

LEWISHAM DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW REPORT

Project	209 Conington Road
Status	Pre-application: 3rd Review
Review Date	17 March 2021
Issue Date	29 March 2021

In attendance:

Design & Planning Team

Applicant	Watkin Jones Graham Nelson Jeff Williams Clare Droog
Architects	Brock Carmichael Phil Malthouse
LDRP Panel Members	Keith Williams (Chair)* Martha Alker* Dominique Oliver Amanda Reynolds Keith Tillman*

Local Planning Authority London Borough of Lewisham

Michael Forrester, Major and Strategic Projects Manager
Ruth Coulson, Principal Urban Design Officer
Konoya Kabir, Assistant Strategic Planning Officer

*Denotes LDRP member who has evaluated this project at earlier LDRP review.

This report forms the response of Lewisham Design Review Panel (LDRP) to the virtual presentation of the project 17th March 2021.

DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest were declared.

VIRTUAL SITE VISIT

The DRP was virtual and did not include a formal site visit due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions currently in force. Three of the five panel members had reviewed the scheme in the past and comprehensive photographs of the site were provided as well as a virtual walk through on 'Google Maps' prior to the review. Therefore, all Panel Members were familiar with the site, its context and constraints.

SITE AND ITS CONTEXT

The site comprises the former Tesco car park, accessed from Conington Road. The site includes a bridge over the Ravensbourne River.

The site is Lewisham Town Centre. Lewisham Station adjacent to the site, to the south. The site lies within the Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan site policy area 'LTC5'. Policy LTC5 identifies mixed-use redevelopment alongside improved connectivity and river restoration to the River Ravensbourne.

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Planning permission was granted at appeal in January 2020 for:

'construction of three buildings, measuring 8, 14 and 34 storeys in height, to provide 365 residential dwellings (use class C3) and 554 square metres (sqm) gross of commercial/ community/ office/ leisure space (Use Class A1/A2/A3/B1/D1/D2) with associated access, servicing, energy centre, car and cycle parking, landscaping and public realm works' - LBL reference 'DC/17/101621'.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The Applicant is in pre-application discussions with Officers relating to the following proposed changes to the consented project:

Site-wide Changes

- A reduction in the floor to floor heights across all blocks (internal floor to ceiling heights maintained)
- A change from CHP to air source heat pump

Building B1 (Tower)

- An expansion of the ground floor entrance lobby
- External changes to the fenestration and crown
- Alteration to external materials from GRC to aluminium
- Total resident internal amenity provision increased at top floor 'deck' level and extended first floor level
- Alteration to the overall unit mix
- Storey heights reduced generally across scheme by 200mm per floor enabling a single additional storey to Tower B1 (internal floor to ceiling heights remain unchanged)
- Provision of plant at 15th storey level
- Internal core arrangement modified to accommodate an additional (third) lift and rubbish chutes

Building B2

- Changes to materials including window surrounds

Building B3

- Improved pedestrian entrance at Conington Road
- Reduction in plant floorspace

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STAGE OF PROPOSAL

There have been two pre-application meetings in relation to this site.

The Panel had discussed the proposals on several occasions when promoted by a different applicant and design team prior to the planning submission and subsequent grant of planning permission, LBL reference 'DC/17/101621'.

The proposals are brought before the Panel with a different owner and design team to discuss the design approach of the options which explore opportunities for accommodating an additional floor, changes to the composition of the fenestration and crown of the building and the changes to the external materials. It is noted that EPR Architects have been retained as "Design Guardian" as required by the S102 agreement.

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The Panel welcomed the opportunity to re-engage with the project and thanked the team for the presentation, before then inviting LBL planning officers' view.

LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANNING OFFICERS' VIEW

Officers are fully supportive of the principle of providing an additional floor level to provide space to accommodate a more sustainable energy strategy.

Officers raised concerns relating to the potential reduction in floor to ceiling heights. The Applicant has however confirmed a reduction is not required, instead offering an engineering solution to reduce slab depths in building B1 and that the floor to ceiling heights of 2500mm will be maintained throughout as a minimum.

The provision of increasing the quantum of residential amenity space is supported in principle, provided that the changes do not weaken the wider public benefits of the consented scheme. This includes functional amenity space, the amount of commercial floorspace (including affordable commercial floorspace) and the public viewing deck.

Officers are concerned that the proposed first floor gym within building B1 could diminish the attractiveness of the first floor terrace and the flexibility offered by a residents' lounge opening onto a terrace (as provided in the consented project). The single storey extension requires further refinement, impacting negatively on the appearance of the development.

