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Our Ref: **Q2023/2461/DRP**
Date: 13/09/23

Dear Jamie,

ISLINGTON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

RE: Edward Rudolph House, 69-85 Margery Street (Ref: P2023/2059/FUL)

Thank you for attending Islington's Design Review Panel Chairs review meeting on 30th August 2023 for a 6th review of the above scheme. The proposed scheme under consideration is for Demolition of the existing building and erection of a 4-storey office (Use class Eg(i)) building, including cycle associated cycle parking, waste and recycling storage, plan enclosure to the roof, hard and soft landscaping, and associated substation.

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 and Cordula Zeidler on 30/08/2023 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

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.

A question and answer session commenced after the applicant presentation followed by a commentary on the scheme provided by the Chairs.

Each section is recorded below.

Questions & Answers:

Panel Query:

The lower ground floor affordable space, does it also have openable windows to the back? How is cross ventilation achieved throughout the building?

Applicant Response:

It is too challenging for a fire rated façade. The M&E system is mixed use. The perimeter could be naturally ventilated. True cross ventilation would not be possible. The Yardley Street corner has openable windows. Not fully across the floor space.

Panel Query:

What about the lower ground Yardley Street windows?

Applicant Response:

These are naturally ventilated, above grade, but not below.

Panel Query:

The corner entrance has a risk of trashing. How does the setback in the corner mitigate rough sleeping?

Applicant Response:

We engaged with the Met. The existing building has recessed entrances and yards, big problems of ASB. Design crime officer said that the corner entrance creates a place with no hiding places, where you can't hide behind a corner as it visible in more views. There is also a slanted wall to makes it less a hiding spot. From an ASB prevention point of view, it is supported. To mitigating rough sleeping, we integrated automatic lighting. In landscape terms, we have designed a surface that cannot be slept on and is not a hostile design element.

Panel Query:

Regarding the recesses in the long elevation in Margery Street, you referenced the Lloyd Baker Estate. In those cases, you have entrances in those bays but yours are blind. What activation or otherwise you get in those recesses in the street? Are the shadow gaps active?

Applicant Response:

There are planters at the base of each of these gaps. The gaps are not meant to be activated or transparent.

Panel Query:

So, these spaces are normal office space behind. There is nothing special in plan?

Applicant Response:

They are just office space.

Panel Query:

The Yardley Street elevation has two visible service entrances. It reads quite hostile. How is this addressed?

Applicant Response:

The Juliet balconies and metal elements are to be finely detailed so that it does not read utilitarian.

Panel Query:

What is the reasoning for the height of gates and their choice, rather than doors? The very tall metal gates look particularly unwelcoming.

Applicant Response:

It is continuing the datum line.

Panel Query:

The grills end to a point, not all the way, in reference to the metal doors. They don't need to look forbidding. Is this the intention?

Applicant Response:

In elevation it may look harsh. Less so in CGIs.

Panel Query:

The orientation and design of the windows at the rear elevation seemed to have not changed since the last DRP where we asked whether they can be adjusted to be angled away from the playground and flats.

What has happened in that elevation?

Applicant Response:

No changes have been made to the rear due to distance. Happy to condition them.

Panel Query:

Has the play space been confirmed as either temporary or permanent?

Applicant Response:

It has been largely empty. Lots of works on reroofing, scaffolded at the moment. There are raised beds planters in there.

Panel Query:

What has structural engineer done to ascertain structural longevity?

Applicant Response:

It has been primarily a desktop study. There is pretty good understanding of existing fabric. They have looked at the steel structure. There has been a combination of load bearing masonry and old ceiling joists that have been damaged in the past. It has been

adapted multiple times during the years. This is one of the reasons why it doesn't have further capacity for adaptation.

Panel Query:

What is quality of the affordable office?

Applicant Response:

It is a well-lit space, has two rooflights, shared access to all amenities and utilities, integrated with main lobby, and has good room depth for types of accommodation.

Panel Query:

The space has a translucent screening to a height, planter along elevation, and an opaque canopy above the skylight. Is this adequate?

Applicant Response:

The canopy won't be opaque. It is slatted as shown in drawing.

Panel Query:

There are issues about the terrace and outdoor amenity which may cause nuisance to neighbours. What are the conditions on operation hours? There is also an urban green factor clash as it shows to be low.

Applicant Response:

We haven't discussed draft conditions. The previous application had it as the S106 was complete. Happy to reinstate those conditions.

Panel Query:

Where is the UGF of 0.32 mentioned? The submitted pack does not show this.

Applicant Response:

It is shown in the submitted DAS. The terrace would be permeable, composite timber finish. Factor number not contribution, so potentially could be more.

Panel Query:

What is the floor-to-floor height of the existing?

