

APPLICATION REF 14/505440/FULL - SPIRIT OF SITTINGBOURNE

Subject: SOS Statements & Clarifications to Points of Email (26 February)

Jim,

Further to our lengthy conversation on Friday, the consultants have been re-consulted, so please see the responses below to the points raised in the email of 26th Feb.

Taking each site in turn:

Site 1 –

1. The end (and rear) elevations of the southern block still lacks architectural interest (particularly facing London Road) and I am disappointed that the opportunity has not been taken to achieve an end feature to articulate such a long and repetitive building form.
Aspects relating to the end elevation were discussed at the meeting of 19th January, and changes were then made to the positioning of the fenestration on the end elevation to improve the arrangement, not just for the present, but in the likelihood that the adjoining garage on the corner were to be re-developed. And therefore it was considered that to add additional architectural detail to this elevation would be lost in the long term. As for the rear elevation, the rationale applied was to concentrate the detail and cost principally to the treatment to the front elevation, given it would be visible to a far greater public and visiting audience.
2. Loss of the green space to the north to car parking is regrettable. The pedestrian route through to Frederick Street needs to be designed to create an attractive and secure pedestrian experience, including the provision of a wall / railings along the southern side of the public path so that car parking behind the building is clearly and securely differentiated from the public area along the path. Regarding the separate car parking area to the north of the path, I consider that some form of boundary is required between it and the path – some form of railing would be appropriate. I also think that it could be improved by moving the two spaces next to the path and adding a tree.
Since the date of this email, the detailed treatment is shown in the Landscaping Plan and report. Additional differentiating detail treatment with the pathway can be addressed further with the landscape consultants to suitably address this further to Committee, or be conditioned.
3. Please can you confirm that 30-metre separation marked on 14.35.110 P3 will actually be provided – it doesn't scale off accurately.
(Jim, Awaiting separate confirmation as discussed at 15.35pm)
4. I note that the northern block rear elevation (as shown on _110 P3) has been amended slightly in an attempt to improve the relationship with the houses behind. This addresses my concern about over-looking, but does not deal with the potential impact in terms of over-shadowing and the building generally having an oppressive effect on the dwellings behind. As set out in my letter of 12th January, this part of the scheme needs to be re-designed in a more substantial way. Obviously the onus is on you to design a solution to this problem, but I consider that if the northern-most four metres were removed from the building, the problem may well be satisfactorily addressed.
The daylight, sunlight and overlooking assessments undertaken for this scheme have been shown to be compliant with all the relevant test criteria by which developments are to be judged. We are however, happy to progress further negotiations with our

architects and the Council to look at a different options under agreeable determining criteria.

Site 2 -

5. It is helpful to see the end elevations, it is unfortunate that they are uninspiring. The east elevation will be particularly prominent and just looks drab. I consider therefore that both end elevations require further amendment in order to achieve a satisfactory architectural solution. **The architectural design rationale to the buildings on Sites 1, 2 & 3, was based on numerous contemporary design solutions that have been adopted in many apartment scheme in various London boroughs. And whilst architectural solutions are considered a matter of differing taste, it is considered that the approach to the form and detail applied to this building is appropriate.**

