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Our ref: **DRP/036**

Tim Gaskell
CMA Planning
113 The Timberyard
Drysdale Street
London N1 6ND

Date: 09 October 2014

Dear Tim Gaskell,

ISLINGTON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

RE: 37-47 Wharf Road, London N1 7SA (FUL planning application ref P2014/2131/FUL)

Thank you for coming to Islington's Design Review Panel meeting on 9 September 2014 for review of a proposed development scheme at the above address.

The proposed scheme under consideration was for demolition of existing buildings and residential redevelopment of the site to provide 99 dwellings (19x 1-bedroom, 50x 2-bedroom, 24x 3-bedroom and 6x 4-bedroom units) in a part 2-, part 8-storey building, together with cycle parking and amenity spaces.

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 Dominic Papa (Chair), Jonathan Ward, Sarah Featherstone, Simon Carne, Steve Burr and Richard Brown on Tuesday 9 September 2014 including a site visit in the morning, followed by a presentation by the design team, question and answers session and deliberations in the afternoon at Islington's Laycock Building, Laycock Street. The views expressed below are a reflection of the Panel's discussions as an independent advisory body to the council.

Panel's observations

- **Layout and massing:** The Panel felt that the morphology of the proposal and the relationship with the linearity of the canal was a positive approach. However, panel members thought that, to some degree, the proposal appeared as overdevelopment which was evident particularly on the ground floor. The Panel felt that the ground floor needed to breath and that the issues at this level were further exacerbated by a series of elements such as bin store, cycle store etc. It was suggested that by losing and re-planning one or two of the ground floor units (at the middle/rear section of the site) some of these issues may be alleviated. Panel members thought that it was commendable that the affordable portion of the scheme benefited of views of canal but suggested that making use of space overlooking the canal also for private units could generate profit which might alleviate development pressure.

- **Roof form:** Although the Panel did not raise any objections to proposed heights and general concept of design of the roof “pop-ups”, panel members were concerned that there may be a lack of understanding of the true appearance of the roof. In particular they were concerned about the impact of the screening at roof level on the quality of the roof form – it was pointed out that these privacy screens were shown in certain drawings but not the 3D image which therefore offered an inaccurate representation of the scheme.

- **Orientation and sustainability:** The Panel expressed concerns in relation to orientation in particular south west facing windows and sunlight access to courtyard. There was criticism of some of the units in relation to the energy strategy. Panel members were concerned that there was excessive shading which would require lights on (non-sustainable) and overheating. The panel questioned whether appropriate sunlight studies to the amenity spaces had informed the design in order to create a successful amenity space. The southern north-west facing single aspect block backing onto the sub-station was of concern with regard to the units potentially not receiving any direct sunlight. Rear windows to the gap/void behind to the sub-station were proposed by the applicant – the benefit of these should be tested. There may be a potential electromagnetic risk.

- **Architectural treatment:** Although the Panel welcomed the general concept of a warehouse character on wharf road, they did not feel that the blocks to the rear appeared distinct enough – they were described in the presentation as the ‘warehouse’ block, the Panel felt that this idea needed to be further developed. Panel members questioned how this intended “playful” character could be pushed further and refined. They indicated the importance of further developing detail, materials and colour. The Panel understood the intentions of engaging an artist to develop some of the detailing but highlighted the important of incorporating these designs as soon as possible to ensure the delivery of the desired character on site. There was a general concern that the elevations to the canal did not appear special enough and needed further refinement and design development.

- **Amenity spaces:** The Panel was generally unconvinced by the character of the landscape. Panel members stressed that the play strategy needed to be substantiated and that different areas needed to perform in different ways in order to provide successful communal amenity spaces for all user groups. They also encouraged the design team to push canal access as far as it can be done, as accessibility to the canal would be of great benefit to residents and general public. The Panel highlighted that it was important to make it as open as possible.

Summary

The Panel welcomed the general design concept and understood the constraints surrounding the site. However, some concerns were raised over the density of the development, particularly in relation to the effect on the ground floor. The Panel also expressed concerns over the landscape strategy and resulting quality of amenity spaces. Panel members stressed the importance of identifying the important detailing which will provide the necessary distinction between the frontage to Wharf Road and the rear part of the site fronting the canal. There were also questions regarding the roof form and energy performance of some of the units.

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 as the scheme under review is currently 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucy', written in a cursive style.

Luciana Grave

Design Review Panel Coordinator/
Design & Conservation Team Manager