

29th July 2020

Dear Kristina,

London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, NW1 9XB

Application Reference: 2020/1481/P

Proposal: Redevelopment of site to provide new and reconfigured community centre and ancillary residential accommodation (Class D1/ D2) involving alterations to retained buildings at No's. 50, 51 and 52 Camden Square including replacement of two storey 'link' building; demolition of Murray Street and Murray Mews buildings and replacement with part-three / part-four storey building (plus basement level) with second and third floor terraces and new entrance; associated landscaping and cycle parking.

In response to comments raised within the Camden Square Conservation Area Advisory Committee's letter dated 26th April 2020, we have outlined additional notes to address any concerns in relation to the design of the redevelopment project.

Note comments raised concerning building management will be covered in the revised EMP prepared by the LIC. A supplementary letter will be submitted by Rolfe Judd Planning that will cover comments received generally.

Massing & Scale

The massing proposed has been carefully assessed in terms of its impact on the townscape. Although the heights of the new building are larger than the existing, the buildings proposed align with the existing language of Murray St to the south – conforming to the 3-storey solid brick wall with a setback 4th storey. Having analysed the resultant massing in respect to daylighting guidance within the BRE, we have set back the 4th storey by a considerable amount to ensure that the impact on the surrounding buildings is as limited as possible. The findings of this analysis are presented within EB7's report appended to this planning application.

The articulation of the massing has been broken down by stepping & recessing the façade lines in response to the historic white Villa's. The resultant building shape has been further articulated by varying the proposed brick colour & texture to add richness to the material palette. This approach was reviewed with Camden during the Pre-App process, with additional review by the Design Review Panel during the design process which has resulted in the final proposal.

DRP notes on architectural approach:

'The panel is impressed by the extent to which the designs have progressed since the previous review, and considers the revised proposals to be appropriate for the site and its context'.

Within the CSCAAC letter, item 3.2 highlighted that an expression of the junction between new & old would be welcome. We have reviewed this in detail and have amended the design to now include a recessed re-entrant detail within the brickwork to express the junction between the Villa's & new building.

Additional comments were raised within the CSCAAC letter noting that the design is too monolithic in appearance. We have considered these comments in detail; however, the team feel that the success of the design is in large down to the calm & confident approach to the

façade articulation. The building fully acknowledges its position within the Conservation Area by its approach to townscape, material & detail and adopts the details of splayed reveals, sills & lintels evident within the finer Victorian buildings in the area to further embellish the form.

The placement of windows and their scale was judged on the overall composition along Murray Street & Mews so that views in & out are managed to ensure overlooking on neighbouring buildings is reduced. This concept aligns with the required quality of light within the spaces to ensure that the new London Irish Centre maintains its sense of a home from home for the building users & local residents alike. The use of brick refines the massing to the scale of the hand, showing a legible construction that sits within the mainly brick context of Camden Square.

Further information on the design concepts and façade design are contained within Chapters 7 & 8 of the Design & Access Statement appended to this planning application.

Design Review Panel

The CSCAAC letter refers to the Design Review Panel and their initial comments. We would like to clarify these concerns were expressed in November 2019 at an early stage of the design process. These concerns were noted and subsequently we worked collaboratively with Camden and the members of the DRP to significantly develop the design thereafter. The DRP in their final report, dated 13th March 2020, were supportive of the design that was ultimately submitted for approval, with positive comments relating to the building organisation, massing, materiality, and façade articulation.

Brick tone & finish

Within the CSCAAC letter, item 5.1/2 queries the darker brick tone & the suitability of the white brick in relation to discolouration. The darker earth toned brick will be conditioned so that the team can explore the appropriate material to best suit the surrounding context. This will be reviewed and signed off by Camden Council during the construction process through mock-ups of the façade at a scale of 1:1.

Having reviewed the CSCAAC's notes regarding the white brick, we have identified locations where the white brick would be glazed to ensure that it is robust and fit for purpose. We note that this revision could further embellish the facades of the building, whilst ensuring the building stays always clean. A detailed maintenance strategy will be developed in the post-planning stages of the project to ensure the building maintains its beautiful appearance during its lifetime.

The detail of this will be conditioned and reviewed during the construction process through mock-ups.

