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Our ref: DRP/52

Date: 06 March 2015

ATT: Sophie Hitchins  
Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners,  
14 Regent's Wharf,  
All Saints Street,  
London N1 9RL

Dear Sophie Hitchins,

### **ISLINGTON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

**RE: Leroy House - pre-application reference Q2014/2214/MJR**

Thank you for attending Islington's Design Review Panel meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015 for an assessment of the above scheme. The proposed scheme under consideration was for a five-storey extension, side extension on the existing car park, single storey roof extension to the existing building and refurbishment of the existing building to create additional B1a business use (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), Paul Reynolds, Tim Ronalds, Charles Thomson and Ben Gibson on 13 February 2015 including a site visit and a presentation from the design team followed by a questions 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 found that the existing 1930s industrial building is an original classic of its period and a complete building in its own right. The Panel argued that, although slightly tired, the building was appropriate for its current use. Panel members were concerned that the proposed redevelopment of the building failed to take its architectural merits into account and that the character of the building would be lost. The Panel recommended that a thorough analysis of the existing building should be undertaken. This analysis should in turn inform the design approach. The design approach should then be better explained so that that the Panel can follow the evolution of the design.

#### Elevations and materials

The Panel raised concerns over the proposed alterations to the existing building, which it felt would strip it of its original character. The Panel questioned the proposed staining and painting to replace the original appearance of the building in an attempt to homogenise it with the extension.

Panel members also queried the dominance of the two storey glazed extension in relation to the original legibility and proportions of the existing building with an articulated bottom, middle and top. The Panel queried whether the internal furniture layouts would result in desks looking untidy against the glazing.

### Side extension

The Panel supported the idea of building on the car park, but argued that in light of the prominence of the site and strong identity of the original building, an extension building of higher architectural quality was required. The Panel noted that the existing entrance elevation, arguable the finest façade, would be lost with the proposed extension. This underscores the need to provide a building of the highest quality on the corner site.

The Panel questioned the attempt to reference the surrounding Georgian architecture in the design of the extension. Panel members argued that extending the architectural vocabulary of the original building to the extension would be more appropriate. They suggested that the extension would not need to be in the style of the 1930s building, but that a better architectural dialogue between the old and the new should be found.

The Panel queried the alignment of the building edge along Balls Pond Road and Essex Road and the resulting space between the proposed building and site boundary. The chamfer to the side extension and the corner appeared weak. The Panel considered that the overall impact would not improve the corner of the site.

Panel members wondered whether other options for siting and building form had been explored. The Panel considered that a more positive solution to dealing with the public realm and architectural juxtaposition with both the 1930's building and church would create a better design.

### Sustainability

The Panel advised that under building regulations, the windows would likely need to be replaced or improved. The Panel raised concerns regarding potential overheating of the glazed roof extension and questioned whether this would need mechanical ventilation.

### **Summary**

The Panel welcomed the principle of continuing and extending the employment-led use of the building and improving the relationship with the public realm with more active street frontage. Panel members found that the building needed a gentle lift and renovation and that the original characteristics should be retained. They argued that the existing architecture should be respected by the extension. The Panel argued the side and roof extension needed to be of higher architectural quality and that the relationship between the original building and the extension needed to be resolved more appropriately.

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 grey ink, appearing to read 'Lucy', written in a cursive style.

**Luciana Grave**  
Design Review Panel Coordinator  
Design & Conservation Team Manager