

Major Developments Panel (Special)

Minutes

26 July 2021

Present:

Chair: Councillor Graham Henson

Councillors: Marilyn Ashton Paul Osborn
Pamela Fitzpatrick Varsha Parmar
Stephen Greek David Perry

78. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance.

79. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the Declarations of Interests published in advance of the meeting on the Council's website were taken as read and no further interests were declared.

80. Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor David Perry as Vice-Chair of the Major Developments Panel for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

Resolved Items

81. Presentation on Plot S, Milton Road

The Panel received a presentation on the Plot S, Milton Road development from the architect - Sheppard Robson.

The architect outlined the context of the proposal, which sat on a prominent corner in close proximity to Harrow Central Mosque and Harrow Civic Centre, focusing on the layout, size, massing and emerging design of the site and showed images of the planned appearance and landscape proposals.

Plot S formed the first part of the emerging masterplan for Poets Corner and was expected to provide 100% affordable homes. Key elements of the proposal included an active frontage and retail space, use of traditional brickwork to complement the existing character of the surrounding buildings, optimised shared and private amenity space and a bike hub.

In the discussion which followed, Members asked questions which were responded to as follows:

- A Member commented on the size of the communal garden, which they felt was disproportionate in size compared to the number of people expected to occupy the building. Noting the proposals, a Member also commented on the safety aspect and expressed concern that if left open to the public it could draw in crowds and encourage anti-social behaviour. The developer responded, noting the following:
 - at 75m the shared garden was deemed reasonably large and would provide an attractive open space for the residents, in addition to already existing private spaces in the form of balconies.
 - the central amenity space would be gated but part of it was expected to be open to the public in order to provide access to the play area. It was noted that other properties in the area such as Gayton Road, with similar open spaces, had not seen any issues with anti-social behaviour.
 - maintenance would be retained and managed by Harrow Council.
- the height of the development, which ranged from 3 to 7 storeys, was Height set on the lower end imagine for Poets Corner and was in line with other tall buildings in the area.
- in response to a question about the size of the townhouse gardens, the developer explained that they were twice the size of the national described space standard and ranged between 20 to 24sqm for flats and 24-28sqm for townhouses.
- Plot S was located in a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) 4 and 5 area, which offered good access to public transport links. In line with the London Plan, it was envisioned as a car-free scheme and except for three disabled spaces there was no other parking built into the proposal. While concerns about potential overspill parking in the nearby area had been considered, the proposal was deemed acceptable and it was anticipated that future residents would not be eligible for a permit for the existing controlled parking arrangements.

- The brown roofs envisioned as part of the landscape proposals, would not be visible from a street level and would be hidden behind parapets, thereby minimising the risk of potential unsightly appearance.
- The development, which was compliant in terms of local housing needs, would comprise of 42 units (32 flats and 10 townhouses). This was in line with advice received from the Council's Housing Need Department and took into consideration the acute housing shortage in the area
- The development would be compliant with all highways and infrastructure requirements, within the required capacity.
- The proposal's financial evaluation had been made on the assumption that additional income from affordable housing grant would be agreed. The intention was to make best use of the available site, providing as many homes as possible without over-densifying the site.
- Units within the apartment block, except for two ground floor which were rented accessible units, were intended for shared ownership, whereas the townhouses would be let by the Council's Housing Team under London Affordable Rent.
- The pocket garden received two hours of sunlight to 50% of the area on 21st March which was line with guidance.

The Panel then moved on to comments on the proposals, focusing on the following key points:

- given the Council was both the client and the planning authority for the development of Plot S and given its level of control over it had a duty to ensure best use of the area.
- concern over the overall size of the development, given the uncertainty of the Council's future leadership and how it could affect the shape of the proposal particularly with regards to its height.
- despite being categorised as "affordable" housing, a Member expressed concerns about the viability of the scheme and noted that the shared ownership cost of the units offered was still unachievable for the majority of the local population, particularly as no parking was being provided. She further drew attention to the fact that PTAL ratings were only a measure of public transport services and did not reveal their usefulness/appropriateness.
- the transition from existing three storey properties on Station Road to seven storeys on the eastern side of the development was seen as a concern as it was disproportionate to the height of the surrounding properties.

- despite questioning the attractiveness of having a small amenity space (pocket garden) with a gate, the Panel was impressed by how much open space had been kept instead of building on it
- further consideration on limited parking arrangements was needed.

In conclusion, the Chair noted that the proposals achieved a balance between affordable housing and what can be delivered in practice within the space available. He added that the next step of the process would include a public consultation, followed by a planning application.

Having thanked the representatives for their attendance and detailed presentation, the Panel

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 7.25 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Graham Henson
Chair