



# LONDON REVIEW PANEL

## Report of London Review Panel meeting

### Manor Road

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> September

Review held at: Richmond Cricket Club, 187 Kew Rd, Richmond TW9 2AZ

### London Review Panel

[REDACTED] (Chair)	MDA
[REDACTED]	MDA
[REDACTED]	MDA
[REDACTED]	MDA

### Attendees

[REDACTED]	Avanton
[REDACTED]	Avanton
[REDACTED]	ICG Longbow
[REDACTED]	Assael
[REDACTED]	Assael
[REDACTED]	Avison Young
[REDACTED]	Avison Young
[REDACTED]	LB Richmond upon Thames
[REDACTED]	LB Richmond upon Thames
[REDACTED]	LB Richmond upon Thames
[REDACTED]	GLA Planning
[REDACTED]	GLA Regeneration
[REDACTED]	Frame Projects

### Apologies

[REDACTED]	GLA Planning
[REDACTED]	GLA Regeneration
[REDACTED]	LB Richmond upon Thames

### Report copied to

Jules Pipe	Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Debbie Jackson	GLA
[REDACTED]	GLA

## **Confidentiality**

Please note that while schemes might not yet be in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, they will be treated as confidential. As a public organisation the GLA 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.

## **Project name and site address**

Homebase site, 84 Manor Road, North Sheen

## **LB Richmond upon Thames' views**

The application for redevelopment of the Richmond Homebase site was unanimously refused by the LB Richmond upon Thames' planning committee, on the basis of the following 6 reasons: affordable housing; design; residential amenity; living standards; energy; and absence of a legal agreement.

As part of Richmond's processing of the application, two Design Review Panels were carried out, one in November 2018 and one in February 2019.

Public consultation included an advertisement in the Richmond and Twickenham Times, site notices, and letter to over 2,400 nearby properties. The consultation generated 724 responses: 694 in objection to the proposals; 5 in support; and 25 general observations.

During pre-application discussions, a number of key design principles were agreed: loss of retail; car free development; and the creation of a new public square. However, concerns were raised about: the scale, mass and height of the development; its impact on conservation areas; design quality; impact on neighbours; and affordable housing provision.

## **GLA Planning's views**

GLA Planning is broadly supportive of the proposals, which would make a significant contribution to delivery of housing in this part of London. Following refusal of the scheme by Richmond, the Mayor called in the application to act as the Local Planning Authority. Work is ongoing with the applicant to refine the designs, including provision of an increased percentage of affordable housing.

This London Review Panel meeting was arranged to allow Mayor's Design Advocates to advise on the scheme's: urban design; height and massing; architecture; residential quality; public realm and landscape design.

## London Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

Whilst the panel supports the principle of creating a new residential neighbourhood on the Richmond Homebase site, it recommends significant further work to improve the design of the scheme. It raises concerns about the quality of residential accommodation and regrets the high proportion of single aspect units. However, the lack of floor plans and sections made it difficult for the panel to comment fully on residential quality. It feels the tenure distribution is unacceptable, particularly where affordable rented accommodation is proposed above a bus depot in Block E. Whilst the height of the development could be acceptable, the panel thinks the overall density may be too great, unless the quality of residential accommodation and amenity spaces can be improved. It suggests a rethink of the urban design strategy, and as part of this process, a reduction in the height of the octagonal Block B, to reduce its visual impact in views from Manor Grove. This currently has the negative effect of emphasising the large scale of the development in relation to its context, which is unhelpful when there are local concerns that the scheme may appear overbearing. The landscape design also requires further thought – and the creation of high quality spaces should be a driver for the distribution of massing. In terms of architectural expression, the panel thinks greater simplicity would benefit the scheme. Finally, the panel offers its support in challenging the requirement for a bus depot, and thinks this function could be accommodated on streets in and around the site, whilst still providing driver facilities. These comments are expanded below.

### *Urban design*

- The panel feels that in general, the height of development could be acceptable in relationship to the wider context, but that the overall density may be too great, unless the quality of residential accommodation and amenity spaces can be improved.
- The panel were unsure about the general urban organisation of the proposed scheme. Having a clear approach to the hierarchy of the buildings and its relationship to the public spaces, along with a distinct set of building typologies could create a more coherent urban design.
- In terms of the site layout, the panel thinks it is not desirable to create an axial view towards the nine storey octagonal Block B from Manor Grove. This has the negative effect of emphasising the larger scale of the development in relation to the two storey terraced houses on Manor Grove.
- The panel would encourage the design team to reconsider the massing of Block B, to reduce the visual dominance of the scheme in views from Manor Grove.
- In general, the panel is not clear about the character of place that the development aims to create. It thinks a clear vision for the public and communal space, and quality of life for residents, will be essential as the basis for a successful scheme.
- Looking beyond the red line boundary, it would be helpful to demonstrate how any potential future development on the Sainsbury's site would work in relation to the Homebase scheme.