Applicant Response:

The existing is 4.1m. The proposed is 3.58m floor to floor. The building is working the harder to tie to listed terrace in Yardley Street. This will improve the setting of Yardley

Street as the current structural shape makes it quite severe and clash. Yes, it is materially different, but you can see that raised ground floor is so different to the listed building. The existing cannot tie this.

Panel Query:

Has there been an approach where the perimeter is cut back? There is no evidence that this has been done. An approach which considers adaptations to structure and partial retention. Your chosen approach of demolition and justification needs to be bulletproof. Members will ask those questions. The current building has a poor streetscape, but what can be adapted?

Applicant Response:

Regarding rebuild a new structure inside and take the exterior, we are long way from there. The M&S outcome is not absolute of no prospect of doing anything, so many issues to consider on each case. In this particular one, this is a building that has already adapted twice. Constantly retrofitting, every single time you are making it more problematic, less structurally able to do what you want with it.

Panel Query:

We feel unable to comment if is not fully resolved. It must be really demonstrated if you do require complete demolition. At present you still end up with a compromised scheme. Where is this information?

Applicant Response:

We have submitted a 43-page document to explain this. It summarises the case, loads of information there, lots of detail. We understand there is a challenge of message.

Panel Commentary:

Architectural design:

There are welcome changes from the last DRP. The inclusion of natural ventilation is welcome. The building reads reasonably in the street in terms of rhythm. It's a long elevation, however, that hasn't quite been totally resolved in townscape terms.

Could it be even better? Lively activation as possible, such a long elevation. It remains very disappointing and blind. Solid panel and planter and recess don't contribute to activation. Could have been turned as a picture window that adds something to the street. Those design moves don't make it as good a building as possible. Planting and planters northeast facing – starts well and maintenance schedules are not kept, coke cans get thrown in and then plants die. Making sure that the maintenance schedules are maintained through the life span is critical.

While the opening windows are welcomed, it is a shame it can't cross ventilate. Fire constraints are acknowledged. Can shutters be used?

There are some issues of level change that would be resolved if the existing building is retained, such as the transition onto Yardley Street. This would make a clear break. Your approach is to make a transition with the architectural fenestration, scale, and rhythm. Why must it be totally aligned, replicating a Victorian villa? In a sense, taking

the starting point of the existing building would be a more confident move as a transition. The 4.1m is a good floor to ceiling height to make a clean break.

Yardley Street grills seem like a shame. This is a sensitive setting in the Conservation Area. You have two full height bays with grills. You ought to think as artwork rather than

grills, which is how they are shown. Condition them or S106 good place to do it. This is an important elevation – don't want to end up with full height grills.

Distances seem reasonable for the rear. It would be better to angle the windows to give more privacy to residents, especially if they want to use communal garden.

Affordable workspace:

There are serious concerns with the quality of the affordable office space.

At present, light is coming from the north-eastern end, but there is no through ventilation.

It's a brand-new building, but a missed opportunity. Even with a new building you end up with affordable space with poor levels of light, no natural ventilation, no outlook. There is a big carbon price to pay and does not result in a first class building in return.

It is disappointing that it located at the back. It is a dark space, not particularly nice. A shame and missed opportunity.

While it is next to the amenity and linked to the main entrance, it is sub-standard. This space is not worthy of a building for the future.

Demolition vs. retrofit.

The demolition strategy needs clear and convincing justification. There are many strategies that involve demolishing 50% and keep 50%, strapping columns, keep the right amount of structure. It should be clear in your submission. Starting from scratch is not solving all the issues. Has demolition been truly explained?

Chair Summary:

There have been improvements since the appeal and previous DRP. There have been subtle changes that address the last DRP comments. The narrowing of the bays is a good change. It has helped the scheme.

It's a shame not being able to naturally ventilate the rear elevation. This prejudices one side of the office space. It all needs to be looked at how can one achieve a degree of air flow to both sides of the building. That needs to be looked at in more detail.

There are big concerns with the quality of the affordable workspace. It is a shame that flexibility is granted to the commercial office space but not the affordable one. Flexibility needs to be across all the office space in the proposal – the affordable is narrow, goes around the core, areas have less light than others, one with more amenity than others. It is sub-standard. One has to go around the core to access the full space. All these lead to the problems of the affordable offer – not just the lighting. There are layers of constraints imposed on this space, like the canopy.

Personally, I am not sure that the transition from Margery Street has to be so dogmatic in replicating the villas, or even the railings. It looks heavy, not only the grills and windows. Can there be a more elegant rhythm, syncopation?

In the end – to get a good outcome with members: we expect as a panel that if you are not retaining structure and answer key sustainable queries on retention and carbon,

then it must be an exemplary building. At the moment, it is not quite achieving the exemplary standards for the reasons mentioned.

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,



Fabrizio Matillana
Design Review Panel Coordinator
Design & Conservation Deputy Team Manager
Islington Council

If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape, easy read or in another language, please telephone 020 7527 2000.