DEFINE

GUILD LIVING UXBRIDGE
TOWNSCAPE RELATED SCHEME REVIEW
9 MARCH 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Define has been instructed by Guild Living to review the townscape and visual qualities of the application scheme and assist in its refinement to ensure its robustness.

1.2. This exercise has involved a detailed review of the DAS, HTVIA, Stage 1 GLA Report and LPA Officer comments. This in turn led to a site visit and the identification of a number of options (and sub-options) being identified and tested in three dimensions to establish an optimal form of massing whilst addressing key concerns. This optimised scheme was presented to Hillingdon Officers on 27 January 2021 and forms the basis of the revised application material.

2. TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL ISSUES

2.1. The process as set out above identified the following main townscape and visual issues that required further consideration and refinement.

1. Harefield Road Frontage

2.2. This concern relates to how the proposed massing steps up from no. 14 Harefield Road, how the building addresses the main street frontage and existing building line, and how the building's mass relates to the existing Police Station building all as perceived from Harefield Road. This issue is therefore a point of townscape character and visual impact. Reference is made to the HTVIA viewpoints F and H.

2. Old Uxbridge / Windsor Street Conservation Area

2.3. This concern relates to views from and across the Conservation Area to the proposed building mass, partly sat above heritage assets. This issue is primarily

a matter of visual impact (which when positively resolved will reduce / remove any heritage concerns expressed). Reference is made to the HTVIA viewpoint K.

3. North Uxbridge Area of Special Local Character

2.4. This concern relates to views from Press Street and to a less degree Lancaster Road and in particular how the proposed mass is perceived from this suburban scale residential street from within the North Uxbridge Area of Special Character. It is principally a matter of visual impact and reference is made to HTVIA viewpoint I.

4. Uxbridge Lock Conservation Area

2.5. The visual impact of the proposed scheme has been expressed by LBH as a concern from this viewpoint. I disagree, however I recognise that changes to the application scheme's massing in response to the issues set out above should in turn be considered from this position (refer to HTVIA viewpoint G).

2.6. In summary, the overall townscape and visual consideration I set out below is how changing the proposed building massing strikes the right balance to:

1. Make efficient use of land and in doing so addressing the question of maintaining the area's prevailing character or of promoting regeneration and change[1], and;
2. Promote development that adds to the overall character of the area and is sympathetic to local character and history[2].

3. MASSING REFINEMENT

3.1. In respect of the above issues, and as set out in the Introduction, I prepared a number of massing options that were modelled and treated from the key (TVIA) viewpoints identified above.

3.2. This process explored sub-options during its development and in effect was a 'live' modelling exercise where by the tests of how a development assimilated

[1] NPPF 122 d)

[2] NPPF 127 a) and c)

comfortably into its townscape and visual context transposed into a 3D massing envelop for the proposed development.

3.3. The changes made result from a series of key townscape and visual tests, which are in summary:

Harefield Road Frontage (see pages 7 and 8 of the DAS Addendum)

1. Set back development to meet the existing building line to relate more appropriately to adjacent buildings and create sufficient space for street trees to be established beyond the footway boundary. The tree species and ultimate canopy form should be assessed to demonstrate deliverability.

2. Massing is stepped back from Harefield Road to ensure that the stepping of form to the higher elements was broadly consistent with the angle formed by the existing police station (from viewpoint F) and that made a more refined massing at the building 'cap' as viewed form TVIA viewpoint H, with the higher built elements more recessive.

3.3. My site visit identified that the very local views of the site from this street (HTVIA Vps F and H) do not allow the full appreciation of how visible larger scale buildings are within the town centre (of around 8 storey) and should be considered in conjunction with wider kinetic movements towards the site.

Old Uxbridge / Windsor Street Conservation Area (see page 10 of the DAS Addendum

3. As above, resulting from the increased building set back, more gradual stepping of built form to its higher elements, and separately the reduced overall height of building B to ensure a higher degree of assimilation into the existing townscape view as viewed from TVIA viewpoint K. As a result, the proposed building massing is notably more recessive in the view.

3.4. My site visit also identified that the TVIA viewpoint K doesn't allow the appreciation of tall buildings in the foreground and that appreciation of a wider kinetic experience is an important consideration.

North Uxbridge Area of Special Local Character (see page 9 of the DAS Addendum

4. A reduced form of massing is achieved through removing a full storey of development. Various options were considered from this viewpoint, including a stepped form of mass, however the simple reduction is considered to be most successful in assimilating the proposed massing within the view as a minor step up in the built horizon. Refer to HTVIA viewpoint I.

Views from Uxbridge Lock Conservation Area (see page 9 of the DAS Addendum

3.5. The above changes were also considered from TVIA viewpoint G (canal bridge 184 over the Grand Union canal). I do not consider the previous scheme proposal to create adverse effects from the position on the view or the townscape (again notably taller buildings existing out of 'shot' of the viewpoint chosen). The proposed massing changes reduce further the visibility of the proposed development from this position to being highly recessive in the view.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. I consider the scheme design changes made to be very positive (and importantly follows the correct process by testing massing changes as they are actually perceived from the existing townscape).

4.2. It results, in my professional judgement, in a form of architecture that strikes a very positive design balance of optimising the use of the site whilst also taking the opportunity to improve the character of the area in a form that is sympathetic to local character and history.

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