



FRAME PROJECTS

## **Report of Quality Review Panel Meeting: Blenheim Shopping Centre**

Tuesday 6 September 2022

Hawthorn Centre, 56 Hawthorn Grove, London SE20 8LB

### **Panel**

Hilary Satchwell (chair)

Shaun Ihejeto

Mike Martin

Tricia Patel

### **Attendees**

Ian Drew

Agnieszka Nowak-John

Adrian Harvey

Reema Kaur

Bromley Council

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### **Confidentiality**

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As a public organisation Bromley 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.

## **1. Project name and site address**

Blenheim Shopping Centre, Penge, Bromley, SE20

## **2. Presenting team**

Jason Cornish	Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios
Hanna Williamson	Farrer Huxley
Juan Jose Sarralde	The Townscape Consultancy
Alex Portlock	Hadley Property Group
Danielle Torpey	Hadley Property Group
Phil Francis	Hadley Property Group
Sean Tickle	Rolfe Judd Planning

## **3. Planning authority briefing**

The application site, which measures approximately 0.7 hectares, is located to the west of Penge High Street and currently comprises a part three / part four storey shopping centre with roof-top car parking facilities. To the south, the site adjoins a surface carpark, while to the north the site adjoins the Royal Mail Sorting Office car park and delivery / service yard for the shopping centre. Residential properties adjoin the site to the west. The site has pedestrianised access from the High Street via Empire Square. Vehicular access into the site is located at the rear of the development from Burham Close and Evelina Road.

Penge High Street Conservation Area adjoins the site to the north-west, while Alexandra Cottages and Crystal Palace Park Conservation Areas sit some 300metres and 600metres away from the site's boundaries. There are a number of statutory- and locally-listed buildings in the vicinity. The site lies within a View of Local Importance from Crystal Palace Park towards Beckenham, Bromley, West Wickham. The site has not been identified as suitable for tall buildings in the Local Plan; it has a Public Transport Accessibility Level rate of 4-5, with High Street forming part of the Strategic Road Network.

Officers would welcome the panel's view on the changes made to the ground floor layout, as well as the changes made to height, scale and massing and the proposed architectural treatment of the blocks, including their materiality.



#### 4. Quality Review Panel's views

##### *Summary*

The panel thanks the design team for their clear presentation, and for their response to many of the comments made at the last review. It is pleased to see that microclimate and overshadowing studies have now been conducted, along with calculations for play space provision. The introduction of townhouses fronting onto the pocket park is a positive move, as is the simpler, calmer architecture and materiality. The reduction in height and the redistribution of massing, to respond better to the site's context, is also welcome. However, the panel feels that the tallest element might be acceptable (although it is still pushing the limit of what can be accommodated within the townscape) but it would like to see more long views to understand its visual impact, especially from Crystal Palace. In any case, it urges the design team to be realistic about the form of the tower, which can no longer be accurately described as slender.

The treatment of the service yard, separated from the public realm, is more successful, although some issues remain, including the management of delivery mopeds using the space. The need for residents to use the service yard to access the bin and bike stores for block BC is particularly unfortunate and, more generally, the experience of arriving at and moving around the development should feel safe at all times of day and night. The ambitious landscape design is welcome, particularly for the central square, but the panel notes that the management and maintenance of these spaces will be critical to their success. The panel is also supportive of the ambitions to integrate artwork into the scheme, although it needs to be resolved in detail how this is to be achieved and managed over the long term.

The panel notes that it has not had the opportunity to review the internal arrangement of the floor plans, so cannot comment on the residential quality likely to be achieved. However, it does support the improvement to the quality of the amenity provided by the relocation of the podium garden of block BC, which allows for a more positive aspect and greater access to sunlight. The podium garden of block DE in contrast remains less satisfactory, however, and the panel urge the design team to explore options for improving this.

##### *Site layout*

- The panel feels that the ground floor layout has improved, and it welcomes in particular the separation of the service yard from the public realm. However, the management of this service yard requires further consideration. For example, greater clarity is needed about how delivery mopeds, servicing the takeaway restaurants on the High Street, will be managed to avoid them spilling over into the wider public realm and what will happen at night when the service yard is locked.



