



HERTFORDSHIRE DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MEMBERS

Beesons Yards Design Review 08/02/13:

Chair: Barry Shaw, Essex Design Initiative
Emmet O'Sullivan, Architecture and Urbanism Studio
Yasmin Shariff, Dennis Sharp Architects / EACT
Nicolas Tye, Nicolas Tye Architects
Francesa Weal, Weal Architects

David Kirby
Molewood End
Molewood Road
Hertford
SG14 3LT

18 March 2013

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear David,

Hertfordshire Design Review Panel: Beesons Yard, Hertford

Introduction

The Hertfordshire Design Review Panel met on 08/02/13 to review proposals for a residential development consisting of 10 flats with garages on the site of a former builder's yard located at the eastern edge of the retail centre of Hertford. The site is within a conservation area and some 200 metres from Hertford East Railway station. Planning Permission for residential development was granted on the appeal site in 2008, but a detailed application for residential development was turned down by East Herts District Council in 2011 on grounds of character and appearance. The decision was supported at appeal.

Site Visit and Presentation

The panel visited the site in the company of the developer Brian Mahoney and his architect David Kirby. Following the visit the Panel received a presentation from the architect and the East Herts District Council conservation officer.

Overview of the site

The site occupies a corner site adjacent to a row of small shops and backs on to the Malthouse Rest Home. Opposite the site is a three storey late 20th century residential development on the site of a former hospital and adjacent to housing on the site of the former Bluecoat School. Opposite again, on the corner of Railway Street and South Street is the Earl Haig public house.

Overview of the scheme

The scheme consists of two one bedroom flats and eight two bedroom flats located above 10 car parking spaces. The buildings are arranged in two blocks around a central court. The block at the front of the site, facing Railway Street, consists of a four storey central unit with a two storey wing to the east and three storey wing to the west. The rear unit is two storeys overall and consists of flats over garages.

In urban design terms the scheme creates a street frontage to Railway Street, maintain the continuous frontage elsewhere in this part of town. There is a variety of heights within the scheme. Roofs are pitched and the roofline varied. The materials are predominantly brick with some render.

Panel observations and recommendations

Overview

The Panel thanked the architect and the developer for a comprehensive site visit and presentation. They also complemented the architect on the thoroughness of the drawings that helped to bring the different angles and qualities of the scheme to life. Several positive aspects of the design were noted, including the way the design sought to frame the view of the maltings building and the way the scheme mastered the corner site.

Spatial organisation, height and massing

The Panel considered the layout plan responded well to the site and the conservation area. The Panel thought the use of a landscaped central courtyard appropriate. They thought that the architect's approach to producing a variety of heights of building elements on the site was a reasonable response to the varied mixed use urban context of that part of Hertford. The Panel considered that the scale of the development was not an issue, nor were they concerned by the height of the central tower, which was not considered out of place on such a corner with a wide road in front and tall three storey residential buildings opposite, together with the height and mass of the existing malthouse building behind. They considered that the ground floor might even be raised above existing ground level to give a degree of privacy to the ground floor bedrooms which directly overlooked the public pavement.

Elevational treatment

The Panel thought the general approach to the elevations was appropriate to the area and that the scheme would not be out of place with its neighbours. The Panel thought the appearance of the penthouse might be improved by expressing its own roof rather than fitting it within a roof to the block as a whole. They were concerned that the Priory Street elevation presented itself as a load bearing traditional façade but the windows appeared not to fit within the bay structure and they encouraged the architect to avoid too many unresolved issues of a stylistic nature.

Choice of materials

The Panel fully supported the developer's intention to use high quality traditional materials in keeping with the historic centre of Hertford.

Landscape design

The Panel thought the hard landscaping scheme was appropriate for the site and the scheme.

Conclusions

The Panel thought that the scheme was in keeping with the area and handled in a sensitive way. Overall the architect should be encouraged to deal confidently and consistently with the detail. The general approach should be accepted for what it was.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Shaw'.

Barry Shaw, Chair
on behalf of the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel

cc. Tim Hagyard, Sarah Leete Jones & Nicola Beyer, East Herts District Council
Rachael Donovan, Design and Built Environment Manager, Hertfordshire County Council