
From: architect [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 April 2021 09:43
To: Fieldsend, Sofie
Cc: Planning; CTCAAC Chair
Subject: 2021/0911/P - Grand Union House CTCAAC comments

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Good morning Sofie,

Please find our comments on this scheme below. Members of the committee were split in terms of agreeing an approach to our comments. We all wish to object to the current proposal due to its bulk and the fact that the design is not appropriate to its location (we believe that the 'delicate' screens will end up being standard cladding and need to be Conditioned for there to be any chance that these will be retained in the final building). Some of us also object to the removal of the important elements of the existing building too and therefore do not believe that the current building should be replaced in as comprehensive a manner but merely added to and infilled (as per the original suggestion):

CTCAAC OBJECTION

The Committee wishes to reiterate and support the comments made in the letter of objection from the Twentieth Century Society (dated 12.02.21), noting the importance of the first and second floor elevation to Grand Union House and the value of the nursery building which adjusts the scale of the building as it meets the earlier buildings on Kentish Town Road and provides a gap for the housing on Camden Road to benefit from.

We too encourage the infill at ground floor to activate the street frontage with retail and public facing programmes, and see no harm in adding two storeys set slightly back above the existing facade in a well resolved way to financially justify the development.

Unfortunately the current scheme is far bulkier than earlier versions, the roofline is aggressive with no apparent logic or rationale, and the roof garden appears both enclosed by the facade and open depending on the CGI, so it is unclear how this element may or may not be perceived from the street. What is apparent is the loss of an active street frontage which this stretch of Kentish Town Road desperately needs, and we urge Camden to consider the potential for this long ground floor elevation to give the street a public face, rather than another closed facade with services grilles, refuse collection and plant room access that blights many contemporary street elevations in Camden.

The opening of the facade for natural ventilation does not acknowledge the issue of traffic noise for office use, meaning the use of natural ventilation is highly unlikely to be realised. This calls into question the facade treatment, which appears to be based closely on Lacaton and Vassal's Architecture School in Nantes - a building that opens up directly to views across the adjacent river

Loire, not Kentish Town Road. In our view to replace a facade by one of Britain's most distinguished architects the rationale needs to be a more robust.

In sustainability terms the dominance of glass and aluminium uses two of the highest embodied carbon materials in construction, with aluminium requiring ten times the amount of energy to manufacture extrusions than the equivalent weight of steel. Glass generates 8.39 tonnes of CO2 per tonne of glass, with the multiple coatings referred to adding significantly to the energy and processing of this material, completely overwhelming the claim of carbon savings noted in the Design Statement when referencing the use of cross laminated timber decking. The re-use of the existing aluminium panels and glazing systems together with the concrete frame is a far more effective low carbon strategy to adopt.

The recent listing of the Grimshaw designed Sainsburys superstore and residential terrace to the north (a move that we highly support) presumably includes the original entrance portal to the central car park, which appears to be retained in the CGIs of the proposed scheme. This entry portal 'borrows' symmetrical stair tower elements on concrete and curved cladding panels, one of which serves the newly listed canalside dwellings, the other serving Grand Union House. The current scheme removes the Grand Union House stair tower element, replacing it with a taller simulacrum, however this element is arguably part of the listed structure as it completes the entry portal. The current proposals fail to take this into account by not accurately evaluating the real boundaries of significance or listing.

We do not feel that the excessive bulk of this new building is respectful to the setting of the newly Listed Sainsburys complex and as such strongly object to the scheme.

With apologies for the delay in submitting these owing to Easter.

kind regards

Luisa Auletta
on behalf of the CTCAAC