



## The Hammersmith Society

### Marks and Spencer proposals for the redevelopment of 27 King Street

**Summary:** the scale of the development is too big and would take away the intimacy and special character of King Street. The design of the student blocks lacks identity and distinction, and the scheme sets an unacceptable precedent for the south side of King Street.

**The planning context:** The site lies in the Hammersmith Broadway Conservation area and the Hammersmith Regeneration area, and the building is locally classified as a Building of Merit.

Development guidance in the LBHF Conservation Area profile includes ... *the massing and rhythm of the buildings is a key element in defining street character...extensions and alterations should not visibly affect their scale when seen from the street or any public space.*

The NPPF guidance regarding a Building of Merit, (categorised as a heritage asset) includes (para 200 et seq) ...*where a development will lead to substantial harm to the heritage asset the local planning authority should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm.'*

The policies of the Hammersmith Regeneration Area include requirements to *(i) improve retail provision and create more offices and arts facilities, (ii) bring a positive response to local character and history, (iii) create an urban environment of the highest quality, sensitively integrated into the existing context, and, above all, (iv) permit tall buildings, providing they are of the highest architectural quality and appropriate form, and sit comfortably both on the skyline and within views from public open spaces - qualities which have to be demonstrated through a design appraisal..*

### The proposals

**Planning:** A design appraisal of the developer's September scheme reveals a range of features both non-compliant and inappropriate to current planning policy. Consent for this scheme would diminish the authority of LBHF Local Plan, Conservation Area and Building of Merit planning policies in future developments in King Street: these policies are an invaluable tool in the control of change in the historic areas of the borough.

**Architecture:** the student building externals are undistinguished, and fail to reflect the highest architectural quality required by policy. They bring ordinariness instead of distinction and identity, with a mediocre, end-on view for the principal elevation to King Street and Lyric Square.

The building is too dominant, especially in long views down King Street and from Lyric Square, an alien form amongst the small scale shops, its height on the south side of the street taking away sunshine and daylight from King Street.

The verticality of the student building sits uncomfortably with the horizontality of the retail elevation, suggesting there should either be greater differentiation between them - such as an expressed slender tower behind the linear shop building - or greater commonality by means of unifying architectural devices.

**The consultation:** This is a major scheme for a critical town centre site, yet the public consultation has been held back until 8 weeks before submission of planning. There is no time for scheme adjustments to accommodate public comment, and no opportunity for the scheme to benefit from the knowledge and insight of those who live in Hammersmith and use King Street – and who have to live with whatever the project builds. The exhibition was effectively a press conference, not a consultation.

**The potential:** it is most regrettable that LBHF has no planning template describing the potential for the future of King Street. A masterplan prepared by Grimshaw consultants in 2018 was only a tentative first step, which has not received Council or borough endorsement and, except for the St Paul's Green ideas, has no place in a planning brief to developers.

In the absence of this planning template, it is of great concern that the M+S proposals, if consented, are likely to set the pattern for the rest of King Street, imposing an alien scale and development density which would crush the characteristics of informality and intimacy so special to King Street.

## **Conclusion**

- 1 The proposals do not comply with local and national planning policy. The scheme brings only shadow and bulk to the town centre, and fails to respond to the planning ambition to regenerate the qualities and character of King Street.
- 2 A design strategy for King Street is critically urgent to provide a framework for the regeneration: without this, the current proposals could set an irresistible precedent for the development of the whole south side, overwhelming the scale and intimacy of King Street.
- 3 The design of the student buildings needs wholesale improvement: they are too big, too dominant, they fail to provide the 'highest architectural quality' required by planning policy, and they present an ill-fitting façade to King Street.

Richard Winterton, Vice Chair  
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