

LONDON

REVIEW PANEL

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July 2020

Dear Chris,

London Review Panel: Manor Road

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the Review of the Manor Road proposals on 22nd July 2020. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer the Panel's ongoing support as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Lavington
Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Debbie Jackson, Executive Director of Development, Enterprise and Environment, GLA

Patrick Dubeck, Head of Regeneration, GLA



**Report of London Review Panel Chair Review
Manor Road**

Wednesday 22nd July
Review held remotely (Microsoft Teams)

Attendees

Richard Lavington (Chair)	Mayor's Design Advocate
Holly Lewis	Mayor's Design Advocate
Chris Cobham	Avanton
Omer Weinberger	Avanton
Holly Barker	Assael
John Lynch	Assael
Laura Postlethwaite	Assael
Tim Chapman-Cavanagh	Assael
Nicholas Alston	Avison Young
Rachel Crick	Avison Young
Richard Green	GLA Planning
Matt Ruddy	GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)
Sarah Considine	GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)
Tom Bennett	ICG
James Garside	LB Richmond upon Thames
Lucy Thatcher	LB Richmond upon Thames

Report copied to

Jules Pipe	Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Lucinda Turner	GLA
Patrick Dubeck	GLA
Jamie Dean	GLA

Confidentiality

Please note that while schemes might not yet be in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, they will be treated as confidential. As a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request, may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

Project name and site address

Homebase site, 84 Manor Road, North Sheen

Note on review process

This Review follows on from four previous London Review meetings to discuss the development proposals for Manor Road, Richmond: a formal review on 20th September; and a surgery review on 9th October 2019 (chair only), a formal review on 1st November 2019 and a further surgery review on the 18th June 2020 (chair only).

The purpose of this meeting was to allow the applicant team to present revised designs responding to the Panel's comments. The meeting was attended by planning officers from the London Borough of Richmond, who briefed the Panel on the reasons for refusal of the application by its planning committee (a summary of this briefing is included below). The London Review Panel was consulted on the scheme, following a call in by the Mayor. Mayor's Design Advocates attending the previous formal reviews were Richard Lavington (chair); Rachel Bagenal (who did not attend the panel review on the 1st November); Holly Lewis; and Adam Khan.

LB Richmond upon Thames' views

The application for redevelopment of the Richmond Homebase site was unanimously refused by the LB Richmond upon Thames' planning committee, based on the following 6 reasons: affordable housing; design; residential amenity; living standards; energy; and absence of a legal agreement. As part of Richmond's processing of the application, two Design Review Panels were carried out, one in November 2018 and one in February 2019.

LB Richmond confirmed they are reviewing their Local Plan to address the new London Plan's revised housing targets. LB Richmond also reiterated their support for redevelopment of brownfield sites and the priority to deliver housing within the borough. However, the LB Richmond still have concerns over the quality and height of the proposals. The borough considers the typology developed for this site to be of an urban nature sitting within a suburban context and this contributes to concerns that the scheme overwhelms the existing neighbours and impacts on the local heritage assets. As such, LB Richmond's objections to the scheme remain.

LB Richmond support the design development the design team have undertaken including the removal of Block E, the increase in dual aspect homes and the material and design changes to the top floors (providing a different material and tone to contrast with the brickwork below). LB Richmond raised concerns over window and balcony proximities in some locations and questioned whether the affordable family housing had dropped since previously presented.

LB Richmond request the panel take into consideration how this proposal can comply with the recently adopted local plan and policy requirements (e.g. tall building policy) within the plan-led system.

GLA Planning's views

GLA Planning is considering the overall merits of this application including the contribution made by this development to the delivery of housing and affordable housing in this part of London. Following refusal of the scheme by Richmond, the Mayor called in the application to act as the Local Planning Authority.

Since the call in, the applicant has been in discussion with GLA Planning to further consider the design and massing of the proposed scheme. As part of this process, five London Review Panel meetings (including the review recorded in this report) have been arranged to allow Mayor's Design Advocates to advise on the scheme's: urban design; height and massing; architecture; residential quality; public realm and landscape design.

Previous Review Recommendations

The London Review Panel recommendations for next steps from the previous review are captured in the summary extract below. Please refer to 18th June 2020 LRP report for full details of recommendations made.