Site 3 -

6. We previously discussed the site boundary for Site 3 and the drawing you had submitted informally showing three indents to the boundary with Milton Road. At that time, there was agreement that it would not be workable to have the site boundary amended in this way – to reflect land ownership – because it would cause practical problems in terms of the actual development that could be delivered. Despite this, the submitted drawing -14.35.130 P2 – shows the indented site boundary. Please can you arrange for an amended ground floor plan correcting this (but obviously retaining the other amendments) to be submitted. **I can clarify that a new boundary arrangement will be drawn up and submitted as per the original drawings and the original parking layout.**
7. At the meeting we discussed the need for more tree planting on the green area at the front of site, I suggest that two semi-mature trees to complement the existing tree in that area should be specified on the new version of _130. **Since the date of this email, the Landscaping Plan submitted shows the provision of three additional trees on the green area. Yet it is noted that the final layout plan for Site 3 does not show this, and this will be regularised accordingly and submitted to resolve the anomaly shown.**
8. We also discussed the over-looking situation between the proposal and the residential accommodation above the Chinese restaurant, and I note that the some of the windows as shown on _131 P2 have been amended on the first and second floors, but this has not been done comprehensively, and on the fourth floor no amendments have been made. As such, there is likely to be significant and unacceptable over-looking. Further amendment is therefore required. I consider that on the first and second floors, the layout and window positions need to be changed so that the doors on to the corner balcony are re-positioned on to the elevation facing west. The bedroom window to this unit also needs to be re-designed so that it angled as the two adjacent ones area. This also applies to the living room window immediately to the east. On the fourth floor, the first four windows to habitable rooms (three bedrooms and a living room) from the western end all need to angled. There is the option of removing the first bedroom window altogether and enlarging the window on the west elevation that would serve this room. **We are happy to progress further negotiations with our architects and the council to re-address the arrangements for the floors above the second storey level, to review the perceived overlooking that may be deemed applicable.**
9. We also discussed the need for a proposed street-scene from Milton Road, showing not only the proposed building but the existing ones to east and west and the two existing trees that are now to be retained.

We are happy to address this as per the response to point 6.

Site 4 –

10. Details of the design of the public domain are still very sketchy. Given the importance of the square, of Station Street and the links to the High Street this is still a major omission. Neither is there any detail of the sculptural feature designed to enclose the square. I appreciate that further information is about to be provided and hopefully it will address this to some extent. I am particularly concerned about how the Station Street area behind the cinema will be finished off – in terms of surfacing, and other hard / soft landscaping. It is important that this area does not become inhospitable. Instead, it needs to function as a pleasant space that people do not avoid passing through.

Since the date of this email, the detail Landscaping Plan submitted addresses the hard and soft landscaping arrangements and specification. A commentary has also already been submitted that indicates intentions to how the remaining area outside of the application site behind the cinema may well be addressed into the future, which will depend upon the availability of funding and parties involved.

11. The Harris Partnership drawings are not the most informative. It is even difficult to tell windows apart from walls on the plans.

Since the date of this email, the drawings have been amended to reflect other comments, and also include additional hatching to illustrate the fenestration areas.

12. There are still no larger scale drawings or specification detailing the quality of materials or the finesse of the architectural detailing.

Since the date of this email, large scale drawings have been provided as part of the latest issue of drawing information.

Site 5 -

11. The roofed link to the Forum is a distinct improvement. The building as a whole is still rather ugly and I am disappointed that the more artistic and innovative cladding system shown in earlier sketches appears to have been dropped. Please can the drawings be amended to revert to this elevational treatment.

The cladding proposal hasn't changed throughout the design process, however we have looked at the openings in the elevation. To respond to the comment above, we have included additional random openings in the façade to match the original design proposal. These include a mesh clad opening which will allow light to penetrate through while maintaining accordance with the Park Mark requirement for full height screen as required.

12. I note that on 13003C-11- A, the two mature trees adjacent the MSC are shown to be retained. Has this position been agreed with your arboricultural adviser? I am concerned that the tree closest to the MSC is unlikely to prosper given the proximity to the MSC and the hard-standing proposed over its root ball. I think it may be more prudent to accept its removal at this stage, rather than potentially having to remove it later. I suggest the drawings are amended to show it to be removed.

The two large trees have been removed from the landscaping proposal. This was an anomaly in the final design plan, and an amendment will be submitted to regularise this aspect.

13. The changes to the Forum service yard and to the bus stop / lay-over area now proposed needs to be justified.

I can confirm that whilst there is the discrepancy between the Landscape Plan and the Harris Partnership layout design as this relates to the service yard to The Forum, the Harris layout should be taken as the basis of the planning application. This anomaly to the options devised will be regularised accordingly and submitted to formally resolve the discrepancy.

