



Victor Grayson
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Our Ref: let.001.62261886
7 September 2020

Dear Victor,

Ramsden House, Huddersfield

We write to provide an update and fulsome response to the outstanding matters which have arisen during the course of the application. Here we set out the key comments from statutory consultees and officers and to provide an update on our position in this regard.

Design

External elevations of tower

In response to comments from Design and Conservation Officer, Craig McHugh, relating to the new window treatments, Columbia Threadneedle has explored a range of alternative options to improve upon the existing blue framing and elevational treatments.

The feedback received was that the window treatment was considered to conflict with the original design intent of the building by introducing vertical stripes which would detract from the setting of the conservation area. The following options to address this feedback have been considered and explored:

Option 1: Replacing the blue frame curtain walling

Kirklees requested that the applicant investigate whether stainless steel curtain walling was used at Lever House and whether this could be uncovered under the existing blue paintwork.

The applicant has obtained costings for this option. To remove the existing and replace the curtain walling and cladding with all associated works this would cost in the region of £1,524,000 which is clearly a significant expense to the project. A set of development appraisals have been undertaken by TFT consultants to assist in exploring alternative options and assess the financial impact of carrying out these works.

The appraisals demonstrate that the costs of the curtain walling upgrade would result in only a 2.63% profit on costs, which would not be sufficient for the owner to progress with the project. Even without the cladding the scheme will only generate a modest profit of 7.49%.

As such, this option has been discounted as it would render the scheme unviable and prohibit the scheme from progressing.

Option 2: Revealing the frame

The applicant has explored the possibility of removing the blue paintwork to reveal the frame underneath. The curtain walling is understood to be aluminium rather than steel and so there would be a mix of materials between the ground stainless steel shop fronts and upper floors which would appear untidy and not deliver the desired design effect.

In addition, it would also not be feasible to remove the existing powder coating and leave the existing aluminium exposed in terms of both weather protection and integrity of the system which would likely degrade over time.

The applicant has discounted this option on this basis.

Option 3: Respraying the glazing bars and vinyl film

The feedback received from the Design and Conservation officer was that the vertical stripes would detract from the setting of the conservation area, and instead a “more subtle glazing treatment” based on a pattern of horizontal banding would be appropriate, particularly one with less contrast than the existing and which responded to the tones of local stone. The applicant was directed to the nearby former Co-op building whereby a bronze colour was approved.

The additional window film creating the vertical banding is required to allow new partitions to junction with the external wall and provide appropriate fire and acoustic separation. It also provides the opportunity to insulate behind the vinyl to improve the thermal performance of the building required by building regulations. Whilst the vinyl is essential to retain, the Applicant has explored multiple colour options which respond to the feedback received.

Three options are submitted for alternative external treatments which would involve respraying the glazing bars and installing colour film to the original glazing. If the Applicant moved away from the application of vinyl, it would involve alternative cladding solutions which will necessitate removing the curtain walling. As outlined above, removal is not financially viable and affixing any further cladding on top of the existing system would not be feasible as it is unlikely that a warranty for any such addition could be secured.

The alternative options considered are as follows:

- Option 4 (Natural Stone): stone coloured cladding panels along the façade with pale stone coloured panels underneath;
- Option 5 (Natural Stone): consistent stone coloured cladding panels along the façade with pale stone coloured panels underneath;
- Option 6 (Bronze): bronze coloured cladding panels along the façade with pale stone coloured panels underneath.

The three options presented include two natural stone options, one with consistent stone coloured cladding and another with a gradient transitioning from a lighter to a darker stone colour. The final option presents bronze coloured panelling which was suggested in the Design and Conservation feedback received. In response to the comments, the colour emphasis of the vinyl in each instance has been amended to create a horizontal rather than vertical emphasis.

Whilst the bronze colouring is appropriate for the nearby Co-operative building, the former Co-operative is made of natural local stone which complements the bronze colouring. It is considered

that the bronze detailing (Option 6) is less subtle than the stone coloured options, and somewhat conflicts with the colour palette of Ramsden House. Option 5 (consistent stone) is the applicant's preferred option, as a more subtle approach which draws on the natural stone colour palette within the surrounding area, however, we would welcome your feedback on the options considered.

The proposed elevational finish will result in a significant visual improvement against the existing blue frame curtain walling which has been identified as detracting from the setting of the nearby conservation area. The proposed colour scheme directly responds to heritage feedback received by drawing on a natural stone colour palette which is seen in buildings of heritage significance close to the site. The improvements proposed will reduce the stark contrast of the existing blue colouring, presenting a more muted colour palette which will complement the heritage assets closest to the site, including the Grade II listed Town Hall and the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area.

The revised elevational treatment will not result in any level of harm to the setting of the Town Hall or the Conservation Area. It will instead deliver a more subtle, and less contrasting finish which will significantly improve upon the existing façade, making a positive contribution to the setting of these heritage assets.

Living/green roof

Design and Conservation Officer, Craig McHugh, noted that the original Level House design included a roof top garden on top of the podium and welcomed the introduction of a similar feature at Ramsden House to help greening within the town centre.

This has been fully explored by the client team, to ascertain whether this could be achieved. An assessment has been undertaken by a qualified Structural Engineer, they have concluded that the loading capacities are not sufficient to support a living roof or roof top garden at podium level and meaning it will not be possible to incorporate this element.

Notwithstanding the structural issues identified and costly work which would be required to strengthen the podium, the costs to install and maintain the living roof itself would not be financially viable for the project.

In addition to the structural issues identified, the podium area falls outside of the red line boundary for this application. Delivering greening works in this location would fall outside of the remit of this change of use application.

Whilst the living roof is not practically or financially achievable, the applicant is committed to the council's aim of greening the town centre in accordance with the Huddersfield Blueprint. As such they propose to contribute £2,500 towards tree planting within New Street to reflect the Council's ambitions the street.

Signage

The position of the signage band on the New Street elevation shop front was questioned. The signage band has been moved up to meet the canopy so that it aligns with the signage of other shopfronts, which will be reflected in the revised elevational plans once the preferred external elevational treatment has been confirmed.

Crime Prevention

Further to correspondence relating to the crime prevention measures which will be incorporated into the scheme, we confirm that the following measures will be integrated:

- Access controlled roller shutter at basement level;
- Internal doors within the basement will be access controlled;
- A concierge will be in attendance 24hrs a day, seven days a week;
- At ground floor, doors leading to the private spaces such as student accommodation, office areas and lounge areas will be access controlled;
- At first floor, the student accommodation office will be fob access controlled for staff only. Access onto the internal corridor to the rear will be emergency access only and doors to the bin store will be resident fob controlled access only. There will be no access control necessary for first floor gym area.
- Standard measures for external lighting, CCTV, alarm systems and external features such as glazing and door sets will be accorded with.

Environmental matters

Waste Strategy

In response to the comments received regarding the Waste Strategy for the building, we confirm that the following can be accommodated within the proposal:

- 12 x 1100 ltr containers for the student residential use;
- 5 x 1100 ltr containers for the commercial uses.

Refuse vehicles currently access the basement for the existing retail units, and there are no changes proposed which would prevent this arrangement from continuing.

We would be grateful if you could review the above and enclosed information and take this forward with the relevant statutory consultees.

We trust that the information provided is sufficient to progress matters toward a positive determination of the application. However, should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Hannah Payne
Principal Planner