

Appendix 6: DRP Report

Overview of Southwark Design Review Panel, 15 December 2020

1. Chair: Gerard Maccreanor
Panel Members: Tom Coward; Jane Dann; Ann Griffin; Carolina Filippini; David Lomax; Mike Stiff
2. Project architects: Latitude Architects
Project clients: CAM
Project planning consultants: DP9
3. The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this important proposal and thanked the Applicants for their clear and detailed presentation. The presentation was circulated to the Panel in advance and included additional townscape model views from various approaches.
4. The Panel investigated further:
 - The operator who would take on this mix of uses and how their requirements had informed the design
 - What options were tested to modulate the massing of the tower – especially in relation to the lower portion to the rear
 - How the features in the LCC scheme related the proposals on pre-fabrication, this site
 - A modular solution
 - Sustainability – aiming for excellent – should this not be ‘outstanding’
 - How realistic the proposed street trees are
 - The involvement of a landscape architect
 - The views that were tested – especially from the West Square and Elliotts Row CAs
 - The use of and relationship with the ‘Pocket Park’
 - How realistic the back-of-house functions are for the hotel, commercial and retail functions?
 - Vertical transportation study – very important given the mix of uses
 - The disabled parking bay
 - The design of the street-facing portion of the building
 - The design of the building facing onto the Pocket Park – green wall vs windows.
5. The Panel encouraged the re-development of the site but were cautious about the proposal due to the complexity of the overlapping uses and the sheer quantum of accommodation proposed. They recognised that this could result in a bespoke solution that was not necessarily inappropriate. They raised a number of questions that they encouraged the design team to resolve as they developed the proposal.

Public realm

6. When they considered the public realm proposed in this scheme they highlighted that this is largely provided outside the footprint of this severely constrained site. The Panel questioned how realistic the proposed street trees would be and whether the kiosks on St Georges Road could be moved. They stressed that the removal of the kiosks was essential and not just desirable. The main public realm offer was the nearby 'pocket park' not in the same ownership as the proposal but an important piece of open space in the neighbourhood.
7. The Panel highlighted that the relationship between the lower levels of the proposal and the pocket park are unresolved. There needs to be a positive relationship between the new building and the park that can work for both. It was felt that this proposal could and should significantly contribute to the upgrade of the pocket park.
8. They urged the early involvement of a landscape architect to test the potential for street trees, to develop a proposal for the pocket park and to help with the design of the lower reaches of the building. In particular the potential for green walls and green roofs will require the involvement of specialists to ensure that these can be delivered. The Panel encouraged the design team to engage with the community that owns the Pocket Park to develop a design that they will welcome.
9. In a follow-up e-mail to the council the Applicants confirmed that following discussions with the custodians of the pocket park to the west of the site, it is now clear that the space is accessible to the general public, not just the residents of the Hayles Building.
10. It will also be critical to introduce active uses across the ground floor and maximise its potential. The Panel encouraged the designers to review the layout of the ground floor again – the spaces that will interact directly with the public realm – to optimise access and vertical circulation and to ensure that the service spaces needed for all the uses are adequately accommodated which is difficult in the current layout. At the moment the proposal appears unrealistic and that too much is being crammed into this severely constrained site.

Height scale and massing

11. The Panel recognised the transitional nature of the site and that significant weight should be given to the planning permission of the LCC scheme to the east. At the same time the site is largely surrounded on three sides by conservation areas and the proposed height will affect the character of these historic areas. They concluded that the site could take some height but that it

should mediate between the established character of Oswin Street and St George Road, and that of the Elephant and Castle core area.

12. The Panel felt the proposed height was sensitive and a matter of judgement. The Panel was split on the issue of building height with some members finding the proposed height to be acceptable while others highlighted that, in the views from Oswin Street, the change of scale was uncomfortable and suggested that the height should be lowered – closer to 8 or 10 storeys.
13. All Panel members encouraged the designers to look again at the lower reaches of the building and especially at the 3/ 4-storey portion to the rear which could perhaps rise slightly, in order to offset the excessive height on St George's Road.
14. The Panel noted that accurate rendered views from Oswin Street had not been properly presented. In developing the design further with the Planners, they felt this lower part of the design could also help to mediate in the views from Oswin Street.

Architectural design

15. The Panel generally welcomed the narrow proportions and articulated form of the tower. They questioned the practicality of such a narrow footprint and how realistic this would be for the mix of uses proposed. Whilst there was insufficient information about the precise choice of cladding materials and detailed design, the Panel were encouraged by the direction of travel in the architectural design. The Panel felt more work was required on the elevations and that sufficient detail design is submitted with any application to guarantee the quality proposed.
16. They highlighted the lower regions of the building which is where the design will relate more closely with the street. The lower four storeys form the base of the tower and include the publicly accessible uses of the building. In this respect they Panel felt it related too closely to the Elephant and Castle towers and not the street-scene of its more closely to its immediate neighbours. They encouraged the designers to introduce a more human scale at the base and to align the architecture of the base more closely to its immediate context; the Georgian properties on St Georges Road and the mansion blocks on Elliotts Row; and introduce some architectural richness at the base of the building.
17. Whilst the architecture, the scalloped design and rhomboid form, hold some promise, the Panel felt the proposal was severely constrained and difficult to deliver. The Panel encouraged the early involvement of a hotel/co-working operator and a fire strategy to inform the building control principles for the design in order to better define how the building will be used and serviced in the long term.

Sustainability and environmental impact

18. The Panel felt the proposal lacked a degree of ambition in terms of sustainability. The bespoke nature of the design, the imperative to address the climate crisis and the need to deliver exemplary design imposes the additional duty on towers to be more sustainable. They felt the circularity proposed was tenuous and the lack of natural ventilation resulted in an energy model that lacked the refinement necessary of such proposals. A more appropriate measure may be something like the RICS whole life carbon calculation which could help to establish the environmental credentials of this proposal.
19. When the Panel considered the environmental impact of the proposal they understood the initial wind and micro-climate and encouraged the design team to test this more rigorously especially in the context of the other towers nearby. This is especially important in the context of the pocket park and the streets nearby. Given there are a number of tall buildings in this area it is imperative that this proposal as well as the cumulative environmental impact is tested and reported to the Planners so that the architectural and landscape design can be updated to address any issues.

Conclusion

20. The Panel were generally optimistic but cautious about this proposal. They concluded that the design held some promise but they had significant concerns about its feasibility because of its significantly constrained site and limited accommodation for back-up and support spaces. They questioned the proposed height and requested more details about the landscape and detailed architectural design and encouraged the designers to amend the scheme to address their concerns.

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