

18/1930/FUL - Appendix B

Cambridge City Council Design & Conservation Panel Notes of the meeting Wednesday 9th May 2018

Presentation – Old Press Mill Lane, South Block (Pembroke College)

A presentation on the emerging proposals to include an explanation of the opportunities, vision and brief for Pembroke Mill Lane; a description of the proposed site strategy in terms of Collegiate activity and movement as well as landscape and form; as well as the detailed proposals for each area of the site, including consideration of specific heritage constraints and opportunities.

The Panel's comments were as follows:

The Panel broadly welcomed these proposals and the strategy adopted for redeveloping this part of the Mill Lane site, although time constraints prevented a full examination of all aspects of the proposals, such as the internal alterations to Kenmare House (Grade II Listed).

• Stuart House (BLI)

Stuart House takes the form of a pavilion building, intended to be seen 'in the round', and the proposal to improve the setting of Stuart House through the demolition and redevelopment of the Mill Lane Lecture Rooms building to the west, and partial demolition of buildings to the east was broadly welcomed, though the Panel acknowledged that there was a degree of trade-off between reducing the curtilage-listed School Hall building by one bay and the opportunity that afforded to use Stuart House to terminate the vista from the new entrance off Trumpington Street. The Panel also supported the decision to set back the railings on Mill Lane in front of Stuart House, since this would provide an opportunity to pause on Mill Lane, and to better appreciate Stuart House. The one concern that the Panel had on this issue was that the resulting space created on Mill Lane should not be occupied by delivery vehicles. The Panel were also pleased to see that the existing front door to Stuart House facing onto Mill Lane is to be retained, even if the primary access to the building might now be on the east elevation, accessed from the newly created Kenmare Court.

The south side of Stuart House faces onto a narrow space enclosed by an existing high brick boundary wall, and the Panel felt that there might be an opportunity to further enhance the setting of Stuart House through some additional planting on this wall.

- **Dolby Court.**

The new postgraduate residential accommodation is to be provided in the form of a new three-sided court, to be known as Dolby Court, located to the west of Stuart House. This new court retains and re-uses the Mill Lane section of Miller's Yard, but all the other parts of the building are new structures. The Panel accepted the strategy adopted by the architects for delivering this new accommodation, and welcomed the slight reduction in scale of the new element fronting Mill Lane that will replace the existing Mill Lane Lecture Rooms building. The sunken lawn, coupled with the arcade screening the commercial elements on the north side (that are to be accessed from Mill Lane), and the varied treatment of the west and south blocks all added a richness to the proposal that has the potential to deliver a scheme of real quality. The Panel had some concern over the detailing of the dormers to the new attic floor on the retained Miller's Yard building and urged the architects to revisit this so that the dormers might be less dominant in the streetscape.

- **School Hall (Curtilage listed)**

The Panel were informed that this building had suffered extensive alterations and change over its life. Notwithstanding the consequential erosion of its historic fabric, the current proposals now seek to retain a significant portion of the building, though the northern most bay is to be demolished so as to open up the new Kenmare Court to Stuart House. The Panel acknowledged that the resulting loss of part of the School Hall would need appropriate justification, but there was support amongst the Panel for the townscape benefits that would result through the development of Kenmare Court, and the ability to use Stuart House to terminate the new vista that will be created from the new access into this part of the college from Trumpington Street.

- **Kenmare House, new gatehouse building at 75 Trumpington Street and 76 Trumpington Street.**

The Panel accepted the argument for the demolition and replacement of 75 Trumpington Street so as to create a new gateway to the development that will also include a new gallery space at first floor level.

The Panel were also comfortable with the scale, form and massing of the replacement building and welcomed the retention of the building line so as to preserve the forecourt to Kenmare House. Whilst the Panel had some concerns over the introduction of a diagonal pedestrian route over the forecourt to Kenmare House, the benefits that this would deliver were understood and accepted, but the Panel requested further work to be undertaken on this forecourt area so as to better reveal the significance of Kenmare House, and recommended the reintroduction of traditional railings (rather than just a dwarf wall), albeit set back in line with the steps leading to the front door of Kenmare House. The materials for the floorscape and any planting in this area will also require careful consideration.

The retention of 76 Trumpington Street was again welcomed by the Panel, and the proposed internal remodelling to provide a new entrance to the performance space within the former church again appeared well thought through. The new 1 ½ storey foyer building flanking the south side of the new Kenmare Court, and linking to the retained element of the School Hall, also has the potential to be a space of quality and appropriate for its use.

- **Pedestrian crossing and shared surfacing.**

A key aspect of these proposals will be the solution adopted for the crossing of Trumpington Street to link the new Pembroke Mill Lane facilities back to the original college. This part of the proposals is still under development and subject to consultations with County Highways. The Panel would support a shared surface option as a measure to slow down vehicle speeds on Trumpington Street, and would welcome the opportunity to review and comment on the eventual solution that is to be adopted.

- **Cycle parking, disabled parking and servicing strategy.**

The Panel were not convinced that the cycle parking arrangements, along with disabled parking provision and the servicing strategy for the new facilities, have been adequately thought through. In particular, the Panel had concerns that the space between the west block of Dolby Court and the University Centre should not become a 'negative space' and be seen as a convenient dumping ground for cycles and disabled parking. If this space is to be used intensively for cycle parking, incorporating double racks for bikes, then consideration might need to be given to enclosing the bike storage with a grass roof, so as to provide

a positive outlook from the bedrooms that overlook the space. The careful integration of visitor cycle parking into the forecourt of Stuart House might also prevent the casual parking of

cycles on the relocated railings to Mill Lane. The new commercial facilities fronting onto Mill Lane, together with the new facilities within Stuart House and those created within the buildings fronting onto Trumpington Street, will all require servicing, and a clear servicing strategy will therefore be needed for the whole site, rather than risk an ad-hoc solution that is likely to erode the quality of the new public realm created by the development.

Conclusion.

The Panel applaud what in their view, is a thoughtful response to a challenging brief. The introduction of new courtyard spaces and the sacrificing of buildings for collegiate functions is a significant change but, in the Panel's view, that change was not necessarily harmful to the character or appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. The Panel felt it is more important for the northern parts of the Mill Lane development to retain its existing 'gritty' character, and there is scope for the internal parts of this site to adopt a more 'collegiate' character. Therefore, while this is considered an appropriate solution for the southern side of Mill Lane, it is not one that should be continued across onto the northern side of the lane.

At a future presentation, the Panel would welcome the inclusion of a fully developed landscape plan so that the interrelationship of the various elements of the new public realm, and the use of materials and planting can be fully understood.

VERDICT – GREEN (unanimous) subject to further development.