



London Borough of Camden Design Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: 14-19 Tottenham Mews

Friday 11 September 2020

Video Conference

Panel

Catherine Burd (chair)

Harriet Bourne

Scott Grady

Barbara Kaucky

Richard Lavington

Attendees

Gavin Sexton	London Borough of Camden
Victoria Hinton	London Borough of Camden
Neil McDonald	London Borough of Camden
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Kevin Fisher	London Borough of Camden
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects
Kiki Ageridou	Frame Projects
Roisin Menon	Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
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

14 - 19 Tottenham Mews, Fitzrovia, London W1T 4AA

2. Presenting team

Stuart Piercy	Piercy and Company
Matti Lampila	Piercy and Company
Henry Humphreys	Piercy and Company
Andre Nave	Piercy and Company
Tom French	Derwent London
Richard Baldwin	Derwent London
Caroline Haines	Derwent London
Jim Pool	DP9 Limited
Hannah Willcock	DP9 Limited
Sarah Roberts	DP9 Limited
Ollie Morris	TST
Matt Schaaf	Blackburn and Co.

3. Planning authority briefing

The application site sits within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area. It is located on the west side of the Tottenham Mews and is currently occupied by two-storey portacabins. A series of individual four-storey mews buildings of varied design are opposite, on the east side of the mews. Access is from the south via Tottenham Street. The site adjoins the Arthur Stanley House to the south. The Fitzrovia Area Action Plan identifies the site as a Bedford Passage link, required to restore the historic connection between Cleveland and Charlotte Streets.

The proposal is to demolish the existing portacabins and replace them with a six-storey affordable housing development, providing ten social and 13 intermediate homes alongside potential affordable workspace on the lower ground and ground floor. The massing takes cues from its surrounding context, aligning with the adjacent four to five-storey buildings. The top two floors are set back to mitigate visual impact from street level. The materials and colours aim to reflect the variety of brickwork along Tottenham Mews. The grid of the façade responds to the immediate surroundings, including the terraces opposite and the horizontal elements at 13 Tottenham Mews. Level Six has lightweight metal cladding to echo traditional metal mansard roofs.

This site is linked to the Network Building development, re-providing residential units. Camden officers asked the panel, in particular, for its views on bulk, massing, response to the mews context, mix of uses, quality of workspace and of residential accommodation.



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4. Design Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel is impressed by the overall design quality of the proposals, and considers the proposed bulk and massing broadly acceptable. However, it recommends that the building layouts are improved to ensure high quality of accommodation for all units. In particular, wheelchair accessible ground floor units lack privacy and are not acceptable as proposed. The panel suggests exploring the potential for two-storey maisonettes at ground and first floor level instead. Single aspect flats with only a rear aspect should be avoided. The panel is also concerned by the lack of amenity space for flats, particularly for social rented units and those that are likely to house children. It therefore asks the team to explore the potential for small balconies, a communal roof garden, and play space in Tottenham Mews which will be a low traffic area. Addressing these quality of life issues may require a reduction in the number of units. Finally, options should be considered to make the link to Bedford Passage a welcoming space. These comments are expanded below.

Architecture

- The panel is impressed by the quality of the proposed elevations, which will result in a building that makes an improvement to the site.
- It suggests that the ground floor height could be increased to match the soffit line of the neighbouring building to the south, Arthur Stanley House. This would result in a higher ground floor that would also suit the mews typology.
- The inclusion of floor-to-ceiling height windows will compromise privacy and reduce the wall space available, e.g. to install radiators. The panel recommends further thought is given to how windows relate to internal spaces.

Bulk and massing

- The panel considers the bulk and massing of the scheme is ambitious but acceptable given the quantum of affordable housing it seeks to provide. The caveat is that levels of daylight to existing homes on the eastern side of Tottenham Mews should not be reduced.
- Lighting levels should be carefully tested to ensure that homes on both sides of the mews receive good levels of daylight.
- In drawings, the eastern façade of the new building appears to sit proud of Arthur Stanley House, to the south. This may be a drafting issue, but it is important to ensure that the two buildings are aligned.



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Layouts

- The panel is concerned that number of units included in the building is excessive, that they appear squeezed in, with internal layouts and the quality of accommodation compromised.
- An example is the quality of the proposed accessible wheelchair units, which are deep, with limited outlook and no amenity space. Their entrances lead directly into the living room, which is environmentally problematic. Their bedrooms face a public route, without defensible outdoor space. The panel asks that the layout and purpose of these units is reconsidered.
- Bedrooms facing the mews on the ground floor should be avoided: this may be possible by varying the unit types and incorporating two-storey maisonettes in lieu of wheelchair accessible dwellings.
- The panel also questions the quality of the one-bed units which only have a rear aspect, and asks that all units are provided with a mews aspect to avoid compromising the quality of their living space.
- The three-bedroom units at the north end of the building would gain an improved outlook if their windows were adjusted to face west, providing an aspect along Bedford Passage.
- Bedrooms on Level Five are constrained, and the panel suggests their width should be increased, potentially by incorporating a smaller external set back.
- The panel is also concerned that basement workspace units will be dark, and asks whether daylight can be introduced from Middlesex House courtyard to the west.

Amenity space

- The panel is concerned by the lack of amenity space for flats, particularly for social rented units and those that are likely to house children. Any large social-rented family unit should be provided with at least some directly accessible private external amenity space.
- It asks the team to explore the potential for a communal roof garden.
- Play space for children could also potentially be designed in as part of Tottenham Mews, which will be a low traffic area.
- The panel suggests that the design team explore the incorporation of small balconies to ensure everyone has access to at least some outside space. It asks the team to look at how these could be designed to maximise their amenity value - for example by incorporating planters, or so it is possible at least to stand in the depth of the reveal.



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Passageway

- The soffit of the passageway linking Tottenham Mews to Bedford Passage is low, and would be improved if the ground floor ceiling height were slightly increased.
- The passageway would benefit from being more clearly signalled, to help it seem inviting. The façade above could be wrapped, for example, or other architectural approaches used to make the through route more apparent and distinctive.
- The panel agree the location of workspace entrance and windows facing the passageway will provide light and natural surveillance of the passage. However they feel the relationship between the mews and recessed internal living spaces adjacent, under the overhang, is uncomfortable. It wonders whether this might be a more suitable location for the flat entrance, or the substation.

Next Steps

The panel anticipates that the applicants will be able resolve the issues it has raised in discussion with Camden officers.

