



**Haringey Quality Review Panel**

**Report of Formal Review Meeting: Cranwood House**

Wednesday 5 February 2020

River Park House, 225 High Rd, Wood Green, London N22 8HQ

**Panel**

Peter Studdert (chair)  
Esther Everett  
Phyllida Mills  
Craig Robertson  
Lindsey Whitelaw

**Attendees**

Emma Williamson	London Borough of Haringey
Dean Hermitage	London Borough of Haringey
Robbie McNaugher	London Borough of Haringey
Philip Elliot	London Borough of Haringey
Ian Pinamonti-Hyde	London Borough of Haringey
Elisabetta Tonazzi	London Borough of Haringey
Richard Truscott	London Borough of Haringey
Sarah Carmona	Frame Projects
Kyriaki Ageridou	Frame Projects

**Apologies / report copied to**

John McRory	London Borough of Haringey
-------------	----------------------------

**Confidentiality**

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

Cranwood House, Cranwood Woodside, Highgate, London N10 3JH

### 2. Presenting team

Peter Exton	London Borough of Haringey
Sadhbh Ní Hógáin	London Borough of Haringey
Martin Cowie	London Borough of Haringey
Jo McCafferty	Levitt Bernstein Associates Limited
Chris Lomas	Levitt Bernstein Associates Limited
Andrew McKay	Levitt Bernstein Associates Limited

### 3. Aims of the Quality Review Panel meeting

The Quality Review Panel provides impartial and objective advice from a diverse range of experienced practitioners. This report draws together the panel's advice and is not intended to be a minute of the proceedings. It is intended that the panel's advice may assist the development management team in negotiating design improvements where appropriate and, in addition, may support decision-making by the Planning Committee, in order to secure the highest possible quality of development.

### 4. Planning authority briefing

The application site lies within Site Allocation Development Plan Documents (SA51 – Cranwood Care Home) which provide for redevelopment comprising new residential development and improved connections linking Highgate Wood and the Parkland Walk. The site is 0.43 hectares and has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating of two with a forecasted rating of three for 2021. It contains a vacant care home to the north of the site and a row of low-rise (predominantly) Council-owned housing to the south. Highgate Wood, a designated Historic Park, Strategic Local Open Land and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Borough Grade II) adjoins the site's southern boundary. The southern boundary of the Muswell Hill Conservation Area is located on the opposite side of Woodside Avenue immediately to its north. St James Church of England Primary School and its playground adjoins the western boundary, with Muswell Hill Road and the Parkland Walk subway link abutting the site's eastern boundary.

The Council has embarked on an ambitious Council Housing Delivery Programme and this site could help to deliver a sizable proportion of the 1,000 homes that the Council has committed to building by 2022. Planning officers sought the panel's consideration of the proposed block / building heights, massing and the design quality of the scheme; its relationship to the surrounding area and heritage assets; the public realm proposals and linkages between Highgate Wood, the Parkland Walk and the north / northeast of the site; and the legibility of the scheme on approach to the site and within it.



The scheme presented to the panel is for the whole site; however, the site is likely to come forward in phases and the consequent planning application will be for part of the site and the remainder will be presented as a masterplan for the whole site, in line with the site allocation, in the Design and Access Statement.

## 5. Quality Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The Quality Review Panel welcomes the opportunity to consider the proposals for Cranwood House at an early stage. It recognises the level of thought shown in the design process so far but considers that the brief for the development is over-ambitious. The site sits on a key corner opposite the Muswell Hill Conservation Area and adjacent to Highgate Woods, so achieving an appropriate scale, massing and texture for the development must be given the highest priority if Policy DM1 of the Haringey Development Management DPD is to be met (see Appendix below).

As the scheme continues to evolve, the panel considers that the massing of the buildings fronting onto Muswell Hill Road and Woodside Avenue should be reduced significantly in order to respond better to the neighbouring context. It would also encourage a rethink of the role and nature of the central space within the site, and of the location of the pedestrian route that will link the Parkland Walk to Highgate Wood.

The architectural expression of the scheme, which is currently generic and anonymous, must draw on the special character of Muswell Hill, which implies a varied roofscape, contrasting materials and rich detailing. The panel commends the aspiration to design the buildings to Passivhaus standards and feels that the scheme could be an exemplar in this regard. Further information on the panel's view is provided below.

### *Massing and development density*

- The site sits at a prominent junction between the Muswell Hill Conservation Area to the north and Highgate Woods to the south. Its immediate context is defined by richly-detailed three storey Edwardian townhouses to the north and east, and a more plain four storey parade of shops to the south. In the panel's view, an important constraint is the need to protect the glimpsed view of Highgate Woods on the horizon when approaching the site from the north down Muswell Hill Road.
- Given this context, the panel considers that the scale and massing of the scheme proposed is wholly inappropriate. The height of two largest Buildings A and B will probably need to be reduced by at least two storeys, and the reduced massing will need to be carefully articulated to protect views of Highgate Woods. The scale of the more modest Buildings C and D adjacent to the school is considered to be broadly acceptable.



