

Camden Design Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Great Ormond Street Hospital

Friday 2 February 2018
5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AC

Panel

Catherine Burd (chair)
Sarah Featherstone
Simon Goode
Paddy Pugh
Peter Studdert

Attendees

Richard Simpson	Camden Heritage and Design Champion
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Jonathan McClue	London Borough of Camden
Alfie Stroud	London Borough of Camden
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects
Farzana Yasmin	Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

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

Great Ormond Street Hospital, Phase 4
Great Ormond Street, London, WC1N 3JH

2. Presenting team

Stephanie Williamson	Great Ormond Street Hospital
Jim Chapman	Consultant to Great Ormond Street Hospital
Duncan Sissons	John Sisk and Son Ltd
Steve Fletcher	GOSH
Benedict Zucchi	BDP
Alasdair Travers	BDP
Tessa O'Neill	BDP
Michael Lowndes	Turley

3. Planning authority's views

Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), the largest paediatric hospital in the country, produced a masterplan in 2015, endorsed by Camden Council, to develop three areas of its site - North, Central and South. The South area is being brought forward as the next development phase. The proposals involve the demolition and replacement of the buildings facing Great Ormond Street the post-war Frontage Building and the 1893 Paul O'Gorman Building - to create a new hospital frontage. The front of the hospital site falls within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and is located opposite two groups of Grade II listed early eighteenth century buildings. The Paul O'Gorman Building, although not included as positive contributor to the conservation area, is being evaluated by applicants as though it were. The Primrose Hill-St. Paul's viewing corridor also passes over the site. A design competition held for the site was won by BDP with John Sisk and Son. The applicants brought their proposals to the panel at an early stage to set design principles, and anticipate returning for two further reviews.



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4. Design Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel finds much to admire in the proposals for Great Ormond Street Hospital, which have clearly emerged from careful thought about the experience of patients, families and staff who will use the new facilities. As design work continues, the panel would encourage the team to apply similar sensitivity and creative thinking to developing architecture that responds well to the site's historic context. As part of this process, the panel questions the decision to demolish the Paul O'Gorman Building. The architecture in this part of Bloomsbury is of national importance. The way the new building sits on Great Ormond Street will be crucial to its relationship with the important townscape surrounding the hospital. While proposals for interiors are impressive, the panel feels the design approach is currently driven by the clinical care layout, and that designs for the exterior now also need to reach the same level of excellence. The building should be more directly informed by the detailed historical analysis conducted to understand the character of the area. The panel also suggests that a south-facing glass-fronted building will present thermal challenges, and that a greater proportion of masonry may be needed to help prevent overheating.

Architecture and streetscape

- The panel feel the focus of the next stage of design work should be the building's exterior, and its relationship to the streetscape. The high quality townscape of Great Ormond Street is on a domestic scale, and the current hospital building succeeds in retaining this domestic quality. This should be treated as an very valuable characteristic. The currently proposed curved glass frontage is distinctively institutional, and not appropriate to the domestic Georgian setting.
- Integrating the new building with the texture of the street is a challenge, as its massing is on a different scale from the Georgian buildings opposite. Whilst the panel appreciate the benefits of the curved plan forms for the internal layout, this creates a challenge in terms of relating to the existing townscape.
- The panel suggests that the concept of dividing the building into 'houses' may provide the language needed to break up its frontage, but that this will require greater domestic scale and sense of verticality. Exploring the architectural expression of the 'houses' could help create a distinctive architecture that also fits well in the street.
- The use of glass as a dominant material on a south façade may adversely impact the buildings opposite by reflecting glare on to them, undermining the current street character.
- While the research carried out into the townscape of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is detailed, the panel is not clear about how it has informed the design process. It asks that a more sequential explanation be provided to show how the exterior designs respond to this context.



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- The townscape analysis does not reflect the fact that, while Bloomsbury is residential, it also hosts a number of large institutions. The panel suggests that examining this aspect of the area's character may provide design clues that can be used to fit GOSH into its surroundings.
- The new building will be predominantly visible in long elevation along Great Ormond Street, and the panel feels it will be very important to see how it sits within this context, and relates to existing buildings.
- While visualisations show a set-back architecture for the top storeys, drawings suggest a new architectural approach is being introduced. More clarity is needed over architectural hierarchy to demonstrate how the top of the building will relate to the lower storeys, and how the elements of the building will relate to one another in long, oblique views.

Paul O'Gorman Building

- The Paul O'Gorman Building is a special building with a finely crafted street elevation. The panel does not have the information to evaluate the evidence for and against demolition. However, it is clear that the design team would need to present a very strong case for its demolition. The panel encourages both client and design team to look carefully at whether the building, or at least those elements of it that make a positive local contribution, should be retained.
- If demolition is agreed with Camden Council, it will need to be replaced by a building of very high quality to compensate adequately for its loss. GOSH must be able to justify a decision to demolish to local stakeholders, and show that it is fulfilling its responsibility towards the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Hospital entrance

- The design team should avoid increasing the size of the hospital entrance, creating a large institutional space also at odds with a domestic street. The entrance designs could be reduced in scale and impact without undermining the internal logic of the building. The panel suggests that the design should further consider what will make a welcoming entrance.
- The panel questions whether GOSH requires a single main entrance, and suggests the design team consider whether the new entrance should in fact be designed as one of several, reflecting the way the complex currently operates.
- The panel suggests that the proposed stairwell location for the Peter Pan statue is not appropriate, and that it needs to be sited prominently where children can easily see and interact with it.



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Interior design

- The panel emphasises the role of craft in the treatment of interior detailing, from service units beside beds to colour and type of lighting, and is keen to see detail of this aspect of the design as it develops.

Environment

- The panel feels that the glass façade proposed for a single-aspect, south-facing building will result in solar gain and problems with cooling. Designs should be adapted to address this problem, including the use of more masonry to reduce the amount of glazing. Windows could also be set back to apply brises soleil, and shading introduced from the 'lily pad' gardens.
- Sustainability is an important part of GOSH's aspirations, but further work is needed to embed sustainability into the designs. The panel feels that sustainability is not yet an integral element of the design approach, but that it could provide important clues in developing the next design stage.

Landscape

- The panel supports the idea of designing gardens that can be enjoyed all year round, but feels more thinking is needed on how landscaping – and features such as the internal tree - will fit into the building's design. The challenge is for the design team to develop its competition ideas for landscaping into detailed, deliverable proposals.

Next steps

- The panel would be welcome an opportunity to comment again on the proposals for Great Ormond Street Hospital, at the next stage of design development.

