

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Thursday 27th September 2012

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
- John Fyfield
- Tony Michael
- Andre Sutherland
- Sally Warren

Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett

Apologies

- Tim Long
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Item 1: 11/P3437, Application, **153-161 The Broadway**

The Panel noted that there had been a number of improvements since the original review in January, as a result of this and of the subsequent e-mail consultation on these amendments. All four of the Panel members who made e-mail comments were present at this meeting.

The Panel began with a discussion about what was Wimbledon character, and building quality. Although there was some feeling the building could be 'anywhere', there was no consensus as to what Wimbledon character actually was, and the applicant made references to elements of the building that reflected local form. The Panel moved towards a view that there was nothing wrong in following the current fashion in building style, but that it needed to be high quality and add its own individuality – as if people could recognise the hotel as 'the one in Wimbledon', rather than thinking 'that's typically Wimbledon'.

The discussion on quality focussed primarily on the main façade of the building. Whilst the Panel were supportive of the changes to the window format and noted the applicant's explanations on this, they felt that there was some further room for refining the appearance such that it clearly reads that it is an hotel – or at least, not an office. The Panel also felt that the building had to feel like the mid-range hotel the applicant is planning to build, rather than a budget one.

Two elements of quality were raised - the material chosen for the cladding and the flat form of the main façade. Several Panel members raised concerns regarding the use of Trespa as the main cladding material. They stated first hand experience of problems with its quality in practice and the ability of its fixing method to be accurate enough to guarantee crisp and accurate positioning. It was felt that this latter point was critical to get right if the main facade was to retain its flat appearance yet still look of good quality. The Panel strongly recommended the applicant look at other cladding materials.

Regarding the main façade, some Panel members were concerned about its lack of three dimensional depth. It was suggested the applicant should consider alterations to the façade, such as pushing forward or pulling back selected portions of the elevation s or panel elements by varying amounts to give more depth. However the Panel were quite clear this was for the applicant to decide, and that ensuring a high quality material that could be fixed accurately, could also ensure the appropriate quality was achieved. The Panel recommended the applicant provide large scale construction drawing details of the cladding and façade at key junctions to enable a clear assessment of the quality by the planning case officer.

The Panel also had a thorough discussion about the height of the building. The effective conclusion of this was that the majority of the Panel had no problem in-principle with the proposed height but that a higher building had more responsibility to be a higher quality building all round. Although some had more reservations than others, no fundamental concern was raised on this issue such that it was a show-stopper for any Panel member subject to the increase in quality of the building. Specific views that were offered on the height are listed below:

- i. No particular problem with the height, but it needs a demonstrable urban design justification for the height chosen.
- ii. The height is okay if the building is better quality.
- iii. Don't have a problem with the height of the building at all.
- iv. Don't have a problem with the height of the building at all. I'm quite relaxed about it, but it would be more acceptable if one floor less.
- v. No problem with height per se, the issue is with daylight, not aesthetics and perhaps this should decide the height.

Whilst the Panel supported the changes to the access from Griffiths Road, there was some concern remaining regarding the physical presence of the escape stair at the rear. It was felt that changes needed to be made here to minimise its visual impact on adjacent houses and gardens. It was

recommended that the form be reduced to its bare minimum, the cladding to the staircase be made thinner, a different material be considered to soften the look and that climbing vegetation on the structure be considered.

The Panel were generally supportive about the proposal and noted the significant improvements that had been made since the original application. Whilst the Panel would like to have given a GREEN verdict, this was felt premature – though not far off. The key issues that had to be addressed to achieve this verdict were (i) a full justification of the proposed height, (ii) improvements to the quality of the materials, and (iii) alterations to minimise the presence of the building from the rear.

VERDICT: **AMBER**

Item 2: 12/P1755, Application, **Cranmer Primary School**

Item withdrawn at applicant's request.

Item 3: 12/P2328, Application, **Emma Hamilton PH**

Item withdrawn at applicant's request.