

London Borough of Camden Design Review Panel

Report of Chair's Review Meeting: Brill Place Tower

Friday 8 November 2019
5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AC

Panel

Catherine Burd (chair)
Matthew Lloyd

Attendees

Kevin Fisher	London Borough of Camden
David Fowler	London Borough of Camden
Victoria Hinton	London Borough of Camden
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Rose Todd	London Borough of Camden
Kyriakou Ageridou	Frame Projects
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects

Apologies

Richard Wilson	London Borough of Camden
Bethany Cullen	London Borough of Camden

Confidentiality

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As a public organisation Camden Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

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1. Project name and site address

Brill Place Tower, Brill Place, Kings Cross, London NW1 1EL

2. Presenting team

Lance Routh	Stiff + Trevillion Architects
Mike Stiff	Stiff + Trevillion Architects
Mark Tizzard	LBS Properties
Nick Crawford	LBS Properties
Hugh Griffiths	LBS Properties
Oliver Jefferson	Turley

3. Planning authority's views

In October 2016, permission was granted for Camden Council's own development to re-provide a school in Somers Town, and to construct community facilities and housing. The application featured seven plots: the private housing in the tower in Plot 7 is intended to fund the rest of the development. Camden has been engaged in pre-application discussion with the buyer of the tower for a Section 73 minor material amendment application. These proposals were previously reviewed by the Design Panel in September 2019.

Officers asked for the panel to consider whether the comments it made at the previous review have been successfully addressed. In particular, it wants to ensure the facade design for the tower maintains the relationship with the wider public realm expressed in the consented scheme, and that the original design intention is reflected in the revised scheme.



4. Design Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel very much welcomes the way in which the designs for Brill Place Tower have evolved, promising high quality architecture. It feels the arrangement of windows into a more regular grid in combination with the offset louvre panels, the introduction of Juliet balconies, and the choice and detailing of materials are all positive aspects of the developed design. The panel offered some comments on potential refinements at a detailed level. It suggests that the balconies could be extended higher up the building to help unify the lower and upper sections of the tower. The coping strip along the roofline of the north and south elevations could be darkened to make it less prominent. The panel likes the timber-like, non-reflective appearance of the cladding panels and their varied joint widths. The material qualities of the underside of balconies will make an important contribution to views of the building from beneath, and the detail at the base of the stair tower also requires further thought. The panel encourage production of full size sample mock-ups to test the colour and texture, scale and detail of all the elements, and to ensure these are implemented as envisaged. This is particularly important given the scale and visibility of the project. The delivery of such a bespoke façade design will require extra care throughout detail and construction to ensure the design vision is not undermined. The panel notes that its recommendations relate to the quality of the designs presented, and should not be taken as a comment on their suitability for submission through a Section 73 application. These comments are expanded below.

Balconies

- The top and bottom sections of the tower appear, at the moment, to be separate elements. The panel suggests that the balconies could be extended two or more floors further upwards to create a smoother transition.
- A subtle colour could be used for the planters behind balcony railings on the east and west elevations, to add an extra level of interest and detail.
- The undersides of balconies will be very prominent elements in the view of the building from below. The panel suggests these would benefit from a greater level of detailing and texture, for example through the use of perforated profile.

Window design

- The panel felt that the design of the narrower windows in the northern and southern elevations might potentially be simplified by removing the small, dark horizontal panels that sit above them.
- The steel channel above the corner windows could potentially be extended further across the façade. This, and the above comment, might be determined by testing at scale.

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Materials

- The two 'board' widths proposed for the dark PPC panels are successful and help break up the elevation. Full size mock ups will help to ensure that the board width appears as intended: the narrower width of 150mm might appear too narrow given the overall scale of the building.
- The panel thinks that the dark PPC coated material proposed for the panels will work well, with its appearance of charred timber. It is important that the surface absorbs light and is not reflective. Adding extra texture to roughen the surface could help to achieve this.
- The panel feels that the coping strip used to cap the roofline, visible in the north and south elevations, detracts from the quality of the elevation. The panel would encourage the team to explore alternative details, for example capping the PPC panels with a coping strip in the same colour.
- The panel suggests that the reflective steel panel next to the main door at ground floor level, visible in the east elevation, could be more subtle. Drawing the panel up from the ground to reveal concrete at the base, and creating a shadow gap, could also add definition.

Design delivery

- The delicate, bespoke nature of the façade design means that extra care will be needed to ensure it is delivered as designed. The quality of the building depends on ensuring design quality is maintained throughout the construction process.

Next Steps

The panel is confident that the design team are well placed to develop the detail design, and that any further issues can be resolved by Camden Council in discussion with the applicant.

