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Date: 1 June 2017

Dear Hannah Bryant,

ISLINGTON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

RE: 15-24 Ropemaker Street, Finsbury Court, 101-117 Finsbury Pavement and 10-12 Finsbury Street, London EC2 (Q2016/2574/MJR)

Thank you for attending Islington's Design Review Panel meeting on 11 May 2017 for a second review of the above scheme. The proposed scheme under consideration is for the demolition of existing building and construction of new office space (Class B1), rising to 27 storeys with retail spaces at ground floor level (officer's description).

Review Process

The Design Review Panel provides expert impartial design advice following the 10 key principles of design review established by Design Council/CABE. The scheme was reviewed by Richard Portchmouth (chair), David Crookes, George Saumarez Smith, Martin Pearson and Charles Thomson on 11 May 2017 including a presentation from the design team followed by a question and answer session and deliberations at the offices of the London Borough of Islington. The views expressed below are a reflection of the Panel's discussions as an independent advisory body to the Council.

Panel's observations

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review the scheme for a second time and noted that the design had been substantially developed since the last review. Panel members recognised the many positives of the scheme including: a substantial uplift in flexible workspace, a good affordable workspace offer, increased and improved public realm, a 'place-making' tree, substantial cycle parking and high-level terraces providing workers with outdoor space. There is also a clear attempt to design the proposed building to respond positively to its context.

Overall panel members thought that the original concept could be strengthened through refining the detailing. The Panel felt that it was important that the narrow 'negative' darker sections need to have as recessive an appearance as possible to ensure that the wider 'positive' sections are expressed elegantly and commented that the 'negative' sections could be more ephemeral in both form and materiality. Panel members observed that in keeping the highest 'positive' section at the proposed height to avoid impact on views of St Paul's it is closer in height to the adjoining 'negative' sections which creates a bulkier

appearance and diminishes potential for an elegant silhouette to the building against the skyline.

The Panel acknowledged improvements to the north elevation and increased vertical emphasis and added interest. However, some panel members thought that greater elegance and harmony could have been achieved in the differing heights and that it would also be regrettable if the Building Maintenance Unit were to be visible. The Panel felt that greater clarity between the horizontal ‘positive’ elements and the vertical ‘negative’ elements could be achieved to the south elevation.

As a way of improving the local context of the building, the Panel encouraged the applicant to engage actively in the discussion about the public realm of Ropemaker Street, Moorfields and the plaza that serves City Point as these currently represent very poor and ill-considered public spaces.

There were mixed views on the proposed clock however if the clock is to be included the concept needs to be developed further, potentially with other alternatives considered and a solution found which better integrates the design with the building.

Finally, the Panel inquired about the use of a 12mm technical stone and questioned how easy it would be to repair and replace in the future.

Summary

The Panel noted that the design had been substantially developed since the last review and recognised the many positives of the scheme. Panel members thought that the original concept could be strengthened through greater refinement of the detailing and materials which should be sufficiently robust. The Panel stressed that it was important that the narrow ‘negative’ darker sections are as recessive in appearance as possible to ensure that the wider ‘positive’ sections are expressed in order to create an elegant composition and silhouette against the skyline. Panel members thought that greater elegance and harmony could be achieved to the north elevation and greater clarity between the horizontal ‘positive’ elements and the vertical ‘negative’ elements made to the south elevation. There were mixed views on the proposed clock and this proposal should be considered further as well as alternatives.

Thank you for consulting Islington’s Design Review Panel. If there is any point that requires clarification please do not hesitate to contact me and I will be happy to seek further advice from the Panel.

Confidentiality

Please note that since the scheme is at pre-application stage, the advice contained in this letter is provided in confidence. However, should this scheme become the subject of a planning application, the views expressed in this letter may become public and will be taken into account by the Council in the assessment of the proposal and determination of the application.

Yours sincerely,



Luciana Grave

Design Review Panel Coordinator
Design & Conservation Team Manager