

19/01145/FUL - Car Park Adjacent to Tagus House Maritime Walk, Ocean Way Southampton

Design Comments

From what I can see there has been only minor changes to the previous scheme that we looked at and insufficient to remove the objection/concerns of the Design Advisory Panel. My concern which is echoed by the DAP is that there is no place/context driven justification presented for a tall building in this precise location. The basis of the application accepts this as a given and in essence presents only two reasons for the location. The first being that MDL's previous master plan 2008 (not publicly endorsed) had shown a tall building that wasn't developed on the now constructed multi-storey car park, and that because that wasn't built it's ok to move that tall element to this site, even though the MDL master plan showed this site for a maximum 4 storey office development. Secondly that this is the quantum of development required to deliver a viable proposal for the PRS residential scheme. Neither of which are design justifications.

We have been consistent from the outset that this area could quite possibly allow for a tall building, or perhaps even a cluster of tall buildings provided that the justification was set out in a clear development framework/master plan including a vision and design rationale/principles developed to guide future development within Ocean Village, where the local character and context is analysed to determine what the special characteristics of place are for this site. As the submission does not do this we are therefore left only in a position to assess the building in isolation against policy and guidance set out in the NPPF, the National Design Guide, and SCC's City Centre Action Plan Policies AP16 Design, AP17 Tall Buildings and AP37 Ocean Village and it is clear in that context that a standalone building is unacceptable

NPPF Section 12

Based on Section 12; Achieving well-designed places, and the six criteria a-f set out in paragraph 127, the building will not function well, or add to the overall quality of the area given its near total dominance of the site. Based on the observations of the Design Advisory Panel it does not demonstrate good architecture, layout or effective landscaping. It does not appear sympathetic to local character given its scale and mass relative to its immediate surroundings and its lack of justification for height relative to the wider principal landmark of Moresby Tower.

By essentially only delivering within the site boundary the proposal can't create a sense of place because the application is not committing to deliver any wider improvements to the streets or spaces network that could provide a welcoming and distinctive place to live work or visit, which is recognised as a key weakness of the existing Ocean Village Estate. It is largely a single use residential development which doesn't deliver any significant or particularly useable green or other public space and shows little evidence as to how it will support public transport facilities. It is also difficult to understand how, because of the lack of any wider public realm, that it can promote health and well-being and in addition much of the ground floor on the south side of the building is dead frontage, and in combination with the standalone cycle store it is again difficult to see how this also promotes safety and security of users through a lack of natural surveillance.

With regard to paragraphs 128 and 129, despite consultation with ourselves, the Design Advisory Panel and the public no significant change has occurred throughout the design evolution to address the fundamental issues raised over the proposal and its design. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF is clear that "permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving character and quality of an area and the way it functions." For the reasons outlined above this development has failed to do so and therefore should be refused.

National Design Guide

The NDG defines the 10 characteristics that should be used to assess the place merits of an application

Context

As the site is almost entirely built development of a significant scale and mass for the size of site it fails to address its wider character and context and makes the assumption that this is the right location and scale for a tall building without presenting a design rationale for that justification. The Design and Access Statement effectively flows from that assumption rather than setting out a compelling context driven case for the site itself. It therefore fails to sufficiently address its context

Identity

The NDG identifies that good place is defined by more than an individual building.

This site is largely covered by a single standalone building and the submission hasn't presented any concrete proposals as to how it will integrate with the wider area by delivering significant public realm and green space improvements concurrent with the construction of the building. Public realm and green space is identified as a key feature in creating an identity to a place.

Movement & Built form

Movement and Built form identifies the key importance of delivering compact and walkable developments. Currently the pedestrian environment is recognised as very poor being dominated by cars either in the form of highway or surface parking which is why the council has been so keen to seek an endorsed development framework/master plan for the wider area and the submitted scheme does not include any committed proposals to improve the pedestrian environment beyond the site, relative to the magnitude of development.

Nature & Public spaces

The landscape proposed is confined to the margins defined by what's left after the building and service requirements are accounted for. Given the number of trees that will be lost from the site to facilitate the building this does not represent any substantial gains in biodiversity or amenity value. No significant public space is created by the development and there are no firm proposals to upgrade existing or define new public spaces within the area.

Uses

The building is largely dominated by a single land use, residential. Much of the south facing ground floor façade is dead frontage in the form of bin and cycle storage

Homes and Buildings

A considerable number of apartments have a north aspect which is less than ideal both in terms of energy consumption and well-being of occupants

Resources and Lifespan

The building doesn't appear to be offering anything exemplary or innovative with regard to energy provision

SCC CCAP Policy AP16 Design

The policy states that buildings must relate well to the predominant scale and mass of existing buildings, which in the case of Ocean Village range between 2 and 9 storeys. There is only one other building Moresby Tower which is of a comparable height. The scale of the immediately adjacent buildings, OVIC and Tagus House is only 3 storey. The proposal doesn't present a justification for an increase in height to 24 storey relative to the buildings immediately surrounding it, which is surprising as in the earlier MDL master plan 2008 (not publicly endorsed) the site had been identified for a 4 storey office block. Although the

reduction in the height of the wings is a positive move, at 15 storeys including roof parapet frame the east block is still a not inconsiderable building relative to its neighbours. The proposal does not deliver “an enriched public realm, defining a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces.” This could only be provided by an endorsed development framework/master plan. The quality of that minimal space that does exist around the building is additionally heavily compromised by the scale and location of the freestanding cycle store. The development does not adopt a “perimeter block form” being a standalone building, does not relate to a human scale, nor leads to improved permeability or an extension of the Green Grid. Indeed a mature stand of Alder trees are to be removed to facilitate the development. The proposal does not through its design strengthen the appreciation of the city centres heritage as the architecture has no specific or distinctive elements which place it as a building inspired by its location.

SCC CCAP Policy AP17 Tall Buildings

This policy encourages tall buildings along the waterfront provided that they accord with AP16, any other relevant site policies, and are assessed in the wider context to ensure the appropriateness of the location. Although visible by means of its scale the building, unlike Moresby Tower, does not directly stand on the waterfront and does not define a destination or define a key space and is therefore unacceptable.

SCC CCAP Policy AP35 Ocean Village

The policy requires that development “uses innovative and distinctive architectural design” Given the concerns raised by the Design Advisory Panel the development fails to align with this policy requirement

Conclusion

Following the review of the submitted proposals against relevant National and Local design policy and guidance, and following the previous reviews by the Design Advisory Panel the re-submitted scheme remains unsatisfactory in design terms

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