### *Quality of residential accommodation*

- The lack of floor plans and sections made it difficult for the panel to comment fully on residential quality, and a further opportunity to discuss this aspect of this scheme would be welcomed.
- The distribution of residential tenures across the site does not seem acceptable. Social rented accommodation is located at the far ends of the site: to the north between a road and railway, above a bus depot; and to the west between two railway lines.
- In other areas, there appears to be a lack of thought about the quality of new homes, for example where single aspect units face north towards the undercroft of the bus depot.
- Most of the residential blocks have deep floor plans, with homes accessed off double loaded corridors, with no natural light. This both compromises the quality of arrival experience, and creates a disappointingly high proportion of single aspect homes.
- The panel thinks that single aspect units facing onto courtyards risk suffering from noise and lower levels of daylight. It is easier to make the case that single aspect units will be high quality, where they are at higher levels, enjoying good light and views.
- Where single aspect units face the busy Manor Road, they are likely to suffer from noise and pollution, and every effort should be made to create dual aspect homes here.
- In general, the panel would encourage further work to minimise the number of single aspect residential units across the scheme. This will not only contribute to improving the quality of the new homes, but also maximise daylight and natural ventilation – which are increasingly important considerations in the context of GLA policies to achieve zero carbon development.

### *Landscape design*

- The panel raised concerns about the character and quality of both public and shared private landscaped spaces in the proposed scheme.
- The main public space at the centre of the site is surrounded by three nine storey buildings, creating an uncomfortably scaled space. Two of these blocks are to the south and west, so will overshadow the space. Analysis of shading would be helpful to inform discussions at the next review.
- The panel does not think the formal approach to the main public space including the pavilion is necessary, and questions whether a cycle café would be viable here.
- Spaces around the octagonal Block B do not feel like meaningful public spaces – it is difficult to imagine how they will be used, other than as access routes, with planting offering visual amenity.
- The current proposal assumes that residents will share access to the courtyard spaces, using key fobs to pass through entrance lobbies. This is likely to create security risks and a management burden.
- The panel raised significant concerns about separating the play spaces based on tenure, and one such play space not being at ground level. Despite potential for fobs to be used to access other play spaces, this will not positively contribute to social inclusion.
- Access to shared landscape and amenity spaces should be (and be perceived to be) equitable between tenures but must also be workable in terms of security and management.
- The panel would also like more information on how the triangle of land to the south west of the site can be best used. A ball games area was suggested as a potential use.
- It welcomes the courtyard gardens facing south towards the railway.

- Overall, the panel would encourage a more landscape led approach to masterplanning the site – with the creation of high quality spaces informing the distribution of massing.

### *Architecture*

- The architecture of the scheme was not discussed in detail, as the panel’s comments at this review were focused on more fundamental issues of urban design and quality of life.
- However, as a general comment, the panel thinks simplifying the architectural expression would benefit the scheme, as well as making it more resilient to the construction process, to ensure it can be built well.
- For example, the panel is not convinced by the use of arches at the seventh floor of the octagonal building, which seems tokenistic.
- At a detailed level, the panel would like to understand the rationale for placement of balconies – and the way they relate to spaces within the masterplan.

### *Bus garage*

- The panel understands that TfL have placed a requirement for provision of a bus garage on the scheme – and offers its support in challenging this requirement.
- The panel’s view is that bus parking would create less negative impacts if distributed on streets in and around the site – whilst the scheme could still provide the necessary driver facilities.
- If it proves impossible to omit the bus depot from the scheme, its design will require substantial further thought, to avoid damaging the quality of public realm around it, and any homes above.
- It would also be helpful to consider how the bus depot could be converted for alternative uses, if it becomes obsolete in the long term.

### *Next Steps*

The panel is pleased that it will have a further opportunity to comment on the proposals for the Richmond Homebase site. In addition to addressing the points raised above, this should provide an opportunity to discuss the detailed design of the new homes, and their relationship with outdoor spaces.