

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Tuesday 20th July 2010

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 Cain
John Fyfield
Alistair Huggett
Tony Michael
John Priestland
Tim Snelson
Andre Sutherland
Nicholas Waring

Apologies

- Sally Warren
- Marcus Beale

Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett: Physical Regeneration Team
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Item 1: 09/P1667/NEW, PRE-APPLICATION, Smyths Toy Store, James Estate, Mitcham

Pre- Application Scheme – notes confidential

Item 2: NO NUMBER, PRE-APPLICATION, 77-91 Hartfield Road, Wimbledon

Pre- Application Scheme – notes confidential

Item 3: 10/P1911, APPLICATION, Cricketers PH, 340 London Road, Mitcham Cricket Green

The majority of the Panel felt that the massing proposed for the site was appropriate, as was the aim to complete the group of three buildings on the island site. This is a very prominent and special site in the borough which therefore requires an exceptional building. More is required from the currently proposed building to make it so. The Panel did not feel that a corner feature or tower was essential to achieve this, but was not opposed to it either, feeling that a more deferential approach could also be made to work.

However, the Panel did feel that the corner feature chosen did not work very well and was somewhat superficial or 'faux' as it was not reflected internally, in the external plane of the elevation or in the materials used. It was also felt that there was a mix of elements in the design of the tower, such as roof pitches and window shapes that showed a lack of clarity in the design. These issues could be seen as examples of how the building was not achieving its 'specialness', others are outlined below, however the applicant needed to address this issue seriously (*how* is this to be achieved) as a step-change in quality was required for a building on this site.

The Panel commented on a number of details. It was felt that the applicant had not given enough consideration to the issue of noise, both from traffic and the fire station. The suitability of ground floor units was questioned, particularly in close proximity to the fire station. It was also noted that the flats did not have any external amenity space and did not accept the argument put forward about traffic noise – people could always choose not to use balconies if they had them. The Panel noted that the location was hostile due to traffic and fire station noise and that if the applicant felt that it was too unpleasant to provide amenity space for housing then why was it considering housing at all. It was simply unreasonable not to provide amenity space for residential units today. It was felt that there were design reasons for the whole ground floor being non-residential use.

It was also noted that a number of the flats were single aspect or not fully dual aspect and that the communal areas had no natural light. The layout of the entrance hall seemed to be over generous and the entrance from the street almost hidden. The Panel questioned the wisdom of locating bin stores directly onto the street and felt that they would be better located to the rear in the car park. It was considered that these were elements of detailed design and layout that it was clear needed reworking and further thought. The Panel felt that the choice of materials had not been established sufficiently for a formal planning application, which was an indication that the design had not been fully developed – the details should be evident in the application – not an afterthought.

Whilst the applicant stated that the proposal was almost meeting the 20% renewables requirement, its aim to meet Code 3 was a poor aspiration and should be easily meeting Code 4 and probably aiming for Code 5. The Panel noted that the proposal did not include any affordable housing and that if it was to maintain this then it would need to offer gains elsewhere, possibly in elements of the design. One element of the design the Panel felt that had

essentially been ignored was the space around the building between it and the pavement. This consisted of an access road and parking area and was not included in the design because ownership could not be established. The Panel felt that this was a serious omission as the immediate setting of the building was very important to the overall design and character of the street and development as a whole. It felt that uncertainty over the ownership should not preclude submitting a proposal for landscaping this area and the applicant should work more closely with the Council to establish ownership of the land.

Overall the Panel felt that there were a number of issues that remained to be resolved and required further work, which suggested that an application at this stage might be premature. It did however note the applicant's willingness to address the Panels concerns and make changes. The Panel felt that whilst it could only give a RED verdict, the fundamentals were such that if comments were taken on board in making changes, it could become GREEN without too much difficulty.

Verdict: RED