



CONFIDENTIAL

ATT: Mr Oliver Jefferson
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Our ref: DRP/76

Date: 04 November 2015

Dear Oliver Jefferson,

ISLINGTON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

RE: 4-8 Rodney Street, London, N1 9JH – in connection with Q2015/1918/MJR

Thank you for attending Islington's Design Review Panel meeting 14 October 2015 for a review of the above scheme. The proposed scheme under consideration is for a mixed-use scheme of offices (B1a), research and development (B1b) and education (D1). The scheme includes a new part-5/part-6 storey building of the front of the site, renovation of the existing building, infill of the whole plot of the site at ground floor level and part-2/part-3 storey extensions adjoining the existing building to the rear (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), Charles Thomson, Ben Gibson, Paul Reynolds, Thomas Lefevre and Marcus Lee on 14 October 2015 including a site visit, a presentation from the design team followed by a question and answers 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 was generally supportive of the ambition of the project and the design approach, but felt further development was required to several areas in order to reduce or remove the concerns raised by the Council.

Neighbouring buildings and context

The Panel felt it would have been very helpful to have been shown the proposed design in the context of the approved scheme (P2014/1017/FUL) on the adjoining site (2 Rodney Street) in order to fully understand the future context of the scheme.

Panel members raised concerns over potential daylight/sunlight issues with Rodney House and also with the consented scheme adjacent to the site at 2 Rodney Street.

The Panel welcomed the retention of the Chocolate Factory, but commented that the relationship between the Chocolate Factory and the new building needed to be carefully considered. With the proposed changes in levels surrounding the Chocolate Factory building it is likely that its foundations will be exposed and need to be carefully accommodated within the new development. Panel members also felt that the relationship between the old and the new could be very interesting and enjoyable.

The Panel suggested that it would be interesting to find out what is planned for the car parking between the site and Rodney House as this could impact on the proposals to this site or could potentially be incorporated into the scheme.

Front Facade

Panel members welcomed the idea of creating a transparent elevation “borrowing” and connecting with the landscape from the park opposite. However, some concerns were raised about the design of the front façade, and in particular the functional challenges of the openable frameless glass panels and the possible need for frames and the acoustic impact.

The Panel suggested that it may be worth exploring the relocation of the front entrance and flipping the ground floor plan so that the access is not adjacent to the Europcar entrance, but accepted that this may be difficult due to rights of lights issues with Rodney House.

Panel members did not object to the set back ground floor, but felt this was another area that needed to be explored further within the context of the approved scheme next door.

Panel members felt that further details would be required for the boundary between the formal outdoor play space and the green roof at roof level.

Flank wall

The Panel also expressed concerns with the impact of the proposed large blank wall which will front Rodney House. Panel members acknowledged that this wall was a significant challenge, but believed this could be overcome with further development. Panel members felt that this aspect needed a sophisticated response and, although the architects indicated that they have begun addressing this, the Panel advised that further consideration and detailed studies are required to demonstrate a good outlook is provided for Rodney House.

The Panel felt that the treatment to the flank wall should be carefully considered to ensure that it will age as intended.

Panel members asked whether an overhang or picture window to the flank elevation, that did not look into Rodney House but onto the park, could be negotiated.

Summary

In conclusion, panel members were very supportive of the ambition of the project and felt that the principle of introducing new buildings to compliment the Chocolate Factory was an interesting idea. The Panel felt that the new buildings adjoining and around it would create very rewarding juxtapositions. The Panel were generally supportive of the material approach and simple elegant building, but felt that the detail would enrich it further and therefore that the detailing of this building was very important. Panel members acknowledged that the daylight/sunlight issue needed to be resolved between architects and Islington. In terms of urban design and massing and the contribution to the streetscape the panel were supportive

and thought the building sat comfortably in its context. The Panel also acknowledged that the blank flank wall fronting Rodney House was also a significant challenge in terms of the design. Panel members enjoyed the design proposals, but felt there were certain areas that needed to be developed and embellished further.

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,

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

Luciana Grave
Design Review Panel Coordinator
Design & Conservation Team Manager