The loss of the space resultant from the extended lobby to Building B1 is considered to diminish the quality of this entrance, removing an important area of transition.

The reduction in size to the public viewing deck is unacceptable.

The reduction in communal toilet provision is also a concern.

Height, Massing and Architectural Approach

Overall the proposals would result in a small reduction to the height of Tower B1. The tower previously employed proportions true to the Golden Section.

Officers have concerns that this change, in addition to an extra storey, would negatively affect the proportions of the building, the fenestration and the crown.

- Officers are concerned that the changes to the proposed materials could lessen the design quality of Tower B1 and building B2.
- Tower B1 – officers need assurance that the materials will have the same visual quality and durability as with the consented scheme.

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- Building B2 – officers need assurance that the proposed changes to the materials to the window surrounds are of good quality and will retain the sense of weight and texture.

Immediate Townscape

Detailed CGIs and further testing showing the tower within the context of locally consented and planned tall buildings must be undertaken.

Public Realm/ Landscaping

The overall landscape strategy and detailed design must be updated and enhanced to reflect the proposed changes. The enlarged external area adjacent B2 from Conington Road is welcomed.

POINTS OF CLARIFICATION

Following the presentation by the architect and after Panel enquiry, the applicant team stated that:

- The floor to floor heights been reduced without changing internal floor to ceiling. This is achieved by reducing the depth of the structural floor slabs
- Airborne sound is dealt with sufficiently by the density of the concrete. Impact sound is dealt with by the resilient floor finish and a layer of plaster board below the ceiling. Compliance with the Building Regulations in relation to sound can be achieved in this manner
- Buildings B2 and B3 materials include a Corium brick slip system
- The proposed aluminium panel systems will be unitised
- The material proposed for the horizontal banding) is expected to remain as GRC as consented

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

The Panel were appreciative of the quality of the team's presentation, which greatly aided the discussion and the Panel's assessment of the project.

The Panel's comments are set out below:

FORM, MASSING & LAYOUT

Building B1 (Tower)

The proposed overall height of Tower B1 has been reduced by 3215mm. Whilst ordinarily this would be a welcome move, its acceptability has to be balanced against the carefully derived proportions of both the tower and its constituent parts established by the original design and subsequent consent. The Panel were concerned that the reduction in floor to heights seems to diminish the design of the tower. Further illustration of the proposed revisions to the tower's architecture needed to be demonstrated by means of detailed renderings from street and more distant views so that the effect of the amendments, when they are further developed in the context of this commentary, can be more accurately evaluated. (see also section on Detail + Materials below)

Buildings B2 & B3

The reduction in floor to floor heights appear on these buildings to have been relatively successfully accommodated, aided by the retention of the original window and window surround proportions. The forms, save for some adjustment to the ground footprint of B3 are otherwise largely unchanged from the consented project.

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Building B1 (Tower)

Ground Floor Layout

The Panel supported the enlargement of the ground floor reception area, but commented that the post room could be better accommodated by being recessed deeper into the support/service zones rather than occupying such a prominent part of the ground level footprint.

The Panel commented that the repositioned staircase now has more prominence within the reception space and has improved the layout. The Panel welcome the additional lift to three which seems a more appropriate provision for the building.

The structural fin wall perpendicular to the main glazed north elevation, though reduced is still very obtrusive and alternative less obtrusive structural outcomes should be explored.

The Panel were concerned that the westward expansion of the reception area brought the external glazing and entrance line broadly flush with the main elevation denying any shelter of protection from downdraft, which would not be acceptable.

Building B1 (Tower)

Gym and Terrace 1st Floor

The Panel were clear that the whole 1st floor layout needs to be redesigned.

The communal terrace has been reduced substantially in area relative to the consented designs which the Panel does not support.

Furthermore, that whilst having health benefits, the gym is a niche function, cutting out a certain percentage of the residents having comfortable access onto the terrace.

The routes from the stair/lift core to the terrace are narrow and convoluted and not acceptable. The consented designs which offered a large communal terrace with easy access from the residents' communal spaces and the stair/lift core was a far more successful design solution.

Architecturally, the proposed single extension to accommodate the gym at the base of the tower is extremely poor and is not supported by the Panel. The Panel suggested that the gym should sit within the footprint of the tower, if needs be adding a floor or part floor within the building volume.

The affordable commercial space at 1st floor is poorly located with a difficult entry point. It should have direct access from the outside and would be far better located as before on the ground floor. Panel suggest that this be relocated.

