

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

20 September 2007

PROPOSAL: Outline planning application for erection of 28 residential units.
LOCATION: Land at A34 Liverpool Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme
DEVELOPERS: Brittle Motors Ltd
ARCHITECTS: Hulme Upright Manning
REF NO: 075

Background & Planning Context

The proposal has been formally submitted to Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council as an outline planning application for the demolition of existing public house and erection of 28 residential apartments and associated car parking, and landscaping works. The proposal includes alterations to the existing vehicular access onto Liverpool Road and two pedestrian access points on the western boundary leading down into the existing housing estate at the rear, which lies below the site ground level.

The site lies in the southeast corner of the RENEW masterplan area and proposes to introduce a range of apartments into the residential mix.

Site Description

The site is located adjacent to Liverpool Road A34 in Newcastle-under-Lyme. Vehicular access can be gained on the eastern boundary directly from Liverpool Road. The site occupied by the former Castle Tavern which is situated in the centre but is now redundant and is surrounded by car parking. The southern boundary is occupied by a small selection of shops, comprising a furniture store and newsagent, with the northern boundary marked with residential properties. The site is level with the A34, however the site slopes down to the northern boundary. At the rear of the site the ground level drops some 3 metres to the back of the housing estate below.

Design Proposal

Despite the planning application being only for outline consent the developer has considered the proposed layout and indicative elevations of the proposed residential apartments. The design proposal predominantly consists of one key apartment block which bridges the vehicular access to the rear, stepping up in height from two storey closest to the north and south boundaries and up to five storey as it progresses to the centre of the development, with associated parking to the rear, and landscaping on the boundaries. The proposed development comprises 28 apartments, 21 of which are two-bed properties and the remaining flats one-bed.

The proposed development utilises a materials palette including a ground floor gabion skin cladding, render and horizontal cedar cladding including louvre panels to the rear elevation. The proposed development has a strong horizontal emphasis.

Panel Comments

Materials:

The proposed materials as indicated on the elevation plans were considered good. However the Panel remarked that they would like to see further use of the gabions at ground floor level, as the continuation will give the appearance of a plinth, defining the building further. In addition the Panel suggested that the Cedar boarding was also extended on upper floors, with the extended white render providing greater definition. It was put forward that collectively these alterations would create more powerful horizontal layering to the elevations and that this would be desirable, if the scheme could accommodate them.

Landscape & Streetscape:

The Panel noted that the plans shown were only indicative but were agreed that it was a strong scheme, especially with regards to the position of the gateway leading through to the circus behind the site. The Panel thought that the scheme would benefit from some further investigation and development of the parking layout and landscape areas, to create private plots for ground floor occupants. This would reduce maintenance costs and create a more attractive development for future residents. The division of small plots would also add interesting individual personalisation to the space surrounding the building, creating a clear definition between the public and private realm.

The Panel also highlighted that pedestrian access to the front of the building was unclear, and that most activity would occur at the rear of the development with residents who arrive by car, it was suggested that some attempt should be made to create a clear entrance to the building for pedestrians entering the site from Liverpool Road.

Buildings Form & Scale:

Overall, the Panel were very supportive of the proposed scheme and consider that it has some special architectural merits. The Panel also commented that the inter-penetration of windows and balconies generally worked well even though the hierarchy of provision on the fourth floor with the inner corners at the rear of the building may limit the views from some apartments.

Conclusion

In summary the Panel were supportive of the design proposal and thought it was a good piece of architecture that had a strong relationship with Liverpool Road supporting the linear rhythm of the street. The Panel considered that the outline application had the potential to become one of the focal developments along Liverpool Road.

Recommendations Actions

1. The Panel recommend that the gabions at ground floor level should be extended further towards the centre of the building to create a plinth appearance to the elevation, and the white render at second and third level should continue further to enhance the effect of the louvre panels.
2. Further careful consideration and development should be given to the proposed layout for car parking and landscape areas, taking advantage of the opportunity to create individual plots for ground floor residents.
3. Following the concerns raised by the Panel, further attempts should be made to create a clear entrance for pedestrians arriving at the building from Liverpool Road.
4. The Panel were concerned that due to the slope on the site and change in ground level to the existing housing estate at the rear the developer should explore possible mitigation measures to address any issues of overlooking.
5. The Panel considered that none of the recommendations made above should stand in the way of outline planning permission being granted as all could be addressed at a later date.