

From: Paul Ho

Sent: 12 March 2023 21:38

To: David Fowler; Planning

Subject: Planning reference 2022/0528/P - Submission of comments for O2 Centre Masterplan

Dear Mr Fowler,

I am submitting my comments for the O2 Centre Masterplan proposals (2022/0528/P).

In general I am in agreement with most of the decisions made with the masterplan and appreciate the thought and planning that has contributed to the masterplan - i.e. the creation of affordable housing, outdoor green spaces, biodiversity and a "town square". I am also in agreement with the replacement of the O2 Centre as its maintenance seems to be in decline and a little unsustainable in general.

However, the main visual concern (as the consultation website is primarily visual) that came to my attention, was the design of the apartments - the squarely cut edges are very different to the design of the surrounding area on either side of the railways (which have more curved roads).

The apartments visually also do not look particularly appealing with the off-white facade which are repetitive in a very uninteresting way (I do not agree with the inspiration taken from 199 Finchley Road). In one of the renders, with the three apartments encasing the green central square felt very claustrophobic, it neither feels like an exclusive space for relaxation for residents nor an inviting open public space. Some of the apartments reminded me of the Silver works development in Colindale - echoey, cramped and compact opposite facing apartment blocks.

I am also unsure how much inspiration should be taken from St. Pancras Square in Kings Cross for the new town square as the area is extremely popular in hot weather, but a little lifeless at some other times (possibly due to the lack of foot traffic from office blocks which are not used at weekends).

I think some ideas from the restoration of the Brunswick centre in Bloomsbury and the design of the Ilona Rose House could be interesting. I would also encourage you to watch this video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfonhIM6I7w&ab_channel=TheAesthetic

[City](#) which details the impact of social change initiated by good urban planning in Le Plessis-Robinson.

Another concern I have is noise pollution and vibrations from the railway (which I can see has been partially addressed by foliage), as well it's visual appeal - which should either be accentuated or concealed. I think the proposal of a metal gate is a strange hybrid which could promote anti-social behaviour. It may be worth taking inspiration from other similar developments where there is close proximity of rail infrastructure.

It would also be interesting to see renders of the connecting avenue to West Hampstead which have not been provided on the O2 Consultation website. It is unclear how the avenue (as well as the development as a whole) will be "well lit and and safe".

In terms of positive feedback, I am pleased with the idea of small ground floor shops (as in the Paddington Basin) being integrated with the apartment blocks as it creates a separation of private space in the levels above, and it adds interest to the green spaces and whilst hopefully attracting the surrounding community to better integrate with residents. I support the addition of a community centre as well as public areas for activity such as outdoor courts. I also appreciate the design of the apartments that would be facing Finchley Road, as it matches the look of the surrounding buildings well.

I understand that most of the plans seem to have been finalised in addition to budget restrictions, and I would appreciate it if you would take my feedback into consideration or pass it on to any relevant contacts or stakeholders.

Kind regards,
Paul

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