space (poorly surveyed) and in the sunniest part of the space – where social activity would be most desired.

The Panel were particularly critical of the placement of an office use at the rear of the site. This would mix commercial pedestrian traffic across what is essentially a private residential courtyard. It was felt this would make the space difficult to make and feel secure and so would make the space less attractive for residents to use. It was felt that a case could be made for not replacing the employment space if it could not be replaced elsewhere on the site, but that the development had to give something back in order to justify this.

The argument given for not siting the flats on the north side of the site was simply not compelling, as there were already 6m high buildings sited on the boundary. This would provide significantly improved conditions for the flats, though the outlook to the rear of other commercial buildings would be less favourable.

The communal roof balconies were considered unlikely to be successful, as they were on a different level, communal and would not get good sunlight. Internally the shape of the flats were cramped, despite apparently adhering to spaces standards, which was evidenced by table and chairs seeming to almost block front doors.

To the front, the replication of the architectural style of adjacent houses was criticised, but not for architectural reasons. It was emphasised that it had to do more than simply be the rather uncomfortable 'stage scenery' they were being. They needed to work like the rest of the street – with individual front doors, even if they remained flats. The whole was undermined by having no proper front doors, but then punching a hole in the bay window for a communal access. This was seen as completely false.

The Panel urged the applicant to consider a different approach, based on providing houses or a mix of houses and flats. It was suggested that the lone house at No. 97 could have its matching neighbour replaced as a new No. 99. The existing house could be restored, either as a house or flats, and the rear of the site developed for a smaller courtyard of houses or flats. It was felt that issues such as garden sizes could be successfully addressed by good site planning and retaining zero off-street parking.

Overall the Panel were clear that much more work needed to be done to effect a good quality development on this site and that, although it was difficult, it was by no means unachievable.

VERDICT: **RED**