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London Borough of Haringey Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Haringey Civic Centre

Wednesday 27 April 2022

Clockwise, Greenside House, 50 Station Road, London N22 7DE

Panel

Peter Studdert (chair)
Phil Armitage
Louise Goodison
Phyllida Mills
David Ubaka

Attendees

Robbie McNaugher	London Borough of Haringey
John McRory	London Borough of Haringey
Sam Uff	London Borough of Haringey
Suzanne Kimman	London Borough of Haringey
Elizabetta Tonazzi	London Borough of Haringey
Richard Truscott	London Borough of Haringey
Kate Trant	Frame Projects
Joe Brennan	Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

Aikaterini Koukouthaki 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.

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1. Project name and site address

Haringey Civic Centre, High Road, Wood Green, London N22 8LE

2. Presenting team

Jason Martin	Partner, Hawkins\Brown
Raheela Fitzgerald	Architect, Hawkins\Brown
Matt Pearson	Architect, Hawkins\Brown
Eduarda Viera	Architect, Hawkins\Brown
Lucy Markham	Partner (Heritage), Montagu Evans
Louisa Smith	Partner (Planning), Montagu Evans

3. Planning authority briefing

Located within the Trinity Gardens Conservation Area, the site is occupied by Haringey Civic Centre, a Grade II listed building, designated as such in 2018. The existing Civic Centre building is three storeys high, with a recessed fourth floor. The building is currently subject to restoration works, and further works are proposed for its internal layout. The proposed new building comprises four storeys with screened plant and atrium / lift overrun above. Both the proposed development and the existing Civic Centre building will mainly be used as offices for Haringey Council staff, as well as retaining some civic uses.

The proposals also include the redevelopment of the rear car park at the northwest corner of the site, link extensions and a landscaped courtyard between the existing and proposed new council office building. The scheme does not propose any replacement parking, with parking in front of the site to be retained.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel broadly supports the proposed scheme, which it views as a very positive addition to the borough but makes comments relating to the height of the annexe, its relation to the existing building, its setting and the scheme's sustainability strategy. The panel applauds the decision to recognise the importance of the Civic Centre to the borough by retaining the existing building, to refurbish significant interior features, such as the Council Chamber, and to retain the existing main entrance. It expresses concerns about the scale of the proposed new annexe building, particularly in relation to the existing Civic Centre, and suggests that consideration is given to either setting back upper storeys or reducing the building in height. At the same time, the panel recognises the importance of creating a building with a strong presence in the townscape and suggests careful consideration of how to address this tension. Facades could be more varied, responding to different settings, and the western edge of the site will require careful treatment to ensure a sympathetic relationship with the school and travellers' site.

The panel would like to see security provision explored in greater detail, to ensure requirements are built in, particularly to the landscape approach. It would also like to more detail to show how each floor plate works in terms of office use and circulation. It would also welcome more detail on the link extensions between the existing Civic Centre building, and on the proposed new annexe. The panel supports the scheme's landscape strategy, which it feels sends a positive message to the wider area but asks that for more thinking on pedestrian and vehicular routes. Cycle parking should be moved to a more attractive location. A more detailed sustainability strategy is needed to show how the scheme can achieve zero carbon, including assessment of material performance. These comments are expanded below.

Scheme context

- The panel comments that the site's wider urban context is key to the success of the scheme. It notes that the existing Civic Centre sits relatively low in the townscape and suggests that giving the new scheme more presence on the hill would reinforce its local civic role.
- The panel feels that the western edge of the development is a sensitive part of the scheme because of its proximity both to the Wallham Place Travellers' Site and to Trinity Primary Academy, and therefore needs careful consideration, in consultation with the school and the travellers.
- The panel feels that both pedestrian and vehicular access need to be addressed in more detail, to help give the scheme greater presence. The approach from the Wood Green town centre to the development could be more legible and the approach to the building's main entrance from its immediate pedestrian setting would benefit from more development.

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- The approach to the scheme would also benefit from being more pedestrian-friendly, with more functional links into the immediate townscape, including to Crescent Park.