- The design team is therefore encouraged to explore other options for the massing of the development, and the Borough, as the client, is encouraged to scale back its ambition for the site to enable an appropriately-scaled development to come forward.
- Some panel members suggested that it might be possible to increase storey heights towards the rear (western) edge of the site, adjacent to the woods and the school, which would provide residents with views to the woodland and across the roofs to the east and south. While it was suggested that taller development adjacent to schools can be successful – and is not an unusual situation in London - careful modelling to reduce overshadowing of the central space would be required.

*Place-making, public realm and landscape design*

- The panel understands that the intention is to create a green link across the site that joins the Parkland Walk (from Alexandra Palace) to Highgate Wood.
- It feels that the current brief for the central space within the development is extremely challenging. As a public route, this space would become very compromised in terms of security and amenity space, as the area would be dominated by public pedestrian routes, parking spaces and entrances.
- The panel considers that providing an additional entrance into Highgate Woods directly from the central space is neither necessary nor desirable and would potentially have negative implications for security and management of the development. It would encourage the design team to liaise at an early opportunity with the City of London (which manages and funds Highgate Wood), as it may not even be a realistic or achievable aspiration for the development.
- It would also support a rethink of the role of the space, which would see it shift from a physical link to an ecological link and become a more private amenity space for the residents of the development rather than a route through to the woods beyond. There will potentially be many families living in the development, so optimising the amenity value of the central space for children will be very important.
- The panel feels that the concept of ‘rewilding’ the central space is interesting, and would encourage the design team to explore further how this might transform into a landscape that reflects ‘soft woodland edge’, to provide a green area where residents could enjoy the sun – in contrast to the woods which are very shady.
- It would be helpful to better understand the changes in level across the site in section, as this could inform a more responsive interface between the buildings and the landscape.



- Scope exists to move the parking away from the centre of the space so that the focus is on creating an attractive amenity for residents; in this regard, a centrally located structure for residents to use for social purposes could be an option. The inclusion of a potting shed was supported by the panel.
- The panel understands the aspiration to link the Parkland Walk through the centre of the site but raises a number of concerns. Approaching the site along the Parkland Walk requires entering the underpass (under Muswell Hill Road), with a blind corner at the end adjacent to Building A; this potentially poses security, safety and management issues. The Parkland Walk runs alongside Building A, which will create privacy and security issues for residents where living rooms or bedrooms face onto this route.
- The panel would encourage the design team to clarify priorities for the Parkland Walk, as this might inform a different approach to its integration within or around the development, and links into Highgate Wood.

#### *Scheme layout, access and integration*

- The panel feels that a further iteration of the scheme layout will be necessary, as the role and location of the pedestrian routes and open spaces evolve further.
- The panel welcomes the level of thought that has gone into the design of the individual blocks but feels that scope for improvement of the configuration of the units and the circulation areas remains. In particular, the layout of Building A (onto Woodside Avenue) would be improved by avoiding deck access fronting onto the street, as deck access on a main road frontage is not typical of this area and could create nuisance to local neighbours from lighting at night.

#### *Architectural expression*

- The panel would support further exploration of the local architectural context. It would welcome an approach to architectural expression that reflects the local distinctiveness of Muswell Hill, rather than the bland and generic elevational treatment shown in the current proposal.
- For instance, visual cues from local mansion blocks could be used to create a fluid language for the development – contemporary but complementing the local vernacular.
- The panel points out that enriching the exterior of the scheme in its detail, tone and contrasts can be achieved within a reasonable budget. It is confident that the design team can meet this challenge and achieve something distinctive for this important site.



*Design for inclusion, sustainability and healthy neighbourhoods*

- The panel commends the ambition to design the development to Passivhaus standards and feels that the Cranwood House development has the potential to be an exemplar scheme for the wider industry.

*Next steps*

The Quality Review Panel would welcome a further opportunity to review the proposals and adds that panel continuity at the next review will be extremely important. It highlights a number of points for consideration by the design team, in consultation with Haringey officers.

**Appendix: Haringey Development Management DPD**

**Policy DM1: Delivering high quality design**

**Haringey Development Charter**

- A All new development and changes of use must achieve a high standard of design and contribute to the distinctive character and amenity of the local area. The Council will support design-led development proposals which meet the following criteria:
- a Relate positively to neighbouring structures, new or old, to create a harmonious whole;
  - b Make a positive contribution to a place, improving the character and quality of an area;
  - c Confidently address feedback from local consultation;
  - d Demonstrate how the quality of the development will be secured when it is built; and
  - e Are inclusive and incorporate sustainable design and construction principles.

**Design Standards**

Character of development

- B Development proposals should relate positively to their locality, having regard to:
- a Building heights;
  - b Form, scale & massing prevailing around the site;
  - c Urban grain, and the framework of routes and spaces connecting locally and more widely;
  - d Maintaining a sense of enclosure and, where appropriate, following existing building lines;
  - e Rhythm of any neighbouring or local regular plot and building widths;
  - f Active, lively frontages to the public realm; and
  - g Distinctive local architectural styles, detailing and materials.