New entrance

Within the CSCAAC letter, item 4.2.2 & 10.1 queries the location & height of the entrance. The team have considered the CSCAAC's comments in regards the entrance location, however we feel that the relocated entrance resolves many of the issues within the existing complex of buildings – fundamentally resolving the severe issues surrounding accessibility. The layouts have been tested through numerous iterations, with the resultant organisational diagram reviewed by experts from the Museum of London & Kings Place cultural centre. Additionally, the relocated entrance will greatly reduce the ambient noise from LIC visitors to the neighbouring properties on Camden Square & Murray Street as there will be no external garden space to congregate in after larger community events, which is present in the existing entrance on Camden Square. Having met residents from Camden Square early in the design

process this aspect was highlighted as a key concern, which the internal layouts will now resolve in full.

The new entrance has been discussed in detail through Pre-App & Design Review Panel and has been accepted as the only logical location for the primary entrance for a renowned community & cultural hub.

The clients aspire to create a building that is welcoming & non-threatening for their most vulnerable clientele, therefore we have proposed a single storey recessed entrance that matches the heights of the surrounding Victorian entrances which are typically articulated in contracting materials such as plaster, timber & metalwork.

This new entrance is 17m wide to provide a generous & welcoming threshold to the new community centre.

Murray Mews elevation

Within the CSCAAC letter, item 4.1 comments on the Murray Mews elevation. To add further information on the resultant design, the design team undertook detailed analysis of the buildings along Murray Mews and have taken inspiration from their boldness of character and ingenuity. Exemplar modern buildings by Norman Foster & Richard Rogers 'Team 4', as well as Tom Kay's home & studio identified bold volumetric works of architecture that respond to their contexts through contemporary thinking.

It was in this spirit that the new London Irish Centre was envisaged, with the aim of designing strong, calm & thoughtfully composed elevations. Although the existing dated façade & roof of the McNamara Hall will be demolished, the lines of existing structure will be maintained to ensure no additional impact is placed on the tunnel below that leads into St. Pancras Station. These structural bays define the available openings within the McNamara Hall to provide greater views out to Kings Cross and beyond.

Due to the programmatic nature of the McNamara Hall, glazing has been carefully considered to ensure it is acoustically treated to ensure there is no disturbance to neighbours.

Additional details on the design of the part of the scheme can be found within Max Fordham's acoustic report appended to this planning application.

Therapy Gardens to the front of the Villas

Within the CSCAAC letter, item 11 rightly notes the harmful affect the early 21st century intervention had on Camden Square. As noted, the proposals look to remove this in full and replace it with a recessed perforate curvilinear brick infill to provide a back of house entrance to the buildings. This will be built as drawn to ensure a high-quality addition here.

Comments were raised about the detailing of the new enclosed garden wall to the front of the Villa's and the lack of detail drawn. To address this, we have provided a more detailed response to demonstrate the intention for this part of the building. As such, the revised design adopts the language of garden walls around the square with crisp white render & coping

pieces. The walls have been lowered so that the extensive landscape of the new Therapy Gardens is visible, adding to the green character of Camden Square.

The detailed design of the landscaping will be conditioned to be developed by a landscape architect post-planning. Details of the revised garden will be resubmitted as an amendment ahead of the committee hearing in September.

The area surrounding the new back of house entrance in front of No.50 will house the enhanced cycle parking area. Details of the stepped arrangement & hard/soft landscaping will be developed further post-planning once surveys are carried out to determine the root structure of the protected Tree in this location. Once the root levels have been identified there may be an opportunity to omit some of the steps here and maximise the opportunities for even more planting.

Internal Light-well

Within the CSCAAC letter, item 12.1 refers to the internal lightwell within the ground & first floor plans. To clarify this item, it is intended as a non-accessible sunken lightwell that brings light into this currently blacked out part of the plan. Openable shutters will allow fresh air to circulate into the 1 on 1 counselling/advice rooms. Furthermore, the landscape design will be a focal point for staff as they circulate around the building, enhancing the feeling of wellbeing in the centre.

Opportunities to increase the size of this will be reviewed post-planning in the detailed design stage once the full servicing requirements are determined.

We trust that the responses outlined above help to address any concerns relating to the main design items highlighted within the CSCAAC's letter. Should you wish to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly to discuss.

Regards

Jamie

Jamie Whelan
Architect



COFFEY / ARCHITECTS

11/12 Great Sutton Street
London EC1V 0BX
+44 (0) 207 549 2141
coffeyarchitects.com