Civic Centre repair and restoration

- The panel applauds the scheme's ambition to integrate the existing Civic Centre building with the new annexe and link extensions, while recognising the challenges involved in working with the Civic Centre's aging fabric. The panel commends plans to restore parts of the building as closely as possible to their original state, particularly the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms.
- The panel also supports plans to ensure that repairs are sympathetic to the detailing and materiality of the scheme. While it understands why glass-reinforced concrete (GRC) has been chosen for the exterior of the existing building, it recommends rigorous specification, testing and detailing of this material to ensure it will not suffer adverse effects from weathering.

Architecture

- While the panel largely supports the proposed four-storey height of the annexe building, it is concerned about the impact of the rooftop plant and atrium / lift overrun on the scale of the building. It suggests that options are developed to set this element back, and that parapet detailing is also developed further.
- The panel also asks whether plant could be accommodated in the basement, or floor-by-floor, to reduce the height of the building.
- The scale of the building could also be mitigated by refining detailing at upper storeys. The panel also suggests that each façade could be detailed to be more individually responsive to its immediate context. For example, the north façade could respond to the more domestic scale of the Trinity Road area.
- The panel recommends more detailed analysis of internal layouts, to show how the central core, and deep floorplates will work in terms of office use, circulation, gathering points and views.
- The panel observes that the presentation appears to show that the levels at parapet height are in alignment and questions whether this is the case, or whether the presentation is a slight misrepresentation. More information on how these levels and heights work in detail would be welcomed.
- The panel supports the materiality of the new annexe building, inspired by the existing Civic Centre building.
- However, it suggests that the annexe's elevations require further thought. For example, the fin design would benefit from more detailed attention.

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- The panel also suggests the development of elevations that respond to different conditions around the building. Each facade could read in a way that addresses a different function and setting, such as facing the street, facing the courtyard or facing adjacent buildings.
- The panel supports the use of large windows, which provided variation in the annexe facades, contribute civic and public qualities. They will also provide views in and out, and the panel suggests more detail is developed on what these views will be.

Accessibility and security

- The public and semi-public areas, and the office accommodation within the scheme, are essential components of its civic and democratic function. The panel welcomes the ways in which these elements are addressed but recommends detailed consideration of the security requirements for such a high-profile building. This should include consideration of human, architectural, technological and landscaping approaches to delivering security.
- For example, the panel suggests that the first security line should be at a vehicular level, tied in part to the scheme's overall landscape strategy. Planting and other subtle interventions could form part of this approach. The need to introduce measures such as bollards, post-completion, should be avoided.
- The panel notes that staff cyclists appear to have the least interesting route into the development, with access from the rear of the scheme next to the refuse store. The panel questions this approach, which is unlikely to encourage employees to cycle to work.
- The panel welcomes the retention of the existing Civic Centre entrance on the High Road as the scheme's main entrance. However, it feels that improvements could be made to general access and circulation across the whole scheme to create more natural and logical relationships between different parts of the building.

Landscape

- The panel notes the generous provision offered by the scheme's staff courtyard.
- The panel is encouraged by plans to preserve existing trees on the Trinity Road and High Road sides of the site, and by proposals for additional planting across the site, including links to the adjoining woodland.
- It suggests that circulation areas in and around the garden and woodland area could be improved to encourage use.

Sustainability

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- The panel supports the ambition for the scheme to achieve net zero by 2027. However, it is unclear how this ambition will be achieved, particularly in the existing Civic Centre building, and asks for further details.
- The panel suggests that considering alternative options for the location of the plant could provide more efficient heating and cooling, as well as reducing the height of the building.
- Similarly, the panel would welcome a more detailed analysis of the way the stack ventilation operates, in relation to the central circulation core of the annexe building.
- While the panel acknowledges that GRC is a viable low embodied carbon material, it asks that its performance is also taken into account, as part of a fabric-first approach to the scheme.
- The panel notes the intention to use operable windows and asks for more detailed analysis to show how they will work in different parts of the building.
- The panel welcomes the introduction of photovoltaic cells but asks for more clarity on how they contribute the overall sustainability strategy.

Next steps

The panel is available to review the scheme again, either at a formal review or a chair's review, when the design team has been able to respond to its comments.