



**CONFIDENTIAL**

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Our ref: Q2018/0544/DRP

Date: 4 April 2018

Dear Kevin Henson,

## **ISLINGTON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

**RE: Laser House, 123-140 Goswell Road, Clerkenwell, London, EC1V 7DY (pre-application reference: Q2016/2574/MJR)**

Thank you for submitting your scheme to Islington's Design Review Panel (Chair's review session) on Thursday 15 March 2018. The proposed scheme under consideration is for partial demolition of rooftop structures and retention of the existing building along with the construction of a three-storey extension to the existing building and new three-storey infill building to the corner of Goswell Rd and Pear Tree Street resulting in a part 3, part 4, part 5, part 6-storey building including internal reconfiguration and refurbishment of the existing facades to provide for office floorspace (Use Class B1(a)) and flexible retail/office floorspace (Use Class A1/B1(a)) along with associated access arrangements, cycle parking, refuse storage and ancillary works.

### **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 at the offices of the London Borough of Islington by Richard Portchmouth (Chair) and Ben Gibson who had both reviewed the scheme previously. The views expressed below are a reflection of the Panel's discussions as an independent advisory body to the Council.

### **Panel's observations**

Panel members were updated about the recent planning history and appreciate the need for the amendments to the scheme. They were happy to see that the development team had taken this opportunity not only to address the reasons for refusal by the Planning Committee but also some of the comments previously made by the Panel.

The Panel understood that the main changes were as follows:

- a) Massing changes - lowering floor, lower roof plant, removed one storey along Pear Tree Street and pushed back the massing at upper levels on Pear Tree Street and pushed forward at upper level on Goswell Road, removal of extruded lift core (moved into the middle of the plan).

- b) Use – make ground floor active and lively, entrance to office space, new sunken courtyard to the rear. Goswell Road, lower the glazing to ensure ground and lower ground floor work together and there is activity on this frontage. Corner block is now a clear entrance into the building – office entrance, not D1 anymore as previously proposed.
- c) Architectural expression – on Pear Tree Street two lower floors retained, on Goswell Road the frontage is retained. The corner block is now brick (not polished concrete anymore).

#### *Pear Tree Street elevation*

Panel members raised no objections to the moves in relation to the massing changes and stated that they could see the improvements to amenity impact.

They felt that the overall piece, knitting together, is successful and in particular considered it to be a considerable improvement on the Pear Tree Street elevation. Simplifying the design was a welcome move. The datum lines on Pear Tree Street were considered to work well and now that materiality has changed, they thought the fenestration of the corner block works well on the Pear Tree Street facade.

#### *Goswell Road*

The Panel welcomed the corner block becoming more vertical, slimmer and were of the opinion that the proportions of the entrance sit comfortably alongside the existing building. They felt there is now a more comfortable relationship between these two elements. They felt the massing was acceptable but there was a further stage of sophistication of the elevation that needs to be developed.

However, they stated that a more detailed study is required in relation to the integration of the proposed upper storey/plane with the existing façade to create a cohesive elevation. The Chair was not convinced that a brick wall with punched windows is necessarily the right solution. He emphasised that what is added to the top needs to respond to the existing façade rhythm including the vertical emphasis of the fenestration. It was suggested one possible resolution to be explored might be to set back the spandrel between the top two levels of windows.

The Panel were also comfortable with the change from art gallery to entrance to offices

#### **Summary**

Panel members were generally welcoming of the changes. They felt that the massing was acceptable and were very positive about the Pear Tree Street elevation. They also supported the moves in relation to the corner block. However, although they accepted the principles applied to the Goswell Road elevation, they felt that with the new proposed massing changes the proportions of that elevation and, therefore, its detailing needs to be further developed to make it a coherent composition.

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 black ink, appearing to read 'Lucy' or 'Luciana', written in a cursive style.

**Luciana Grave**

Design Review Panel Coordinator  
Design & Conservation Team Manager