Building B2

Ground floor

The Panel felt that the reduction in commercial space had produced a vast entrance lobby space and some rebalancing was needed. This may include a re-evaluation of the building line at ground level, and potentially adding back some commercial space.

1st floor

The addition of further residents' amenity room in lieu of the consented one bedroom flat is a positive. The Panel recommended that full height and full width glazing with access doors be added to form the external envelope between the residents' room and the terrace.

PUBLIC REALM AND LANDSCAPE

The proposed landscape design amendments to consented scheme are appropriate and welcomed, but need to be worked into the wider landscape.

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The Panel drew attention to need to ensure that the external environment will be safe, welcoming, robust, and establish successful urban planting. The team will need to demonstrate that lighting, wind/ downdraft mitigation have been successfully resolved (see also sections on Microclimate and Lighting below).

Public Realm And Landscape : Building B2

The Panel challenged the reduction in size of the triangular planted spaces to the first floor level communal terrace between buildings B2 & B3. Clarification is needed as to landscape design intent, plant species and detailed design of the planters, pathways and seating arrangements.

Further work is needed to clearly demonstrate the proper and successful segregation of the private/communal/public realms notably for the apartments at ground floor level. Sectional variation between inside and outside and defensible walled/segregated planted zones are the normal devices for resolving this issue.

Public Realm And Landscape : Building B3

The Panel supported the reduction to the building footprint at street level at its junction with Conington Road.

The Panel recommend that further work is undertaken to establish likely desire lines and to add pathways toward the building to accommodate the expected direction of pedestrian travel.

Further work is needed to clearly demonstrate the proper and successful segregation of the private/communal/public realms notably for the apartments at ground floor level. Sectional variation between inside and outside and defensible walled/segregated planted zones are the normal devices for resolving this issue.

DETAIL & MATERIAL

Building B1 (Tower)

The Panel emphasised the importance of a high quality cladding system being selected such that the joints, corners, returns, and soffits were all well executed and visible surface fixings and seals avoided.

The Panel challenged the design of the columns/column casings are questioned as shown on the ground and first floor plans as they appear non-aligned and unresolved. The consented scheme had clear ordered columns and established a precedent which should be adhered to.

The Panel agreed that GRC should be retained for the lower two storeys including the column cladding, for reasons of durability.

The Panel questioned the appropriateness of aluminium cladding, post-Grenfell but noted the team's assurance that the systems chosen will be fully code compliant.

The Panel noted that the applicant team were proposing to use "stone effect" aluminium cladding, commenting that this needs to be demonstrated as a suitable high quality material.

The Panel were clear that the window proportions as established by the consented designs should be retained.

The Panel considered the reduced depth of the horizontal spandrel bands, which clad the structural zone at 3 floor intervals. The Panel were concerned that reduction in depth, which was originally designed to match the equivalent panels of the tower's vertical frame, are a noticeable and detrimental change to the designs.

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The thickness of the banding of the original consented scheme contributes heavily to the layering of the building and the strength of reading from a distance. Panel consider the reduction in banding thickness is a step back from original consented scheme. The Panel recommended that the team explore a means of providing the original depth to the bands whilst retaining the window proportions, which may require some further adjustment to the floor to floor heights.

The Panel did not support the louvres spanning vertically across the structural floor zones and advised that the precedent of a floor spandrel in the same material as the building cladding to the main grid system as defined in the consented designs, be complied with. The Panel also raised issues in relation to the louvre panels and extracts running through these, questioning how they will be maintained and cleaned and freed from dust and pollution in use.

The Panel noted that with no apparent zones to take a range of floor finishes in the detailed section such as wood flooring or thicker finishes and an acoustic layer, the design appear to limit the adaptability of the building over the long term. Although the building is being constructed as build to rent its structural design and spatial zones should allow future adaptability such as units for sale. The design should allow sufficient tolerance to secure the long-term future of the tower in a range of tenures as it will not be possible to adapt the tower once constructed and it is not acceptable that adaptability should not be factored into the design at this stage.

Buildings B2 & B3

Comments under Materials + Detail : Securing Quality below, the approach to the cladding of these buildings seems reasonable in principle and eth Panel raise and particular issues of concern.

MICROCLIMATE

The environmental studies presented seemed minimal in scope for both daylight/sunlight and wind. The Panel questioned whether further mitigation measures will be needed to address the potential for unacceptable downdraught in the public realm to be caused by the buildings and suggested that further work wind analysis coupled with the architectural detail will be needed to fully resolve this issue.

