

**Cambridge City Council
Design & Conservation Panel**

Notes of the meeting Wednesday 16th January 2013

Attendees:

Nick Bullock	Chair
Terry Gilbert	RTPI (vice Chair)
Ian Bramwell	RIBA
Kieran Perkins	RIBA
Carolin Gohler	Cambridge PPF
David Grech	English Heritage
Jo Morrison	Landscape Institute
Jon Harris	Co-opted member
Ian Steen	Co-opted member

Officers:

Catherine Linford	City Council
Susan Smith	City Council

Observers:

Cllr Paul Saunders	City Council
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1. Apologies – Dennis Goldsmith, Chris Davis, Tony Nix and Russell Davies.

2. Presentation – The Race House, Shaftesbury Road.

A presentation on a round house proposal on the land between 2 & 3 Shaftesbury Road. The building has been designed over four floors with a basement level, two full floors at ground and first floor level and an 'attic' storey at the second floor level. Previous proposals were brought before the Panel in October 2011 and May 2012. Although the final scheme was strongly supported by the Panel (verdict unanimous GREEN), the planning application made in April 2012 was refused under delegated powers in July 2012.

Presentation by Tim Poulson of Poulson Architecture.

Carolin Gohler declared an interest and did not participate in the vote.

The Panel's comments are as follows:

- The Impact on the Neighbouring Properties. The impact of this building on the gardens of the neighbouring properties was a key concern last time and remains crucial to the building's success. The Panel would have welcomed further information on the neighbours' gardens to both north and south and the rooms looking on to them in order to gauge the effect of the proposal. Further detail of the proposed fenestration and views from within the proposed building looking out onto these gardens would be necessary to assess the impact on the adjoining properties.
- The Impact on the Streetscape. The Panel felt the building would be successful in the streetscape: open at the front but revealing the circular form behind the trees. However, the possibility of success also depends on a successful resolution of the boundaries of the site, requiring negotiation with the neighbours at No 1 and 3 Shaftesbury Road so that the drumlike form of the house can be clearly read without being encumbered with boundary walls.

- Nature of the parapet. With fenestration only to the front, this was viewed by the Panel as overly simplistic. Exploring alternative treatments to the ground floor while maintaining the implicit shape of the 'drum' at the upper levels would necessitate a welcome re-visiting of the top level.
- Handling of the Ground and Top Floor. The Panel wondered whether the question of the boundaries might be addressed by slightly modifying or inflecting the simple drum form of the dwelling on the ground and the top floor while maintaining the integrity of the drum at first floor level. Exploring alternative treatments to the ground floor while maintaining the implicit shape of the drum might also open up possibilities for rethinking the top level.
- The Link between Basement and Garden. The Panel were disappointed to learn that this space would only have a visual link to the garden at the rear. The Panel were told that there is an issue with the water table which was noted but thought nevertheless, that every effort should be made to create a physical link between the basement and the garden.
- The Detailing of the Design. The Panel thought the choice of stone was an appropriate material for the house but felt strongly that details such as crisp arises and the handling of the window cills would be essential for the success of the design, not just in the short term but in the longer terms as the stone weathers.
- Forecourt parking. The Panel questioned the practicality of the parking arrangements and whether the proposed trees along the street line could be accommodated given the limited space.
- Landscaping. The Panel advise against the planting of Hornbeams or Plane trees along the Shaftesbury Road boundary line as these will grow too tall resulting in excessive shadowing and recommended instead the choice of lighter species designed for the longer term. The Panel also thought that any screening to the rear of the building would need to incorporate a protected root zone, as the existing tree makes a significant contribution to the Conservation Area.

Conclusion.

The Panel were reminded that the previous proposal for this site was refused principally on grounds of amenity and not design. However, as the owners of both adjacent properties have sold this site with planning permission it is clear that the principle of the development of the site has been established and the Panel feel that the issue of amenity can be resolved despite the constraints imposed by the narrowness of the site.

The Panel feel that the drum like form of the house would be considerably less oppressive in its impact on the neighbouring gardens but consider that the pure cylindrical form will need modification to address the boundary problems on either side. While persuaded that this approach has the potential for success, the Panel feel that the simplicity of the starting point for the design will need careful detailed handling of questions like the fenestration, the relationship between basement and garden in order to realise its promise.

VERDICT – GREEN (5), AMBER (3) with 1 abstention.

3. Minutes of the last meeting – Wednesday 12th December 2012.

Paul Milliner of the University had requested clarification regarding the minutes for Arup Building proposal; specifically the Panel's view on the gable extension.

ACTION: Terry Gilbert to re-visit the minutes for the Arup item to clarify the Panel's discussion on the gable end of the building.

4. Review of the D&C Panel – Glen Richardson.

Panel members, officers, and agents will be invited to participate in an open dialogue over the coming months to discuss objectively how well the Panel is working and where any 'fine tuning' may be required. Nick Bullock will be included as a crucial participant in this discussion.

5. A farewell and thanks to Nick Bullock.

All those in attendance thanked Nick for his skilful chairing of the Panel over the last two years. Terry Gilbert will be the Acting Chair for the period of the review.

6. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 13th February 2013.

Reminder

CABE 'traffic light' definitions:

GREEN: a good scheme, or one that is acceptable subject to minor improvements

AMBER: in need of *significant* improvements to make it acceptable, but not a matter of starting from scratch

RED: the scheme is fundamentally flawed and a fresh start is needed.