



**London Borough of Camden Design Review Panel**

**Report of Formal Review Meeting: Selkirk House**

Friday 23 October 2020

Video conference

**Panel**

Peter Studdert (chair)

Kirsten Henson

Harriet Bourne

Barbara Kaucky

Richard Lavington

**Attendees**

Richard Wilson	London Borough of Camden
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Elizabeth Martin	London Borough of Camden
Victoria Hinton	London Borough of Camden
Kevin Fisher	London Borough of Camden
Neil McDonald	London Borough of Camden
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Angela McIntyre	Frame Projects
Kiki Ageridou	Frame Projects

**Apologies / report copied to**

Bethany Cullen	London Borough of Camden
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**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

1 Museum Street, 10-12 Museum Street, 35-41 New Oxford Street and 16A-18 West Central Street, London WC1A

## 2. Presenting team

Henry Mace	Lab Tech
Jon Watson	Lab Tech
David Hills	DSDHA
Lemma Redda	DSDHA
Nathan Humpfreys	DSDHA
Jean-Francois Pflumio	DSDHA
Anna Snow	Iceni Projects
Nick Grant	Iceni Projects
George Baines	Iceni Projects
Kirsten Elder	Scotch Partners
Peter Stewart	Peter Stewart Consultancy
Vladimir Guculak	Bradley-Hole Schoenaich Landscape

## 3. Planning authority briefing

The site is split into two parts by West Central Street. The southern part of the site is bounded by High Holborn and Museum Street and is currently occupied by a Travelodge hotel and car park. The Travelodge tower is 17 storeys high and was built in the 1960s. There is a three storey podium at its base. The northern part of the site is bounded by New Oxford Street and Museum Street and features lower, more historic buildings.

The northern part of the site, including West Central Street, is in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. There are no listed buildings on the site, however a Grade II listed buildings adjoin the boundary. The site as a whole lies within the Tottenham Court Road Opportunity Area and 1 Museum Street is identified within the emerging 'Holborn Vision and Urban Strategy' as a 'Key Project' for potential redevelopment with active frontages, increased residential population, and through route on axis with Coptic Street with future potential to connect to Covent Garden.

The planning authority would like the panel's views on the height of the proposed tower and the West Central Street block, architectural expression, and the quality of public realm and open space.



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## 4. Design Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The design review panel finds much to admire in the emerging proposals for the Selkirk House and 1 Museum Street site. It is broadly supportive of the design strategy, including the opening up of new routes, and retention of existing historic buildings. It offers some comments on aspects of the scheme where design challenges remain to be resolved. Overall the panel takes the view that the tower has the potential to be an elegant building, and a positive landmark, but would like to see further refinement of its design, including articulation to its top. This should be informed by thorough townscape assessment, which will also support planning decision making. The panel supports the concept of knitting together new and existing buildings to create new homes in the West Central Street block. However, it is concerned that the courtyard is too narrow and dark, and would like to see different residential layouts tested. As part of this process, the panel suggests collaborating with smaller design practices. More information is required for the panel to take a view on the Grape Street block, the High Holborn block and proposals along Vine Lane. The panel supports the direction in which the architectural language is evolving but encourages further consideration of material choices, and their carbon impacts. The panel is encouraged by landscape and public realm proposals, but would like to see further microclimatic testing, more urban greening, and if possible, retention of the Category B tree on High Holborn. These points are expanded below.

### *Overall approach*

- In principle, the panel supports the direction in which the strategy and detail of the development are evolving in and finds proposals much improved since the previous review.
- It supports the retention of the buildings on New Oxford and Museum Street.
- The panel would like to see more information on the Grape Street block. Especially where the building extends the party wall which may be very prominent in views north along Grape Street.
- The panel considers that the quality of the West Central Street block could be enriched by collaborating with smaller design practices, who could bring variation and delight to each infill element.
- It has not yet seen information on the High Holborn block (market residential) and looks forward to seeing this at a further review.
- The panel asks the design team to consider whether it is possible to retain the B Grade tree on High Holborn. It notes that a replacement tree could take more than 50 years to reach similar maturity. It would encourage relocation of the loading bay to avoid the loss of this tree, whilst keeping this at the perimeter of the site.



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- The panel supports the decision to make Vine Lane an open street and not a passageway, which will help make this part of London more permeable.

