

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Wednesday 27th September 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)
- Vinita Dhume
- Jon Herbert
- Rob Heslop
- Rachel Jones
- Michael Whitwell
- Beatrix Young

Apologies

- Jason Cully
- Tony Michael

Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett

Councillors Present

- Councillor Daniel Holden

Members of the Public Present

- Sara Sharp (items 1 & 3)

Declarations of Interest

- Marcus Beale was presenting Item 2 and had an interest in Item 4. He therefore did not take part as a reviewer.

Notes:

Item 1: Application, 16/P3513, **226 London Road**, Mitcham

The Panel noted that there were a number of changes to the proposal since previously reviewed by the Panel in May 2016. It was felt that the scale and massing were much better and the separation of the old and new buildings was appropriate.

The Panel felt that there were a number of landscaped spaces but these were awkward spaces in awkward locations. It was questioned how and whether they would be used or useable. A number of these spaces were created by the chosen orientation of the new building to the rear. To the Panel this seemed to jar with the geometry of the retained and other surrounding buildings. It was questioned why the 'cranked' layout suggested, but discarded, in the design and access statement was not proposed. The Panel felt that this would create a better and more useable landscaped courtyard and would allow the possibility of retention of the rear part of the existing building.

The landscaped frontage was felt to be very vehicle-dominated, with the turning circle of the refuse vehicle being used to define the landscape design. There was no reason why the swept path geometry needed to be reflected in – or drive – the landscape design. It was felt that the landscape design should drive the appearance and layout of the front space with the space for the vehicle turning absorbed in it. A hard-landscaped area of regular shape could achieve this. It was felt that the landscaping needed to work a lot harder to achieve this. It was also suggested that parallel parking might work better for the space.

It was asked where the inspiration for the waveform had come from and whether any local context had informed it, as this was not evident. The Panel felt that the waveform risked being seen as simply decoration on what was essentially a rectangular box. They suggested that the theme could be developed further to other aspects of the development.

The Panel asked about how the curved effect of the waveform building profile would be achieved, both with the bricks and curved glazing for the balconies. The Panel felt that getting this right was a critical part achieving a sufficient quality feel about the building. They felt that further details should be submitted to demonstrate this could be achieved in the manner explained by the architect and that this should not be left solely to the discharge of conditions stage.

The Panel also had some concerns about the pedestrian routes into and through the site. They were concerned that the main entrance when one reached the existing building would be flanked by the bin store. The location of the cycle parking was also criticised as being inconvenient and poorly overlooked at the back of the site. It was felt that there was scope to redistribute this in a more integrated and convenient way. The Panel also felt that more could be done to the external staircases to the upper flats in the retained building to make them more welcoming. A subtle form of canopy or enclosure was suggested.

Overall the Panel felt that there were significant problems with the proposal based on the site and orientation of the new building, the quality of the landscaped spaces and the poor pedestrian experience and domination of vehicle requirements in the landscape design. The justification for the architecture was also felt not to be sufficiently robust and thoroughly thought through.

VERDICT: **RED**

Item 2: Pre-Application, No Number Yet, Barry House, 20-22 Worple Road, Wimbledon

Pre-Application. Notes Confidential

Item 3: Application, 17/P1942, 8 Preshaw Crescent, Lower Green, Mitcham

The primary concern of the Panel with this proposal was the layout of the ground plane and the interface between it and the ground floor of the buildings. This was particularly so regarding the pedestrian environment.

The entrance into the site from Harwood Avenue has a poor interface with the car park and needed to be improved to allow easy pedestrian access into the site. The main pedestrian route to the new buildings is through the car park and there are no dedicated footways. There needs to be clear and safe routes linking the new development, Beadle court footpath and the main entrance. Currently the route to Beadle Court footpath and to the main cycle store requires walking between cars. This would make it almost impossible to get cycles to and from their parking.

The Panel were of the strong opinion that there needed to be a pedestrian entrance into the site from Russell Road – this would be the ‘front door’ to the development. The greenspace around the buildings, to the rear in particular were not well defined and could attract anti-social behaviour. A reallocation of space at ground floor to make more private external space in conjunction with an entrance on Russell Road was suggested. The Panel liked the continuation of the Russell Road elevation but felt that this could be continued further and more decisively into the site to create a ‘pedestrian street’ into the site with small front gardens to re-orientated flats.

The Panel also felt that having bedrooms facing the car park was poor as it would expose them to noise, light from too-close parking spaces and close proximity by other residents. The grass in front of the bedrooms prevented easy pedestrian movement. The upper levels have terraces overlooking the car park when it would be more pleasant for them to overlook the communal garden. It was considered important to get the design right first and not to retrofit a poor design.

There was a feeling that the development had been designed to achieve the optimum plan form and that this seemed like it could be to the detriment of all else. A few less parking spaces and a rejigging of the units could begin to address this and need not necessarily require a fundamental redesign in order to achieve the significant improvements the scheme needed.

Internally, there was also some concern regarding achieving correct building regulations and the implications this could have on the internal quality and layout. The Panel felt that it was difficult to gauge the quality of the external appearance of the building as the CGIs were not of sufficient quality to convey this. Overall, the

Panel felt that it was just possible to make the required changes without going back to the drawing board and submitting a fresh application.

VERDICT: **AMBER**

Item 4: Pre-Application, 16/P4231, **41-47 Wimbledon Hill Road**, Wimbledon

Pre-Application. Notes Confidential