

**Richmond
Design Review Panel
C/o Richmond Council**

Environment and Community Services
Department
Civic Centre
44 York Street
Twickenham TW1 3BZ

Please ask for/reply to:
Telephone: 020 8891 1411
Direct Line: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Web: www.richmond.gov.uk

Our ref: ECS/
Your ref:
Date: 19 May 2021

[REDACTED]
Twickenham
Middlesex [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Richmond Design Review Panel: Elleray Hall, Elleray Road, London, TW11

The Panel is grateful to you and your development team for submitting your proposal to the Richmond Design Review Panel (RDRP) on Tuesday 4 May 2021. In light of the Government restrictions following the coronavirus outbreak the Panel was not able visit the site and meet your team in person, however the Panel provided feedback in a virtual open session with the applicant present to hear the Panel's views. We therefore thank the applicant team and the architects, [REDACTED] for a clear and comprehensive presentation of the proposals. This letter will remain confidential until a formal planning application has been submitted, whereupon it will be uploaded to the Council's application website.

The scheme proposals involve the redevelopment of two interlinked sites, Elleray Hall at the southern end of Elleray Road with the junction of Middle Lane, and the North Lane Depot and East car park, a former Council depot and car park located on the east side of North Lane, diagonally opposite. Elleray Hall is a well-used community centre where local people take part in a range of activities run by Elleray Community Association on behalf of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. The services remain an integral part of the Council's support for older people. The former depot site is fenced off and currently not in use. The car park, Council owned and run, acts as an overflow car park for the main North Lane car park opposite the site. It is close to Teddington Town Centre.

It is understood that Elleray Hall is no longer fit for purpose, as the age and construction of the building means that it is inefficient, in poor condition and overly expensive to run. It is acknowledged that the existing layout is also unsuitable for the changing programme that is

required for both the existing users and the demand for a community space from other local groups.

Constraints

The Panel notes there are a number of constraints affecting the site. These include:

- The North Lane site lies to the south, but within the setting of, the Broad Lane Conservation Area,
- Both sites lie within the setting of adjacent BTMs (non-designated heritage assets),
- The sites are within a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) 3 area,
- Elleray Road is within a controlled parking zone, operating everyday 8.30am – 10pm (Monday to Sunday), and
- Whilst not within the town centre boundary, the North Lane site (Site 1) is opposite the boundary, the Elleray Hall site (Site 2) is just south of the boundary.

Proposal

The proposal is to deliver a new community centre (510m²) on the North Lane site (Site 1), together with five parking spaces, minibus area and gardens. This part single part two storey building has a staggered front and rear building line, incorporates two gabled facades on North Lane, and a hipped and flat roof to the rear. The southern wing provides first floor accommodation within the eaves. The scheme proposes a modest lowering of the ground level to reduce impacts on the properties on Elleray Road (that have very modest gardens) and the residential property immediately to the north of the site.

Once the new community centre is complete and ready for occupation, the scheme proposes the demolition of the existing Elleray Hall (Site 2), and the erection of a two storey 'J' shape development for affordable housing (targeted at 100%), including 14 x 1 bed units and 2 x 2 bed units.

The frontage building facing Middle Lane comprises two houses which reflect the form and design of the adjacent BTMs. The rear wing takes on a more modern approach. The entrance to the rear units is via a pathway adjacent to the west boundary. Ground floor units will benefit from private gardens, and the scheme incorporates a communal garden in the southwest corner, with a cycle and bin store. One car parking space is proposed for one of the wheelchair units on the ground floor.

No details have yet to be provided on tenure and split, however, it is understood that the scheme is to be cost neutral, with the residential components funding the new community hall.

The detailed comments from the Panel are set out below:

Concept

The Panel is overall supportive of the location of the uses on site. Relocating the community centre to the more prominent site to the north (Site 1), allows for the new building to be more visible and easily accessible.

As for Site 2, the Panel supports the case for redeveloping this site for residential use. We note that the existing Elleray Hall is not a listed or locally listed building, but it does represent a structure that is uncommon and dates from the early 20th century. The Panel therefore

urges the team to undertake a Heritage and Townscape Impact Assessment in order to gain a thorough understanding of the existing building and assess its historic merit. We think this would help inform the design process and assist officers and members of the community in understanding the proposal. Based on the findings of the Heritage and Townscape Impact Assessment, we also encourage the Council to consider measures to record the building prior to any demolition, where justified.

While the Panel is supportive of the general principles of the scheme, we think the presentation could have benefited from a clearer site and context analysis and that the design concept could have been better illustrated, explaining how the team arrived at the form for this site from concept to current design. Overall, whilst we acknowledge these are two separate sites, they are close together and linked in terms of the development programme. The work on the community centre seems better resolved, however we feel the design for the residential site needs much more work to convince us that it will achieve a high quality. For both sites we feel the team needs to push harder to achieve the highest sustainability in line with the Council's ambitions.

Site 1 – New Community Centre, North Lane / Middle Lane

The Panel understands the reasoning behind selecting this site for the proposed community centre as it is important that the local residents have access to the facility when Elleray Hall closes. The site is also closer to the town centre, which will benefit elderly residents.

