

SOUTHWARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL DRP REPORT – 11 MAY 2015

(Confidential in advance of a planning application)

Chair: Simon Hudspith

Panel Members: Richard Brown; Tom Coward; David Lomax; Andrew Pryke

Kipling Garages

Architects : Bell Philips Architects

Applicants : Leathermarket JMB

Case Officer : Wing Lau

Project description

The building has been designed by local architects practice, Bell Philips Architects, in collaboration with local resident, from brief setting through design evolution, materials choices and customisation.

The site is located at the corner of Weston Street and Guy Street to the south-west of London Bridge Station within an area that has rich and long-established historical roots but which has undergone rapid change over the past few years.

The proposed building will deliver 27 new homes, all affordable (social rent) tenure. There is a wide mix of units which has been derived from a housing needs study of the existing estate. The new homes are largely intended for older residents to downsize, freeing up larger flats on the existing estate.

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this new proposal including and this innovative model of delivering new affordable housing on an existing council estate. They thanked the applicants for their presentation which included: their consultation strategy and brief setting process, massing options tested and mix, a contextual analysis including the historic development of the area, scale plans of every floor, elevations and sections, details of the cladding and a card scale model of their proposal in its immediate context.

The Panel acknowledged the overwhelming support for the proposal from the community, thanked the residents who attended the review and felt that the design team were well placed to meet the challenges of this site. They, however, raised a number of questions about its relationship with the existing estate, its provision for the private and communal amenity of future residents, and its architectural expression, which they hoped could help to shape the scheme as it progresses and to ensure that this new proposal takes its rightful place in this community and the wider context.

At the outset, and as this is proposed as a new building on its own site in isolation, the Panel considered how it sits on its constrained site and how it proposes to accommodate the needs of its future occupiers which every new development needs to do. They felt the current massing of the proposal allowed little space for an adequate transition from the 'public' street to the 'private' residences and offered limited communal amenity. An example of this was the design of the 'defensible' space at the terrace of houses which appeared narrow and largely overshadowed by the balcony overhead. While the main entrance lobby sequence to the apartment blocks may have been carefully considered, the Panel felt the sequence from public to private at the houses needed further work. The Panel acknowledged that the area appears to be well served by parks and open spaces. However, every proposal should provide adequate private and communal amenity for its occupiers within its site. They were concerned that the current roof-top communal amenity located over the houses appeared inadequate and poorly designed. They asked the designers to review the sequence

of spaces from public to private and to ensure that the scheme had adequate and well designed private and communal amenity on its site.

When the Panel considered the relationship of the building with the rest of the estate they felt there were a number of instances where existing estate would be affected by the new scheme which new developments should avoid. These instances occurred at either end of the site. On the southern end, the new block is separated from the tower by just 8m to 10m and has single-aspect bedroom windows facing directly onto the tower. This is likely to affect the outlook of future occupiers of both buildings and should be avoided. At the northern end of the block the new corner block has windows in the 'party' wall separating the existing estate from the new building. Where a room relies on a window which is on a party wall it should have another window away from the party wall so that it does not rely on the adjacent property for its outlook of amenity. The Panel asked the designers to review their design to address these issues and resolve the instances where the outlook or amenity of the existing properties is affected.

The Panel welcomed the choice of cladding materials and appreciated the architect's attention to detail at the 'banding' and the window reveals. The design for the cladding has to be looked at in the context of the proposed block design which is highly articulated and complex in its own right. They felt there were two strategies for the design of the elevations –either to embellish the cladding with a pattern as proposed, or to keep it simple but to express the complex architectural geometry of the block. The first strategy raised a number of questions for the Panel including: where does the pattern start and how does it finish; what is the reason for the bands on an isolated modern block; and how is the angled parapet detailed? They noted that the design followed certain architectural rules with the main block form chamfered and at the corners to reveal living rooms with the chamfer expressed as a balcony. The Panel encouraged the architects to review the cladding strategy, to retain the brick cladding but consider expressing the building's form and its architectural idea more deliberately, not simply embellish it. They felt the three main elevations could be successful if developed further. However, the elevation on to the estate (west elevation) was less successful and requires further work.

Finally, the Panel raised a number of questions of detail which still require resolution. The remoteness of the parking spaces from the wheel-chair units is a concern and needs further consideration. The team should contact the Environmental Protection Team of the council in order for advice on the location and height of the proposed Combined Heat and Power flue which appears to be located too close to the existing tower.

In conclusion, the Panel felt the proposal offered an exciting and interesting model for new affordable housing delivery. They broadly endorsed the design but raised concerns over the design of private, semi-private and communal spaces, its impact on its neighbours and its architectural expression and they encouraged the designers to review their proposals to address their concerns when they discuss this further with the Planners and before a planning application.