## *Height and massing*

- The proportions of the tower on One Museum Street mean that it will have an impact on views from Shaftsbury Theatre, and potentially also in longer views. It is therefore vital that the detailed design of the proposals is of an exemplary quality to mitigate this impact.
- The panel did not see sufficient views analysis to make a clear townscape assessment on height and massing. It trusts that this information will be provided to inform planning decisions.
- The panel emphasises that where the tower is visible in long views, it must add interest.
- Some panel members felt that the tower of One Museum Street was negatively impacting the Shaftsbury Theatre, especially due to its bulk.
- Overall the panel takes the view that the tower has the potential to be an elegant building, and a positive landmark, but would like to see further refinement of its design, including articulation to its top.
- The panel is concerned that the sheer faces of the tall building will have a detrimental impact on the microclimate of Museum Street and High Holborn. It encourages the design team to carefully test this and put measures in place to mitigate any impact.
- While the panel welcomes the way terracing breaks up the proposed mass, it would like to know more about the extent to which these terraces are useable.
- Further thought should be given to the two storey extension to 10-12 Museum Street. The scale and set back of the extension, and the way it transitions from one storey to two storeys should be tested in views from New Oxford Street.

## *Architectural language and materiality*

- The panel supports the direction in which the architectural language is evolving.
- It would like to see more detail on the proposed anodised aluminium cladding to One Museum Street, which is not yet convincing as a material choice.
- The panel welcomes the approach of set back glazing to the south facade at One Museum Street. However it is not yet convinced about the treatment to the north façade where there is a high ratio of glazing and potential for heat loss. It would also like to understand more about how overheating will be avoided on the west façade.



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- Further testing is required to ensure that floor to ceiling glazing is the correct approach for One Museum Street. It highlights that daylight is only required at sitting and standing level and suggests the design team should experiment with glazing ratios to improve u-values and overall thermal performance.
- The materiality of the extension to 10-12 Museum Street requires further thought. The panel considers that aluminium may make the extension appear overly dominant as it catches the light.
- Proposed materials, such as aluminium and anodised aluminium, have high levels of embodied carbon. The panel would encourage the design team to consider less carbon intensive materials.
- The panel suggests timber frames could be used instead of lightweight steel frames proposed to the rooftop extensions along New Oxford Street.

## *Residential proposals*

- The panel has concerns about the quality of the residential amenity space, in particular, the scale and the amount of sunlight which the central courtyard will receive. It does however accept that this is a central London location and expectations must be managed for this tight urban site.
- The panel considers that daylight to the courtyard would be severely compromised by the access decks which are not currently shown in plan. It would like to see these drawn and modelled correctly to assess daylight to the space accurately.
- Residential layouts have been arranged with living rooms and kitchens facing onto the courtyard, however the panel questions if these will be dark due to the lack of light in the courtyard, and may be better facing onto the road. It would like to see different residential layout options tested.

## *Landscape and public realm*

- The panel reiterates the point made in 'overall approach' above and encourages the design team to retain the B Grade tree on High Holborn.
- The panel welcomes proposals at ground floor along Museum Street which will create an enjoyable space to move through.
- The panel highlights the importance of testing the wind effects on the public realm, especially Museum Street which can be quite windy for cyclists.
- The site sits within a very dense part of central London and the development will rebuild at an increased scale. The panel therefore emphasises the need to add greening and make the proposals as biodiverse as possible.



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- The panel would like to understand how the proposals will achieve the required urban greening factor.
- It encourages the design team to consider adding greenery to the set back terraces to One Museum Street, to provide shading and help avoid overheating.
- The panel encourages the design team to bring more trees into Vine Lane.
- At One Museum Street, terraces are created on the north and west facades, as amenity spaces for office workers. The north facing terrace is likely to be breezy and cold, and the west terrace faces the predominant winds. Careful thought is needed about how these can become comfortable spaces, and if that is not possible, provide visual amenity and ecological value.
- The panel highlights a number of successful green walls in the locality of the proposals, it notes the considerable value these can add, especially where 'valleys' are created by tall buildings and narrow streets, and wind is an issue.

## *Next steps*

The panel would welcome the opportunity to review the proposals at a further review as the next stage of detail emerges.

