

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Tuesday 24th May 2011

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 Belcher
John Fyfield
Tony Michael
Victoria Perkins
John Priestland
Andre Sutherland

Apologies

Nicholas Waring

Council Officers Present:

Paul Garrett: Regeneration Team

Item 1: 10/P2141/NEW, PRE-APPLICATION, Doliffe Close, Bond Road, Mitcham

Pre-Application – Notes confidential

Item 2: NO NUMBER YET, PRE-APPLICATION, 165-169 Merton Road, South Wimbledon

Pre-Application – Notes confidential

Item 3: 11/P0815, APPLICATION, Morden Tavern, Central Road, Morden

The Panel initially asked some background questions relating to the retention of the pub building, how the local architecture had influenced the design of the scheme and whether the scheme enhanced this, and the retention of retail

uses on the site. Overall the Panel were supportive of the principle of intensification of development on the site, and in the main had no issues with most of the site layout.

Two issues in this respect were raised. Firstly, the rear extension to the pub building was considered too extensive and intrusive to the new houses to the rear, and that this part of the interior of the site would benefit from a more open feel. Secondly, the positioning of the block of flats next to the retail uses was questioned. This block was fronted by a general use car park with only a minimal amount of vegetation in front.

It was felt that this would offer a very poor outlook for residents and would be an inappropriate mixing of uses, placing a residential use in an area with a commercial feel. There was also no direct footpath access to these units other than through the car park. It was strongly felt that these uses should be properly segregated, with clearly separate parking areas – possibly within front gardens, and a dedicated residential pedestrian access.

It was also suggested this distinction could be improved further by bringing the new residential building forward to be in line with the adjacent houses. This would also have the benefit of enabling the retention of existing trees to the rear and enlarging the communal garden area. Currently the feel was that of “a couple of flats in a car park”.

In general terms the Panel noted a mix of contemporary and traditional forms that they felt did not sit well together. They considered this a fundamental problem with the scheme. Although they acknowledged this may have been influenced by advice from a range of sources (the Panel now being an additional source), the Panel felt the applicant needed to have faith in their approach and be confident in their ability to explain and justify it.

The Panel could not see a clear rationale for the architectural approach, there appeared to be a lack of consistency between different buildings, with dramatic changes in places, although there was some impression of a ‘family’ of materials. This is in contrast to the clarity of the surrounding 1930s style where there is a consistent language with distinct forms for different uses. What is needed is the 21stC version of this clarity that will relate well to these surroundings. There was an impression of a series of disconnected architectural statements that were lacking in authenticity.

The Panel wholeheartedly supported a strong contemporary approach to the new buildings and felt that the applicant needed to be more passionate about the underlying contemporary approach with a strong rationale for what is proposed. Currently it feels as if ‘bits have been stuck on’. The layering of styles is confused and unclear – such as the mixing of pitched and flat roofs. Overall authenticity should not be sacrificed.

This lack of clarity and mixing of approaches mean that at a fundamental level the solution was lacking in passion and integrity. Given these issues of architecture and layout, the Panel considered only one verdict was

appropriate. However it felt confident that the applicants were capable of producing an acceptable proposal for the site.

VERDICT: RED
