

Design Review Panel

Summary Feedback Notes

Tuesday 24th May 2016

No.1 Savoy Circus, Site at junction of Western Avenue and Old Oak Road

Panel	LBHF	Architects and Agents
Robin Partington - Chair Dan Burr Max de Rosee Paul Sandilands Melanie Whitlock Will Wimshurst	Paul Goodacre Davina Barton	Simon Bayliss, HTA Design Simon Toplis, HTA Design

Main Issues Raised during the Design Review Panel

1.	Reasons for previous refusal at planning committee
2.	Relationship/distance to houses on Foxglove Street
3.	Outcome of daylight study

4.	Proposed access for servicing
5.	Relationship of ground floor accommodation with the public realm/street
6.	Privacy issues for ground floor students next to the street
7.	Amount of “active” space on the ground floor
8.	Consideration of aspect and views
9.	Air quality concerns
10.	Noise concerns due to proximity of A40
11.	Consideration of the location of the entrance
12.	Courtyard accessibility to students/residents
13.	Reasons site has been vacant/undeveloped for 20 years
14.	Characteristics of conservation area

Panel Summary and Recommendation

The proposed massing and bulk is a concern to the panel. The panel were of the opinion that the previous schemes and the cinema building should not be relied upon to inform the design, which has to work on its own merits in the proposed setting. The panel wondered how the scheme might evolve if the constraints were relaxed, and the architects were allowed to design a scheme that came from an appropriate response to the site and its context rather than being driven by previous planning history.

The current proposal is very bulky and “boxy” and appeared to fill the site up to a datum height found to be acceptable in an earlier scheme. The panel felt there should be more variation across the scheme and the applicants should consider going higher on the corner “knuckle” and lower on the wings responding to and holding this important corner whilst being a little more subdued towards neighbouring buildings. The Panel considered that the flank ends were very deep and not working as currently proposed, the change in colour of the brickwork failing to break down their apparent bulk. The abrupt end to the gable walls facing the conservation area does not help the scheme feel like it belongs as a whole. The flanks would benefit from greater differentiation than offered by the change in brick tone alone.

The success of the corner element and its clear articulation is considered key to the success of the overall design, and the current version appeared to have lost an effective celebration that was beginning to be suggested in earlier schemes. The applicants should consider the design, and in particular the top, of the corner feature and how it might successfully address the approach to the site from the west.

There are concerns regarding the north facing single aspect accommodation facing the A40. The panel felt that the wings do not have to be symmetrical, and that bay windows from the earlier scheme should be re-considered to improve daylight which may help address the problem of north facing student rooms onto the A40, recognising that students are there for considerable periods of the year, unlike hotel accommodation.

The panel were concerned about the student accommodation at ground floor level next to the pavement. It was considered that the accommodation would be better raised by 300mm above pedestrian level, instead of lowered to offer privacy. The resistance to height should not force the building into the ground.

The panel requested that the relationship to the public realm was considered further.

It was considered that it would be wrong to prevent students from actively using the courtyard space. Students should enjoy access to the courtyard, but this needs to be a managed solution to avoid any anti-social behaviour issues.

In conclusion the panel felt that the current proposal is too big, and many of the issues discussed amongst the panel could be satisfactorily addressed by removing some of the proposed rooms. The panel suggest that the applicants should let the architecture lead over the economics and not be too referential to earlier schemes.