DETAIL & MATERIAL : SECURING QUALITY

The applicant team should note the Panel's general guidance on material, quality and detail. At planning application stage the quality of the detailing needs to be demonstrated through large scale drawings 1:20 and 1:5 of key elements of the building and landscape, and should be accompanied by actual material samples which should be secured as part of any planning approval.

LIGHTING

Although not discussed in detail at this review, the applicant the team should note the Panel's general advice that the proposals need to be developed to consider the diurnal/nocturnal aspects of the public realm and should include high quality lighting design work integrated into the landscape and architectural strategy.

SUSTAINABILITY

Discussed only in outline at this review, Panel encouraged the highest levels of sustainability and noted the emerging intentions in the Design Team's statements to that effect. The design team should establish clearly to the satisfaction of the LPA, their intentions toward sustainability, carbon reduction and energy use targets for the development.

SUMMARY

The Panel continues to endorse the principle of the development and considers the proposed uses appropriate. The important aspect in respect of this stage of the project is for the Panel to be satisfied that the proposed amendments to the consented designs do not diminish their quality.

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Summary : Form, Massing & Layout

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The Panel were clear that the whole 1st floor layout needs to be completely redesigned as the layout amendments are not acceptable as set out in detail in this commentary.

Architecturally, the proposed single extension to accommodate the gym at the base of the tower is extremely poor and is not supported by the Panel. The Panel suggested that the gym should sit within the footprint of the tower, if needs be adding a floor or part floor within the building volume.

The affordable commercial space at 1st floor is poorly located with a difficult entry point. It should have direct access from the outside and would be far better located as before on the ground floor. Panel suggest that this be relocated.

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Summary : Public Realm & Landscape

The proposed landscape design amendments to consented scheme are appropriate and welcomed, but need to be developed in design terms and worked into the wider landscape.

Further work is needed on Buildings B2 and B3 to clearly demonstrate the proper and successful segregation of the private/communal/public realms notably for the apartments at ground floor level. Sectional variation between inside and outside and defensible walled/segregated planted zones are the normal devices for resolving this issue.

Summary : Detail & Material

The Panel emphasised the importance of a high quality cladding system being selected such that the joints, corners, returns, and soffits were all well executed and visible surface fixings and seals avoided.

The Panel considered the reduced depth of the horizontal spandrel bands, which clad the structural zone at 3 floor intervals. The Panel were concerned that reduction in depth, which was originally designed to match the equivalent panels of the tower's vertical frame, are a noticeable and detrimental change to the designs.

The thickness of the banding of the original consented scheme contributes heavily to the layering of the building and the strength of reading from a distance. Panel consider the reduction in banding thickness is a step back from original consented scheme. The Panel recommended that the team explore a means of providing the original depth to the bands whilst retaining the window proportions, which may require some further adjustment to the floor to floor heights.

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The Panel noted that with no apparent zones to take a range of floor finishes in the detailed section such as wood flooring or thicker finishes and an acoustic layer, the design appear to limit the adaptability of the building over the long term. Although the building is being constructed as build to rent its structural design and spatial zones should allow future adaptability such as units for sale. The design should allow sufficient tolerance to secure the long-term future of the tower in a range of tenures as it will not be possible to adapt the tower once constructed and it is not acceptable that adaptability should not be factored into the design at this stage.

The Panel challenged the design of the columns/column casings are questioned as shown on the ground and first floor plans as they appear non-aligned and unresolved. The consented scheme had clear ordered columns and established a precedent which should be adhered to.

The Panel agreed that GRC should be retained for the lower two storeys including the column cladding, for reasons of durability.

The Applicant team need to demonstrate that the proposed changes in materials do not produce a diminution in quality relative to the consented designs.

Summary : Microclimate

The environmental studies presented seemed minimal in scope for both daylight/sunlight and wind. Although not explored in detail at this review, the Panel questioned whether further mitigation measures will be needed to address the potential for unacceptable downdraught in the public realm to be caused by the height of the buildings and suggested that further wind analysis coupled with the architectural detail will be needed to fully resolve this issue.

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Overall the Panel was clear that further revisions, testing and design development is needed to convince that the proposed amendments do not diminish the quality of the consented designs, in particular in relation to Building B1 which is of most concern, and the grounding of Buildings B1 and B2.

This report constitutes the formal response of Lewisham Design Review Panel to the project as presented at review on 17th March 2021 and supersedes any earlier advice given by the Panel on this project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Williams', with a horizontal line above the 'i' and a dot above the 's'.

Keith R Williams FRIBA MRIBA FRSA: Chair LDRP