Layout

- The Panel raises some concern over the layout of the building. We note the existing strong streetscape with the terrace to the north of the site, and further down along North Lane. Yet, the proposed building is set back, leaning away at the south western corner and lacks the ability to hold the corner in the streetscape. Instead the space is given away to the few car parking spaces, while externally the focus of the southern corner is the toilets for the centre's visitors.
- We therefore question the location of the car park on the corner of the site and encourage the team to consider whether the building form could hold the space better in the streetscape.
- We suggest considering precedents such as the Newport Street Gallery by Caruso St John Architects as an example for how a civic building can address the streetscape in a terrace form, should that be the approach you wish to take.
- We are concerned about the potentially high costs involved in lowering of the ground level, and question if this is the best solution.

Architecture

- The Panel supports a contemporary approach to the design of the community centre; however, we question the 'barn' typology which is redolent of more rural locations. More analysis and a stronger narrative to justify this typological approach would be helpful. We questioned why the space in between the two gables is not being utilised and find this wasteful.
- In terms of the articulation of the front façade, we are not convinced about the relationship between the inside and outside of the building. Could perhaps the main entrance be more central?
- Overall, we feel the community building has become a collection of forms through the wrestling with different challenges and contextual relationships, and maybe the team

needs to step back and simplify the design. We suggest finding a form that resolves all the issues in one clean move and generate a clearer and more elegant design. We suggest taking clues on simplification of form and clear morphologies by works of Tham and Videgaard Architects for example.

- In terms of materiality, we are not entirely convinced about using pre-weathered metal on the roof and we suggest the team explore the options for the materiality of the roof further.
- We feel there should be a stronger narrative around sustainability and strive for net-zero carbon as a Council-led scheme needs to be an exemplar in this regard. The photo-voltaic panels appear very visible and these should form part of an integrated solution.

Landscape

- The Panel feels that the landscape treatment is rather unimaginative, and we encourage a more verdant edge to soften the proposal.
- The car parking is too dominant and should be reviewed in order to make it a more friendly environment.

Site 2 – Residential Component on Middle Lane

Layout

- Overall, the Panel supports the mews concept for this site, but we are uncomfortable with the relationship between the front two houses and the units to the rear. There seems to be a lost opportunity to celebrate the relationship between the two parts.
- We question the curved layout of the building form, which is in our view inefficient and creates awkward spaces internally. A granular / stepped layout could perhaps be explored.
- We think the entrance to the mews is understated and not well resolved. It comes across as an alley rather than an entrance to a mews and suggest introducing generous piers or metal gates to celebrate it more. We suggest looking at precedents for mews typologies where site constraints are tight.
- Have you considered two storey houses rather than flats for the mews as this typology may be more appropriate?
- The angled windows on to the gardens appear contrived and we would encourage the team to explore further options so that glazed windows are evident as people enter the mews.

Architecture

- The Panel questions the typology and feels more consideration of context and morphology is required as the combination of the two-storey paired frontage and curved form to the rear is rather 'mixed-up'.
- We question why the roof form has not been raised to create more space, although appreciate this may impact on neighbour amenity.
- The Panel feels that the flat roof to the mews houses looks like an afterthought and is too apologetic.

- We suggest looking at mews typologies as precedents to inform the approach to this site. In particular we invite the team to review projects by Peter Barber, Donnybrook Quarter especially, or The Old Dairy by Studio Woodroffe Papa for solutions for tight sites. Also, the Tin House by Henning Stummel is an interesting solution for broken down forms on backland developments.
- In order to make best use of the space and provide for a more attractive pedestrian environment, we suggest finding ways to integrate air source heat pumps and refuse bins within the building envelope.
- The frontage building may benefit from some refinement, including a roof overhang and chimney stacks, which could form part a sustainable solution to move towards net zero carbon.
- In terms of internal layout, we suggest the apartments in the mews street should stack for continuity of structure and services.

Landscaping

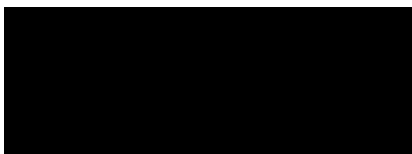
- Further consideration should be given to landscaping, tree planting and boundary treatment.
- The communal garden appears small and further consideration should be given providing the 2-bed units with private amenity space.

Moving Forward

The Panel thanks the applicant for the clear and comprehensive presentation. We acknowledge these are complicated sites to develop due to their constraints and the stakeholders involved. It is an important scheme for the Council, and we support the ambition to unlock both sites for regeneration. Whilst the design for the community hall seems better resolved, we are not entirely convinced about the residential component of the scheme and feel there is little relationship between the two sites. In our view there could be a stronger linkage and a more sensitive solution to Site 2. The Panel was not aware of a landscape architect's involvement on the team and we think this would benefit both sites.

We feel that the architects need time to explore options, particularly the residential component to address the Panel's comments. We suggest a further design review would be beneficial to see the scheme prior to any submission in order to give it a positive endorsement and the Council more confidence in the outcome.

Yours sincerely



Director, 
Chair, Richmond Design Review Panel

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