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By email

Ref: BCC 743 dmb
29 August 2015

Dear Shane,

Lionel Road Detail Application:

The Brentford Community Council has received a presentation on the detail proposals for Lionel Road South and has set up a sub-committee to respond.

It is recognised that this is a difficult site for housing development. (Page 12 of the Design Code Report of May 2013 (DCp12) shows that the housing in this application would be confined to a narrow strip on the east of the stadium which would itself occupy the whole of the centre of the site.

The housing site is further divided into 3 distinct clusters on either side of the railway line, which would only be linked by one new bridge and by a long, narrow pedestrian route passing between the stadium and the railway cutting, between blocks F and block G (DC p.8).

The Design Code recognised the importance of connectivity and made welcome proposals for improving the links to Gunnersbury Park and to the Thames, which are not part of this detail application, but failed to provide attractive links between the individual eastern housing clusters or to link them to the facilities outside the site.

The task for the detail design was made more difficult as it proposed high buildings on tight sites. The footprint of these buildings is largely determined by the constraints imposed by the railways and by the bulk of the stadium.

Additionally it was clearly vital that the new development should not "harm" adjacent Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings or the World Heritage Site. These include Kew Bridge (Grade 2) and the Steam Museum and Tower Grade 1.)

The Design Guide considered how that potential harm could be mitigated.

It proposed that each cluster should have its own distinct character, while clearly being part of a single design concept.

That each cluster would use its own separate colour scheme, from a limited and carefully co-ordinated palette, to emphasise the contrasting designs of each cluster.

That careful attention would be paid to form, tapering and proportion and the effects of wind on the micro-climate should studied and mitigated.

That the skylines, which will dominate views from within Conservation Areas and from Kew Bridge, should be given the closest attention

And that materials and detailing, including the use of brick and traditional facing materials should be included and should be of the highest quality.

The applicant has appointed another architect to design all the housing on the east side of the site, which is the subject of this application.

The Brentford Community Council would have preferred a solution where the Master Planning Consultant was retained to carry the Design Code through to the detail stage and to appoint separate architects to develop detail designs for each cluster.

This practice has been adopted in both the Commerce Road and the Brentford Town Centre proposals, where it has produced a more harmonious result than has been achieved in this proposal. This alternative approach would have been particularly appropriate on this site.

The application has failed to follow the guidance in the Design Code in several respects:

All clusters have the same character with similar elevations.

All clusters are clad in the same colours

The Forms and Proportions are crude.

Much of the variation in the Skyline proposed in the design code has been lost.

The detailing and materials, exclude brick, are uniform throughout and have not achieved the highest quality.

The result is that the scheme now reads as a monumental wall of high buildings, whose height and mass has been reinforced by the drab grey-brown metallic cladding, only interrupted by white bands, which make the development look like an enormous layered cake.

The aesthetic owes nothing either to the Brentford's Victorian housing, the industrial tradition captured in the Kew Bridge scheme nor the over high, but slender tower blocks of the Haverfield Estate.

Instead, it appears to have its design roots in the massive Council Housing Estates built in the 1970, many of which have now been demolished.

The BCC asks you to reject this application and to advise the applicant to propose an alternative, based closely on the adopted Design Code and developed with a team prepared to follow through those objectives.

There are other Matters of Concern, particularly relating to the quality of the design as it would affect new residents:

1. Privacy.

Where parallel blocks of single aspect flats are close together (J and K) privacy is an important consideration. It is unacceptable to provide open balconies looking down into bedrooms and living rooms which are too close together.

2. Pollution.

The flats have been designed with forced air ventilation to overcome the high level of pollution at the lower levels. However, the sealed flats are also provided with open balconies and French doors compromising the sealed solution.

3. Quality of Amenity Space.

The amenity spaces (particularly that in the Central Southern Cluster, blocks E and F) are sited between two closely spaced high blocks. Air turbulence and over-shadowing, and echoing will create an unsatisfactory environment which will negate the value of the Amenity space especially for passive enjoyment.

Some of the minimal balconies to the single aspect flats are on the north and east, elevations and will enjoy little sunlight; community amenity spaces are similarly over-shadowed. For many residents the only chance to enjoy an attractive amenity will come from visits, across the 40 mph dual carriageway A4 to Gunnersbury Park.

4.Landscaping.

The character of the landscaping proposed appears to be suburban in character, lacking any trees like London Planes which are characteristic of urban spaces in London. This is particularly inappropriate as the landscape is out of scale with the overbearing buildings.

The BCC considers that the detail design proposed in this application fails to provide acceptable living conditions for new residents and should be rejected.

Yours sincerely

Denis Browne,
Chairman, Planning Consultative Committee,
Brentford Community Council.

Copies to

Case Officers, Applicant, Ward Members
Planning Committee Members.