

Application for a Variation to Condition 2 - an application for a Minor Amendment to the existing permission.

Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum (KTNF) makes the following comments to the changes under this application:

1 VARIATIONS TO THE GROUND FLOOR

This results partly from a reduction in the basement area. The applicant has also retained some of the existing ground levels, which results in some steps and ramps being required within the entrance area. The following uses are now at ground rather than basement:

- bicycle storage, towards the back (ie. to the west of the site). This is probably a good thing as it is easier to access.
- a small kitchen, towards the back.

However, there are other changes to the entrance space and ground floor circulation that are more a modification of the original design intent. The main concern is that the route between Spring Place to Grafton Road has been diluted, so that instead of there being a direct connection between the two entrances, it is split so that the Grafton Road entrance leads into a truncated corridor that opens onto office space. The Spring Place entrance opens onto the cafe and the office space, but does not link directly into the Grafton Road corridor. The connection between Grafton Road and Spring Place, which is something that the planners had originally pushed to be a public route, is therefore further downplayed and concealed. This is a shame as this link was the one of the key attractions of the previous scheme.

We also note that in the original scheme the circulation space included one of the arches, whereas now the previously open archway is taken up by the cafe area. The route to the event space is through the cafe, rather than through the clear arch. We also note that the event space is much smaller and reads as an adjunct to the cafe, rather than being a separately accessible space. Again this is a shame as the developer highlighted this as a particular attraction when promoting the original scheme to KTNF and other local groups and residents.

2 VARIATIONS TO THE EXTERNAL ELEVATION

The west elevation facing the railway has been changed from metal cladding to brick, due to Network Rail's concerns about light reflectance and conductivity in relation to the overhead electric line. This does affect the overall design of the building, as now it has two completely different material treatments for what are the same architectural elements, ie. the 'saw-toothed' elevations. This treats the elevations as 'wallpaper' rather than being an essential part of the building's design and identity, and reduces the integrity of the design overall.

In our view, it would be preferable for the east elevation to be brick also, or at least better related to its brick counterpart on the west side, especially as the building also reads as brick

from the south. Having the building appearing to be brick from one side and metal from the other makes the reading of the building more difficult, particularly given the rather chaotic context. In short, there are too many different materials without sufficient visual hierarchy, and a simplification of the design would be preferable.

The fenestration has changed quite a lot. The Design and Access statement explains that the screening of the windows (previously in the form of perforated metal and brick screens) has been omitted in order to 'help improve the internal daylighting and build ability', which are laudable reasons. The location and size of the windows are also varied, although this appears to be more an adjustment of the design.

3 INCREASED AREA OF PLANT AT ROOF LEVEL

The size of the area for roof mounted plant has been increased. The location of the plant has moved. It is open to the atmosphere, but shielded visually by angled metal fins. The larger area also reduces the area of green roof provided by the scheme. We would want to ensure that the inevitable noise from the plant is reduced so as not to be a nuisance to residential neighbours in next door buildings by suitable acoustic screening or other suitable measures.

In summary, the change in elevational treatment and the loss of the link between Grafton Road and Spring Place are the most significant issues and our comments in relation to these are set out above.