

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Tuesday 24th November 2015

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)
- Tim Day
- Paul Dodd
- Tony Edwards
- Alistair Huggett
- Sir Duncan Michael
- Tim Long
- Andre Sutherland

Apologies

- Richard Walker

Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett

Notes:

Item 1: Pre-Application, 15/P2690/NEW, Units 1-4, **Haig Homes Masterplan**, Morden

Pre-Application – notes confidential

Item 2: Application, No Number Yet, **Pollards Hill Estate Masterplan**

Pre-Application – notes confidential

Item 3: Application, 15/P3701, **101 Arthur Road**, Wimbledon

The Panel felt that this was a potentially good quality building that arranged the majority of the building away from its neighbours. The bold approach of presenting a white rendered box clad in perforated metal requires exemplary architecture in design and construction in order to be successful. The Panel were clear in their view that the quality of the presentation material was very poor and did not reflect the numerous subtleties in the design that were discussed. This really needed to be rectified in order to communicate the design better when seeking planning permission. This was particularly so with the prominent frontage of the building that looked flat and with little detail in the CGI. However, the building had a variety of openings at different depths concealed behind the screen, many of which could add interest to Arthur Road throughout the day and at night. Many of the carefully considered details were not visually apparent and would assist in understanding the quality of the intended construction.

The main area the Panel were critical about was that they felt the architecture and form of the building were not responding to the local context. This was exacerbated by the simplicity of forms. It was stressed that this did not mean the architecture had to be traditional, but that it should be informed by a wider understanding of the site and how the house will be seen. Extended elevations or perspectives could assist. The house as currently portrayed gives the feel of a 'rendered box with a flat metal face over a timber fence'. The site model demonstrated how the building followed a rhythm of the forms of the surrounding houses. Other aspects of the conservation area require equal consideration and presentation, eg. the palette of colours, materials, texture and grain.

The Panel also felt that the house and its site were inward-looking, defensive and fortress-like when compared to the surrounding houses and their settings and that it needs to have a more open feel to respond to the local context. It currently doesn't have 'kerb appeal' or contribute much to the character of the street. The front of the building should embrace the street and understand the character of the nearby front gardens. It was felt that this could be addressed by developing a landscape design for the front garden, path, forecourt and fence.

The Panel were concerned that the internal courtyard and green roof on the north side would receive little light, yet the courtyard was finished in dark colours and would benefit from lighter colours to ensure it was a pleasant space. The landscaping was lacking in detail, particularly the trees, yet this was a key feature of the surrounding area. There needed to be a proper landscaping plan that showed the true effect of trees and that it was robust and workable. This was particularly so with regard to the proximity of proposed piled walls to existing trees.

Overall the Panel's view was that a building of this kind needs to be outstanding and the architect needed to prove the architectural quality of the building. Much of this would be dependent on getting the frontage right, both in terms of its detail and the way it interacted with the street. A lack of quality detailed drawings undermined an appreciation of the qualities of the building

and it was recommended that the applicant invest in a high quality model, showing all key trees. A significant improvement in the amount, quality and detail of drawings was needed to convince people this was a quality building. If these issues could be addressed the Panel felt the building would easily warrant a green verdict.

VERDICT: **AMBER**

Item 4: Application, 15/P3477, **Metro Bank, Wimbledon Bridge House**, 1 Hartfield Road, Wimbledon

Note: *This application was reviewed by the Panel in the absence of the applicant. Whilst this not the usual procedure for the Panel, it was felt that the proposal was of sufficient design significance to warrant such an approach. As a result, the Panel was unable to obtain opinions or explanations from the applicant to guide their deliberations.*

The Panel were concerned that the public realm proposals were chaotic and unsuccessful. They introduced more clutter rather than less, a more complex arrangement of steps, planters and seating that were unnecessary and would narrow the footway. The secluded location could raise concerns about anti-social behaviour. The angled steps would also be more inconvenient for people with mobility needs and require walking diagonally up the new steps. These seemed unnecessary and did not relate to the surrounding buildings.

The Panel felt that what was needed was a simple decluttering approach that simplified the space, improved sightlines and responded to the surrounding buildings. The Panel also felt that a simple arrangement of steps in conjunction with a corner entrance to the building would be an appropriate way of drawing attention to the shop unit without the need for a large amount of advertising.

The Panel felt that the design of the frontage was aligned to a specific user and their wishes regarding advertising and was more an exercise in advertising that building frontage or shop-front design. A robust and flexible design for the frontage was needed that could accommodate easily a whole range of different users over time.

The Panel was also especially critical of the failure to address the design of the whole building. To leave half the building as is, and then re-clad only half of it would lead to an appearance that was incongruous in the extreme and would be a very strange arrangement that was the worst of both worlds. It would combine an existing over engineered building of overbearing quality with an ill-conceived re-cladding, designed to fit an excessive amount of advertising for a specific occupier.

The Panel were highly critical of all elements of this proposal, and strongly urged that the whole building be re-clad before new shop-fronts and advertising were inserted. A planning permission for such an approach

already existed and was reviewed and largely endorsed by the Panel in the past. It was recommended this, or an improved version of it, be implemented first.

If this was not possible, it was recommended that the new occupier should submit a standard application for a new shop-front in the existing building without largely changing its external appearance. It was felt this was entirely reasonable and achievable as the current building happily accommodates several different retailers within its overall consistent appearance.

VERDICT: **RED**