14. It is unfortunate that the position of the building on the pavement edge and that changes that are proposed along the rear of the Forum (much of the green-space previously proposed in this area has been removed in the latest drawing) together result in a rather stark impression with very limited soft landscaping to soften the appearance of this part of the development. I consider that the situation could be improved significantly if additional street-tree planting is specified on the pavements / verges to the north-west of the MSCP (from east end of Kwik-Fit eastwards) and along St Michael's Road. If done, with conviction and using semi-mature trees as specified in the SPD Masterplan, this could create a significant and very positive improvement to the appearance of what is currently an extremely uninspiring street-scene. At the same time, it would off-set the potentially very harsh appearance of the MSC. I appreciate that there may be logistical challenges associated with this tree planting, but our concerns about the design / appearance of the MSC remain substantial and I think this significant step is needed to arrive at an unacceptable overall design outcome.
- The proximity of the scheme to the footpath edge is an outcome of the site constraints and the requirement for a car park on this site. The car park is designed to minimum spatial requirements to and additional highway works are proposed along St Michaels Road to maintain the footpath. Regarding tree planting to the footpath, it is not feasible given the amount of space to include tree planting and the associated underground cell and grill structure. There is insufficient space for adequate circulation and the tree, and the survival of the tree species in this environment would be low.**

Site 6 –

15. My main concern on this site was the Milton Road Elevation which has been improved but still has the appearance of a thinly veiled retail box. If good tree planting can be retained or planted that will soften the effect. Returning the glazing and the canopy around the corner will also help, but more so if the columns which support it were also returned around the Milton Rd elevation. The brick corner totem sign fall short of the architectural statement which is called for on this prominent corner. Car park barriers need to be designed with care (after the motorway crash barriers experience at Morrisons).

We proposed an illustration for discussion purposes looking at new materials and the relationship of the building to Milton Road. We have also proposed a revised canopy detail and signage element along Milton Road which will add to the layering of the architecture on this elevation. We have shown retained trees where feasible along the embankment and propose additional planting to soften the edges of the building and the new pedestrian access. Car park barriers within the site are not included and timber knee rails are used along the perimeters.

16. Landscape design still looks weak; an afterthought rather than integrally designed, particularly to Milton Road where a large amount of the existing planting is to be removed. The replacement tree planting shown on 13003A_102 D should be specified to make it clear that the trees will be semi-mature and to give an idea of possible species (so that I can be confident that they will be substantial enough to have the necessary visual impact).
- We are happy to address this as per the related response to point 6.**

17. There are still no proposals to enhance pedestrian links to the High Street.

A strategy proposal for a link across the rail has been provided. This highlights the spatial constraints in achieving this, and illustrates the potential requirements for a new rail gated access which needs to be determined with the rail operator.

17. Please can you confirm the number of car parking spaces proposed. I thought you advised previously that it would be 105, not 109 as stated on 13003A_102 D. If the plan is incorrect, please can you provide a corrected one, and printed at A0 (rather than A2 as provided) so that I can scale from it.
Since the date of this email, a final plan has been provided, and the car parking is needed confirmed as 109 spaces (this excludes the count for staff parking in the delivery compound to the rear). The original count missed a couple of spaces. So the total parking for this area will indeed be 4 more than set out on the overall parking table that covers all sites (that was dated 4th March).
18. Thank you for adding notes to 13003A_102 D to refer to retaining some of the existing perimeter planting. Please can the note be worded to make it clear that the planting in those areas will be retained unless there is a compelling reason for trees to be removed (ie they are dead or dying).
Since the date of this email, this is shown on drawing.

Other Issues

19, 20 and 21. As discussed previously, please can you provide clarification of the 'Car Parking in front of Station' that is to be lost, **(since the date of this email, the detail of the spaces lost and those being re-provided in the reconfiguration have been set out in the overall parking table dated 4th March)** the amended Sustainability / Energy reports, and the 'Plan showing land ownership'. **(the plan showing land ownership has already been provided, yet we are mindful that a full list of the third party owners on Site 3 has yet to be finalised, the delay of which has been caused by one building that was recently sold at auction, such that the exact owner details have not yet come through from Land Registry. This will be submitted to the Council upon immediate receipt it).**

22. I would also be grateful for clarification of the amount of cycle parking that is proposed, both the total and the provision per site

This has already been provided in a table dated 4th March, that outlined parking arrangements across all sites.

Kind regards

Simon

Simon Reynolds
Quinn Estates Ltd