



The Hammersmith Society

Richard Winterton *Chairman*
r.winterton@btinternet.com

20 March 2019

Director for Planning & Development
Development Management, Planning and Growth
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Town Hall
King Street
London W6 9JU

For the attention of John Sanchez

Dear John

2019/00195/FUL
Redevelopment of the former Hammersmith Magistrates Court site

The Hammersmith Society has carefully studied the planning application for the redevelopment of the Hammersmith Magistrates Court site, including a review discussion at a meeting with the development team and LBHF planning.

This is one of the first substantial commercial developments on this east side of the town centre, and we are concerned that the proposals offer a mediocre contribution to the urban environment and set a poor standard for the developments which are likely to follow. We note the following comments:

Background: the application site is on the south side of the Talgarth Road approach to Hammersmith Broadway, the east side neighbour to the Ark. Further east is the petrol garage and the recently constructed Lamda drama school. With the absence of destination or visual focus, together with the busy traffic alongside at ground level and fly-over level above, this is a hostile area, the existing buildings offering refuge but little cohesive streetscape.

Planning brief: over the last three years LBHF have been working on a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide a brief for the redevelopment of Hammersmith Town Centre, with the intention of seizing the opportunities to improve the centre in the light of the considerable changes anticipated, including the fly-under and the redevelopment of the Broadway. We understand that guidance to the applicant has referred to the 2018 report on the emerging SPD, identifying (i) the priority of preserving views of the Ark when

An Amenity Group concerned with Planning and Conservation in Hammersmith since 1962

Patron: The Mayor of Hammersmith & Fulham
Member of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies Founder Member of The West London River Group
President: Professor Hans Haenlein MBE Chairman: Tom Ryland
Secretary: Annabel Clarke, 42 Greenside Road, W12 9JG Tel: 07940 575590

approaching from the east, (ii) improving the pedestrian environment by creating connections across the site, linking Lamda with the Ark, (iii) taking measures to address the high levels of air pollution in the area. With the open south elevation of the site, the location has previously been identified as ideal for residential development. It is of note that the SPD report addresses the future provision of commercial and residential space for the prosperity and social demands of the town centre, but the market is currently strongly promoting hotel development. In this context we intend to submit separately our comments on the change of use proposed from the original public facility to commercial hotel use.

Application proposals

The development concept proposes three slab blocks: the stand-alone Building 1, on the Talgarth Road frontage, rising ground + 24 stories and roof plant storey; the narrower Building 2, rising ground + 15 upper stories and roof plant storey, and adjoining Building 3, rising ground + 7 stories. Community facilities include, in Building 1, an upper floor dedicated to 'affordable workspace' use, and community rehearsal and meeting room space at basement level. These facilities are welcome providing community access is at an appropriately low cost, and the arrangement should be secured by condition or Section 106 agreement.

Architecture

Building 1 is a rectangular slab block clad with grey reconstituted stone with modelled inset window bays, the rectilinear slab geometry reinforced by the straight parapets at roof, balcony and window levels; roof level incorporates storey height windows and metal screening to the plant room. This is reminiscent of 1960's commercial architecture, including a stair rising behind a full height glazed wall, but in place of the ubiquitous curtain wall of reflective glass, the cladding offers a monotonous repetitive grid formed in non-reflective reconstituted stone: a sheer elevation without visual relief or geometric hierarchy to bring order and visual clarity.

Planning conditions should include a requirement for a full-size two-storey design development mock-up to explore design refinement of the cladding. The lifts which might be visible through the glazed west end could introduce some visual dynamic. The vertical garden treatment to the east end is a welcome antidote to air pollution, but its rectangular, wallpaper-like treatment might be better integrated with the site landscaping to create a more natural appearance.

Buildings 2 and 3 are largely clad in brick, a different selection for each building, with a glazed end, and the top storey and some vertical stripes finished with metal cladding. Some form of architectural relief is needed to the very extensive areas of brickwork which form prominent west and east end elevations of the buildings.

The windows, deeply recessed in the brickwork, bring a welcome clarity and antidote to the extruded appearance of Building 1, but the overall mixture of materials lacks visual coherence, where there is such an opportunity to establish an underlying campus aesthetic, possibly played out differently on each building.

The landscaped courtyard would bring visual relief but with the nearby busy roads, limited recreational benefit. The courtyard landscaping should reflect this as a space for people, and not a forecourt subservient to the high buildings around. The pathway between Buildings 1 and 2 appears uninviting, and is too constrained by the basement rooflights: with the difficulty of creating black-out conditions required in conference and rehearsal space these rooflights might be omitted.

The layout of the scheme obscures the views approaching from the east of the Ark, one of Hammersmith's most distinctive buildings. The verified views are selective, with the view along Talgarth Road from Lamda being taken from a point where the Ark can still be seen, but very shortly after, the development comes into the foreground and only glimpses of the

Ark appear – confirmed by the “kinetic views from the A4”. This is contrary to the priorities set out in the SPD.

The scale of the development is exceptionally dominant from Biscay Road and Yeldham Road. The verified views show the impact from Biscay Road, and it is on a scale such as to damage the amenity of residents on these streets . A lower development, spreading the massing more evenly over the site, would avoid the damaging impacts of overlooking, light spill and noise reflection for these streets.

Peripheral issues include (i) visible broadcast masts should not be permitted on any level, (ii) confirmation is required that train noise reflected off the south face of Building 3 will not disturb the Yeldham and Biscay Road residents, (iii) further investigation is required to confirm that light spill from the hotel windows will not impinge on the houses in Yeldham and Biscay Roads.

Conclusion

The Design and Access statement reports on the outcome of the first pre-application discussion with LBHF: *‘any tall building would need to be of an exceptional design, and will need to be tested from various agreed viewpoints.’* We are surprised that despite four pre-application meetings, the proposals remain singularly unexceptional.

This is an uninspiring scheme: a very substantial and visible development offering so little to the Hammersmith streetscape. Significant further design work is required before the scheme is worthy of consideration for planning approval.

Yours sincerely
Richard Winterton

Yours sincerely
Richard Winterton
Chairman
The Hammersmith Society

cc. Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council
Councillor P J Murphy
Councillor Patricia Quigley