'The Chair reiterated the London Review Panel's view that the massing at the previous review (1st November 2019) was acceptable subject to demonstrating a high-quality proposal captured in the panels other comments. Whilst the removal of Block E is a positive step, the chair encourages the panel to review the other issues raised that would need addressing to ensure the success of this proposal. As a scheme that aims to optimise housing delivery within a sensitive setting the design team must ensure that these designs are of the highest quality, both in terms of architectural expression and quality of accommodation. The chair encourages the design team to address the Panel's recommendations and return to the LRP when they have updated material that can demonstrate how these have been actioned.'

Client/Client Agent Presentation

A summary of the project history and context was given. The site is a vacant retail unit with a PTAL rating of 5. There is a mixed-use context with planning policy supporting a residential led development. The key issue for the team has been to optimise housing whilst balancing concerns over the height and massing. Since the November review, the scheme has been developed to remove Block E and alter the housing mix.

Assael Presentation

Assael set the context for this development, confirming that it was not within a conservation area and does not include any listed buildings. The scheme is close to a transport node (North Sheen Station) and aims to optimise affordable housing delivery. The current proposal is for 454 new homes with all homes designed as tenure blind and achieving 40% affordable homes (by habitable room).

The design team responded to all comments from the previous panel report and presented how each had been addressed where possible. Key points of design development presented by the team are summarised below;

Height & Massing

- Removal of Block E
- Redistribute the housing from Block E onto the other blocks (1-2 storey increase in height)
- Reduced floor-to-floor heights (maintaining 2.6m floor to ceiling) to minimise block height increases and reduce the heights of the blocks where no extra storey has been added
- Set back to top storey on Manor Road (and Block C)
- The massing has been developed to not appear above the ridgeline of the Almshouses

Quality of Accommodation

- Increased the number of dual aspect ground floor units (55% to 78%)
- Reviewed internal comfort levels for overheating and noise with consultants (glazing ratio 40% of external wall, deep plans avoided with bathrooms/kitchens located in centre of plans/ fully opening windows with secure night-time ventilation/MVHR for filtered air exchange)
- Designed the massing and elevations to minimise heat gain
- Railway facing balconies replaced with winter gardens
- Entrance locations and internal arrangements at ground floor revised for privacy (bedrooms moved from Manor Road to internal courtyard)

Architectural Expression

- Changes of the material to a lightweight metal cladding on the top floor for greater contrast with brickwork
- Change red stone to a tone more consistent across stone the proposal
- Balcony central pillars made lighter and colour to match metalwork
- Extended commercial frontage to Manor Road for more active frontage

Landscape & Access

- Removal of the landscape pavilion to improve shared amenity space
- Improve the landscape pathways to simplify journeys
- Existing street trees retained along Manor Road
- Reintroduce a landscape buffer to the north boundary
- Improved access to substation
- Distances between Block A and bus parking increased
- More diverse landscape uses (allotments/play spaces)
- Enclosed the open cut-through to provide more generous lobby space (north-east block)
- Manor Road designed to be free from servicing
- Access to network rail, refuse, fire tender and deliveries from the courtyard

London Review Panel's Views

Summary

The Panel commend the design team for addressing the recommendations from the previous reviews. The Panel believe the changes to the massing increases the impact on the context and that the design team should review how and where this can be minimized considering the number of units now proposed. The Panel encourage the design team to review the strategies proposed to avoid overheating, and recommend a low cost in use, low energy approach considering the climate emergency and affordable housing residents. The Panel encourage the design team to continue to develop the detailed designs beyond planning and into delivery, so that the realised buildings exceed the levels of design aspirations being developed now. This will require a commitment from the client and design team to invest in the high-quality detailing and material selection in the following stages of the project. The Panel advise the design team to review their servicing strategy to better reflect the likely reality of the commercial units and recommend further exploration into the potential flexibility of these units considering recent changes to planning use classes.

Height & Massing

- The Panel thoroughly support the removal of Block E which is a positive development for the scheme. The Panel would still encourage the design team to determine what this part of the site could be and whether there are better solutions to accommodating the bus parking.
- The Panel note that the amended views demonstrate an edging up of the height since the November review. The Panel believe that the schemes massing in November was acceptable in terms of its impact on the local context and heritage assets. The Panel recommend that the design team reduce the bulk of the massing where possible. There seems to be scope in the increased number of homes now proposed to accommodate this reduction.
- The Panel agree that the reduction in floor to floor is helpful in minimising in the impact of the massing. This is most evident on the buildings that have not increased in the number of storeys. Where additional storeys have been added the reduction in floor to floor height mitigates some of the increased height. The Panel recommend the design team look at reducing the number of units to further to minimise the impact on massing. The Panel encourage the design team to ensure the 2.6m floor to ceiling heights in habitable rooms are maintained in delivery through developing the coordinated section to ensure it can accommodate the necessary structure, servicing and construction build-ups required.

