



CONFIDENTIAL

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Our ref: DRP/81

Date: 22 December 2015

Dear Rosemarie Jenkins,

ISLINGTON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

RE: Hathersage & Besant, Newington Green, London – pre-app ref Q2015/4128/MJR

Thank you for attending Islington's Design Review Panel meeting on 8 December 2015 for a review of the above scheme. The proposed scheme under consideration is for the retention of Hathersage Court and the demolition of the 5-storey L-shaped building making up part of Besant Court on the southern end of the site with 6 new-build elements across the estate to deliver between 50 and 70 new dwellings (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 Dominic Papa (chair), Lee Mallett, Neil Williamson, Phil Coffey, Kate Graham and Simon Carne on 8 December 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

As with other estate regeneration schemes seen by the Panel, the concept of bringing improvements to the estate, providing additional and mixed-tenure housing within a well-designed landscape and better functioning open space is strongly supported. The Panel was concerned, however, that the scheme is not sufficiently comprehensive and strategic in its approach, and considers that a masterplan addressing the long term future of the whole estate (Hathersage and Besant) and ideally including adjacent sites not currently within the Council's ownership is essential, to inform the right strategy for the site.

The Panel recognised that there are significant practical and financial constraints making comprehensive redevelopment of the whole site difficult to achieve immediately, but advised that a phased approach could work well provided it is fully informed by a long-term strategy and masterplan. This would allow the client's aspiration of a cohesive overall approach to be achieved. The current scheme appears piecemeal and does not achieve this. The masterplan

needs to include costed design and phasing options that factor in the management costs and realistic life expectancy of the existing buildings.

The Panel felt that the historical context of the site within a conservation area had not been adequately explored. Fundamental to the masterplan should be consideration of the potential for enhancements to the conservation area particularly fronting Newington Green and Newington Green Road. An element of mixed use development could be appropriate along this frontage, as part of a strategy to create active frontages and enliven edges and routes. This could also reveal potential value that might be targeted to assist with renewal

The Panel strongly supported the aspiration to use landscape to provide a cohesive framework for the redevelopment. However, they were concerned that the landscape proposals needed to be addressed in a much more rigorous manner, based on a clear understanding of the particular social, environmental and management factors that had resulted in the current degraded and largely unusable open space on this site, with a clear strategy to identify how the design and future management of the landscape will ensure that the objective of high quality, well-used, safe and inclusive open space is achieved and sustained in the long term. The landscape framework should also support a clear hierarchy of spaces and organise building frontages and entrances.

Panel members were concerned that the scheme is not currently taking account of its surroundings. They encouraged the design team to explore a mix of uses, not just on the frontage to Newington Green to bring more character and interest to the proposals. It was noted that the existing use within the site for housing homeless people could be relocated as part of the development to provide more options for the internal development of the site.

The Panel felt that the scheme at the moment looks piecemeal and is looking solely inwards when it needs to start looking at the estate from outside and how it links to the wider area. Further work on analysis of options including a robust assessment of potential unit numbers and costs is needed to inform the design.

Summary

The Panel welcomed the concept of estate regeneration but felt that a much more holistic approach is necessary. They advised the project/design team to develop a comprehensive masterplan for the site which could then inform an appropriate phasing strategy.

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'.

Luciana Grave
Design Review Panel Coordinator
Design & Conservation Team Manager