- Requiring the residents of block BC to use the service yard to access the bin and bike stores is problematic, as this will likely feel unsafe and unwelcoming, particularly at night. While recognising the intention to activate the frontage to the landscaped public realm, the panel feels that alternative access arrangements, directly from the streets, should be considered for both facilities.
- The panel is supportive of the introduction of town houses fronting onto the pocket park, which it feels will help to animate this space, and it would welcome additional units of this kind in block DE to create a continuous street.
- The panel is supportive of the proposed active transport hub, but notes that this will need to be highly prominent and accessible within the scheme if it is to be well-used.

#### *Public realm and open spaces*

- The panel welcomes the generous landscape design for the public realm, including the introduction of greater planting into the central space. However, it notes that the management and maintenance of the public realm will be critical, and it would like greater clarity on how this will be delivered into the future.
- The approach to street frontages is more positive, but animation will need to be thought about in use as well as design, to ensure that the ground plane is able to be activated sufficiently to make the public realm around the buildings feel safe and inviting. The experience of using these spaces at different times of day and night should be considered and tested.
- Rigorous microclimate testing, along with more fine-grained daylight/sunlight analysis, will be essential to ensure that the public spaces created are comfortable to use and benefit from sunlight more than the absolute minimum periods each day.
- The panel welcomes the relocation of the podium garden on block BC, which provides better access to sunlight and a more attractive aspect over the pocket park.
- Ideally the podium garden of block DE – where most of the affordable housing is located – would be similarly reversed. If this is not possible, then the panel would like to see options explored for opening the roof of block E as amenity space, which would receive more generous sunlight and not simply look out over the backs of businesses along the High Street.



- There is no clear visual link between block DE and the pocket park and increasing the amount of planting on Evelina Road would help to improve the immediate environment for residents of these homes.
- The end treatments of the service yard will be critical, as it will form part of the landscape of the public realm. Close consideration should therefore be given to the design and materials of gates and fencing, to ensure that this is commensurate with the quality of the public spaces proposed.
- The panel is supportive of the intention to maintain and develop the public art programme begun as part of the meanwhile character of the site, particularly the ambition to continue to work with young people. It cautions however that this will need to be approached in a different way to make the most of their contribution.

### *Scale and massing*

- The panel feels that the massing strategy, organising the scheme around a single tall element, is more effective than the previous strategy and the stepping down, especially the step-down of block DE, helps to set the scheme more comfortably within its context although there remain some concerns about the relative scale of the now lower elements and their relationship to the context.
- The reduction in overall height is welcome, but the heights are still challenging within the context of Penge: reducing the tallest element from 20 storeys to 18 storeys plus a crown does not represent a significant reduction.
- It appears that much of the reduction in massing has been achieved at the expense of the slenderness and elegance of the tower (block C). This is particularly evident in the close views presented.
- The panel urges the design team to be more honest in relation to the tower, which cannot easily be described as slender and elegant, and to be realistic about its character in seeking to refine it.
- The panel would like to see additional long views, especially from Crystal Palace and areas of higher ground, to better understand the townscape implications of the proposed massing. Long sections would also be helpful in this regard.
- The amendments to block AA are positive, particularly the increase in dual aspect accommodation, but the panel feels that the building would benefit from a further reduction in height, by another storey.



### *Architecture and materiality*

- The panel supports the simpler architectural language of the overall scheme and the calmer materiality, and it feels that the lighter colour of the base works well.
- However, it suggests that introducing some subtle differentiation in texture and tone to the elevations could reduce any risk that the consistent materiality becomes monolithic.

### *Sustainable design*

- The panel notes the commitment to ensure that the risk of overheating is mitigated, and it would like to see specific measures in place to test and respond to this risk ahead of an application being submitted.

### *Next steps*

- The panel would be happy to review the scheme again, as the design work progresses.