Quality of Accommodation

- The Panel encourages the design team to ensure the high quality of the accommodation which is paramount for the success of this high-density scheme. It is especially important to ensure the living accommodation proposed is of a high standard due to the Covid-19 situation with people spending greater time in their homes including to work.
- The Panel acknowledge the sustainability consultant input to date and the conclusions that have informed the current strategies for heating, cooling and noise mitigation.
- The Panel encourage the design team to develop the scheme to avoid the need for mechanical cooling such as including external shutters and revising the glazing proportions. Windows that are 40% of an external wall and are floor-to-ceiling look great but can exacerbate issues of overheating. Achieving sufficient sunlight and daylight need to be balanced alongside these overheating concerns. Overheating issues in relation to the noisier edges of the site should be reviewed as these are the homes most likely to suffer from either noise, overheating or both.
- The Panel caution the design team in their adoption of technology to resolve issues of overheating. Introducing mechanical cooling to homes can become the default, as it did in cars. Just because we can use it doesn't mean we should use it considering the energy use and cost involved. These concerns are of importance due to the Climate Emergency and the cost to the occupants of the affordable housing. The Panel encourage the team to explore low-tech solutions to achieve thermal comfort.
- The Panel note LB Richmond's comments regarding the proximity of windows to balconies (particularly in Block A and D) and that these distances needed to be reviewed. The Panel recommend the design team do a detailed analysis of these proximities between balconies, windows and publicly accessible areas to ensure adequate privacy and separation can be achieved. Some solutions discussed included the reduction of oversized balconies, moving windows and using landscape to achieve defensible space at ground level.

Architectural Expression

- The Panel questioned why the design team had chosen the current material palette and whether this related to the local context as it was unclear to the Panel where the logic had been derived. The Panel recommend the design team clearly demonstrate the research into the context and heritage, showing how this informed the choice of materials to support the design conclusions being presented.
- The Panel note the change in material to top floors from stone to metal to improve the contrast with the brickwork below and that this is supported by LB Richmond. The Panel advise that the design team robustly detail the metal cladding to ensure this is delivered well. PPC metal should be avoided and (if now not precast or brick) then zinc or other real metal is used. This is to ensure that it weathers well and minimises the need for maintenance and repair/repainting at high level.
- The Panel understand the design team have simplified the scheme palette and are using precast stone in a more consistent colour across the buildings. The Panel encourage the design team to test the tones of the materials propose to avoid looking to grey and that the local context may provide useful precedent.

Landscape & Access

- The Panel agree that the enclosing of the cut-through in Block A to Manor Road is a positive move and this creates a more legible, secure street edge and generous lobby space.
- The Panel commend the design team for their development of the landscape proposals which have improved since the last iteration. The path layouts are now much simpler, and the play space provision has improved.
- The Panel question the realism of the visuals presented and cautioned the design team to be honest in the representation of the planting proposed. For instance, the view through the archway shows hanging vines and the Panel queried whether this was proposed and that the necessary infrastructure for support it had been considered. The Panel suggest the design team including the landscape designers confirm the planting proposed has the necessary supporting services.
- The Panel queried whether the design team had considered the use class for the commercial units considering the recent planning control changes. The new use classes can allow for a broader range of uses. The Panel recommend the design team review the impact on the architecture and design to allow for this increased flexibility as these spaces could be a valued asset to local people.
- The Panel do not think the servicing strategy for the commercial spaces is not convincing and suggest that it is unlikely to happen as described. The Panel advise the design team mitigate deliveries pulling up onto the kerb on Manor Road by considering a loading bay or other physical impediment. By allowing the design to acknowledging the reality, the scheme can avoid future conflicts on this road caused by the proposals.

Next Steps

The Panel trusts that the design team will be able to address the comments from this and the previous reviews, in consultation with planning officers. The Panel would be happy to provide further advice on the scheme's ongoing development.

