

**Richmond  
Design Review Panel  
C/o Richmond Council**

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Our ref: ECS/  
Your ref:

Date: 14 December 2021

Richard Conroy  
Progress Planning  
Waterside House  
20 Riverside Way  
Uxbridge  
UB8 2YF

Dear Richard

**Richmond Design Review Panel:  
Kingston Bridge House, Church Grove, Hampton Wick, KT1**

The Panel is grateful to you and your development team for submitting your proposal to the Richmond Design Review Panel (RDRP) on Wednesday 17 November 2021. In light of the Government restrictions following the coronavirus outbreak, the Panel was not able visit the site and meet your team in person. However, the Panel provided feedback in a virtual open session with the Applicant present to hear the Panel's views. We therefore thank the Applicant team for their presentation of the proposals for the Kingston Bridge House site. This letter will be uploaded onto the website and appear alongside the information submitted with the application.

Kingston Bridge House is located on the northern side of the junction between Church Grove and Hampton Court Road in Hampton Wick, approximately 150m west of the River Thames and Kingston Bridge. The east side of the River Thames at this point is the Royal Borough of Kingston and Kingston Town Centre. To the west and south of the site, is Bushy Park and Hampton Court Palace. To the north, there is Hampton Wick High Street and the more suburban residential area between it and Teddington. Kingston Bridge House is not listed but it lies within the Hampton Wick Conservation Area, within the setting of the Grade I listed Bushy Park, and within an Archaeological Priority Area.

The site itself measures 0.28 hectares and is occupied by a singular 'L'-shaped building that was previously owned and used by Kingston University for student accommodation. As new purpose-built student accommodation has been constructed, the building is now vacant. The site has two separate vehicular access points from Church Grove and benefits from

undercroft car parking, with further parking to the rear which is largely hard surfaced. Kingston Bridge House is part seven storeys and part four storeys in height, and its current use is for student accommodation, providing 259 individual rooms.

The proposals seek the erection of a two-storey extension, a single-storey extension, and conversion of the existing building to create 89 residential flats, with associated works. The highest element of the proposed upper roof extension would be approximately 29.6m above grade, and just under the 30.0 metre threshold to refer to the GLA.

## **General Principles**

Overall, the Panel is in favour of addressing the site. We think this is a fantastic design opportunity to better integrate a building which from the outset, has had a problematic relationship with its surroundings, mainly due to its mass and height within a historically sensitive and extremely prominent site. However, we acknowledge with concern that a planning application has already been lodged with Richmond Council for the proposal. We would have expected more information to be provided in support of the application at this stage, as these would have helped inform the design response for the site and address some of the concerns raised.

The suggestions of the Panel are summarised as follows:

- Prepare the following set of documents to demonstrate the appropriateness of the scheme:
  - Townscape Visual Impact Assessment
  - Contextual elevations along Church Grove (SW) and Hampton Court Road/Hampton Wick High Street (SE) incorporating proposals
  - Structural Engineer's Report
  - Sustainability Strategy
  - Biodiversity Assessment including biodiversity net gain and Urban Greening Factor
  - Servicing Strategy which takes account of existing right of way
  - Updated Fire Strategy
- Further develop the design proposals in line with the findings of the reports mentioned above and in response to the Panel's detailed recommendations.
- Develop a comprehensive Landscape Strategy for the site including details on child yield play area requirement, amenity and SuDS.
- Provide a NE elevation of the scheme (as this is currently missing).
- Work closely with the local planning authority to establish critical viewpoints.

The detailed comments of the Panel have been collated into a constructive critique with suggestions included, as follows:

## **Heritage**

Kingston Bridge House lies within a very sensitive historical context. It sits at the southern end of the Hampton Wick Conservation Area, adjacent to the ancient river crossing and

within the setting of the Grade I listed Bushy Park. This area - once an industrial riverfront of wharfage and timber sheds - has in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, given way to a mix of larger scale residential and commercial development addressing Kingston. These larger developments, to which Kingston Bridge House belongs, have harmed the balance of both the river and landscape dominated setting, often spoiling views and historical skylines.

- The existing building is already significantly taller than the surrounding buildings. As this feels already at odds with the lower scale of the High Street, and river and landscape setting, we do not see increasing the height further as beneficial.
- We would like the applicant to produce a Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment Report. New contextual elevations are necessary in order to assess the impact the scheme will have on the streetscape along Church Grove, High Street, from Kingston Bridge and from the park.
- We suggest collaborating with the Council Officers to establish a list of verified views from critical viewpoints that should be provided.

## Design Response

Originally constructed in the mid-1960s as office accommodation, Kingston Bridge House was subsequently renovated in the mid-1990s to provide student accommodation for Kingston University. The L-shaped building has a primary/front block (seven storeys) that fronts Hampton Court Road and a secondary/side block (four storeys) that fronts Church Grove. The side block sits on small piloti columns that elevate the building to first floor level, which provides a sense of lightness to the structure.

While the Panel did not regard the existing building as having any particular architectural merit, and already too tall for the prominent location and historical context, we agreed it does present a classic 1960's composition and is reasonably well-proportioned.

- Addressing the site is supported - we think this is a great design opportunity to better integrate a building which from the outset, has had a problematic relationship with its historically sensitive surroundings. We acknowledge that changing the typology of a building from office use to residential use and getting the proportions right is challenging, but the Panel is not convinced about the rationale behind the design response proposed. Specifically, we do not see any justification for additional height, given that the scale of the building is already at odds with its surrounding context.
- We strongly recommend that the team provides a Structural Engineering Report as part of the submission, given the proposal to add new storeys and the scale of proposed façade modifications, including introducing deep recesses for balconies.

A verbal commentary provided during the review outlined the intention to strip the existing building back to the primary frame by entirely removing the external façade in order to install a new façade incorporating brick slips finish. It is understood from the discussion that no investigation of the structural implications of adding additional storeys, nor of the removal and installation of new façades or balcony recesses, has yet been undertaken.

A Structural Report will provide the local authority with reassurance about the technical feasibility of the desired approach and indication of certainty of delivery.

- The existing building - while not of architectural merit - has well-proportioned main and side blocks. We feel the proposed in-filling of the ground floor of the side block and loss of the piloti columns is inelegant, and in combination with the additional proposed height, makes the side block appear overly 'bulky'.

We suggested a study could be undertaken that explores extending the block to the rear and re-orientating the units (internal flat layouts become deeper rather than wider) as this could potentially provide the desired increased footprint without needing the infill and additional upper storeys.

- In terms of appearance, the team are using the adjoining HSBC Bank building as a historical stylistic reference for the design and materiality of the remodelled building. While this perhaps could be a plausible option, it is rather weak as there are no particular commonalities between the two buildings (ie: function, prominence, scale, etc) other than their proximity.

There are many rich architectural and material references within the wider locality that could be drawn upon. Equally, a contemporary approach could be put forward. Orchestrating a successful remodel is a significant design challenge but a stronger and more convincing design rationale is needed, and this should be submitted.

- The scheme presented is aiming for a historical appearance and we are concerned about the proposed use of brick slips for the masonry cladding, querying why this non-traditional approach is proposed. We agreed that the quality of the elevations will be determined by the brick selection, bond, mortar, reveal depth, and details such as the quoins illustrated, and suggested that traditional brickwork may be more appropriate. Pre-cast panels with brick slips can look inauthentic and particular care is needed for control joints and alignments.

Regardless, we would like confidence that the design can be built to a high standard as claimed and recommend providing details at 1:20 to demonstrate how this will be achieved.

- We are not convinced about using smoked glass for the staircase link as this jars awkwardly with the brickwork proposed. However, the balconies were liked and considered helpful in adding interest (and amenity) and in breaking up the mass, particularly where they form recessed elements.
- We understand that PV panels will be located at roof top levels, and that air source heat pumps (ASHP) are being considered. ASHP may comprise individual units per flat and incorporated in some way to the façades, or alternatively, provision may be through a communal approach.

We look forward to the outcome of the ASHP study and in seeing how the potential visual impact of these has been addressed. Similarly, we would like to see how the PV panels are accommodated and any impact their siting has on roof access and parapet heights.

- The NE elevation of the building above the line of the neighbouring HSBC Bank building is missing from the presentation, and we noted that it should be provided as part of the submission.

## **Public Realm and Landscaping**

The existing landscape provision reflects the corporate approach associated with the building's former office use. Changing to a landscape appropriate for a residential arrangement requires careful consideration to create a welcoming and safe environment for residents. While we welcome the reduction in amount of hardstanding, the current landscape proposals are nominal, comprising little more than a 'green fringe' around the perimeter of the building and plot. In particular, the rear yard remains dominated by car parking and hardstanding.

We understand the existing vehicular right of way to the industrial premises to the rear/NW of the building must be retained, which imposes a significant potential challenge with respect to noise and disturbance to future residents, as well as raising safety aspects. The frequency of traffic and types of vehicles accessing through the site, was not discussed.

It is understood the proposed servicing of the site by refuse vehicles will be compromised by the height of the existing undercroft, which is too low to allow for refuse vehicle passage. Refuse vehicles may be required to reverse onto the site during collections, to avoid obstructing Church Grove.

- We would like you to develop a Landscape Design Strategy for the scheme and this should be carefully integrated with a proposed Servicing Strategy for the site.
- We understand all trees on site will be retained and that an Arboriculture Survey has been submitted. Please consider the requirements for protection of the existing trees during construction and review the opportunity to introduce additional trees to the site edges and rear.
- We understand that while there is limited amount of area for play on the site, there is an abundance of opportunities locally and that the applicant intends to contribute towards these. Nevertheless, we recommend exploring ways to provide for the family units proposed within the scheme.
- There was no assessment of the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) and biodiversity net gain; this needs careful consideration and proposals made.

## **Sustainability**

In light of the Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, the principle of re-using the existing building structure rather than demolishing and re-building, is supported. However, we would like the team to prepare a coherent Sustainability Strategy for the scheme.

- We are not convinced by the current energy strategy but support the use of ASHP. The use of individual ASHP rather than communal provision was questioned, although we understand the team is exploring options (as already noted).
- We understand PV panels will be located at roof level and that a green roof is being considered, to contribute to the UGF. It is important the Structural Report confirms the building can support the extra weight of these items, as well as any associated safety and access provisions, which also need defining.

## **Moving Forward**

Overall, the Panel is in favour of regenerating this building for residential use.

The building is exceptionally prominent from all directions including front-facing views from Kingston Bridge, and we think this represents a unique opportunity to design an exceptional re-model. The building should become demonstrably improved in massing, appearance and architectural expression, thus fit better within its sensitive historic context.

We expect the challenges highlighted in the letter to be addressed and a strong and convincing rationale for the re-design proposed. We have suggested a list of additional reports that need to be provided at this stage to help inform the design and justify the choices made.

We would like to see the scheme again once the required documentation has been submitted and the design has been progressed.

Yours sincerely



**Rebecca Mortimore**

RIBA

Chair, Richmond Design Review Panel

**Panel Members**

Dorian Crone	Heritage and Design Consultant
Marcus Claridge	Director, Claridge Architects
Ciara Gormley	Architect and Interior Designer
Glen Macfarlane	Founding Principal, Macfarlane + Associates

**Panel Admin**

Barry Sellers	Principal Planner, Panel Secretary
Daniela Lucchese	Senior Urban Designer, Panel Coordinator

**Applicant Team**

Kamal Pankhania	Westcombe Development Ltd
Sunil Pankhania	Westcombe Development Ltd
Neville Millen	Fluent Architecture
Richard Conroy	Progress Planning
Kevin Lang	Lanmor Consulting
Ivan Ball	Blue Sky

**Attendees (invited to observe)**

Robert Angus	Head of Development Management
Chris Tankard	Area Team Manager North
William Tysterman	Principal Planner
Marc Wolfe-Cowen	Principal Urban Design Officer
Nicolette Duckham	Senior Conservation Officer
Matt Clarke	Conservation Officer
Tara Murphy	Conservation Officer

Cllr Julia Neden-Watts  
Cllr. Martin Elengorn  
Cllr Robin Brown  
Cllr Petra Fleming  
Cllr Jim Millard