



Places Matter Enabling Session 20 November 2019, at Trafford College, Stretford

Guy Pearson-Gregory
Accrue Forum 1 LLP

By email

03 December 2019

Dear Guy,

**Re: Places Matter Enabling Session
Trafford Place, Stretford – 20 November 2019 at Trafford College**

Thank you for engaging Places Matter and for the time that you and your colleagues gave us in presenting the development history of the site.

The key purpose of the Enabling session was to explore with you the scale, mass and format of potential residential development on the former B&Q site on Great Stone Road, Stretford, adjacent to Lancashire County Cricket Club.

The panel undertook a site visit to familiarise themselves with the site and its context, including the relationship to surrounding residential areas, the Metrolink station and the stands and cricket facilities next door.

The Enabling Conversation

The Panel explored with you your own thoughts about the emergence of the current development proposition and the competing pressures on the site, as well as hearing about the wider regeneration plans, being guided by the 2018 Civic Quarter Masterplan.

The Panel worked with the tabled iteration of development, which is seeking to create a residential led scheme, of c.300 units, with an landmark building, which can reused a significant brownfield land site, which is close to public transport. The ambition is to enable the site to be permeable to neighbouring residential areas and to create a strong street scene.

The height of the scheme is being guided by the “planning reference” of the six storey office blocks to Talbot Road, with the potential for additional height at the tramline interface.

The Panel outlined a series of headline comments to help guide the next stage of the design development, as follows:

- a. The Panel expressed its clear view that a site of this significance feels right for development at this scale, height and massing. The Panel did not agree that there was any need to define a rigid datum at six storeys and that justification could be made to adjust this as outlined in more detail below;
- b. There is a fundamental issue still to be resolved in terms of whether this is one building or a series of three, or more, as this will determine your options for sculpting the buildings and how you are able to introduce more natural light to elevations and internal areas, perhaps through the introduction of secondary entrances.
- c. The Panel’s clear view is that this development would benefit from being a series of separate buildings;
- d. The ‘edge conditions’ and adjacencies are a critical factor. These will determine the amenity of a good number of the apartments, in terms of the width of the perimeter landscaping, the views over car parking and the impact of the noise and servicing on those apartments;
- e. You were encouraged to ‘cut’ some elements out of the northeast facing elevation, to improve the amenity of these units and to get sunlight penetration to the street. A much wider edge and a raised ground floor should be considered for this elevation given that it is overlooking the car park entrance;
- f. You were also asked to reconsider whether 280 car parking spaces were really needed for this development. If you can reduce this, then vehicle access might be possible from the northwest side and allow for additional space to be created between the blocks and the adjacent indoor nets. It might also reduce the need for a full podium across the whole site;
- g. You need to be designing the space to the north-east as if the indoor nets have been replaced by something much more amenable and you must avoid any sense that the rear space is just a service yard;
- h. The Panel noted the worthy intention to connect to the nearby tram stop, but felt that the diagonal route through the site and the corner of the development block was driving the arrangement of spaces and uses. Careful thought needs to be given to how to introduce passive observation over the ‘tail’ of this proposed connection if it is to be a safe route;

- i. You were urged to produce cross sections of the site as these will highlight any key areas of poor residential amenity, if you were for example to apply a Building for Life 12 type test to the development;
- j. The Panel felt strongly that you should consider bringing the development closer to Great Stone Road, to allow for greater engagement with the street. This will also guide you in placing additional pedestrian entrances and how to further articulate the elevations;
- k. The intended overall architectural quality, proportions and details were felt to be successful and you must strive to retain these in the final scheme and not lose elements to any future efficiency savings;
- l. Consider how you can create clear and separate entrances to each block and how you avoid the things you “mustn’t do”, such as a clash between service and car parking needs and residential amenity. Drive the development for amenity value, not engineering ease and remember that in 50 years we will be designing for no cars, so don’t let them dominate your thinking now;
- m. The internal courtyards present an opportunity for you to have small areas of highly valuable private amenity space and perhaps even ‘front door’ apartments to help animate the courtyard and help ensure its use;
- n. At present the courtyards are dominated by a desire for wider public access, which has no clear function and is not conducive to high residential amenity. You need to more clearly define public and private spaces, your required access routes and how you might even create a few special sunny spaces;
- o. On the northeast elevation, you might consider bringing the basement level out slightly to allow for the creation of small balconies to relieve this elevation and improve amenity. As a single continuous entity, this elevation is felt to be too long and must be broken up;
- p. You were asked to reconsider the use of corner entrances to the blocks, as these diminish the amenity of the adjacent apartments;
- q. The Council is clear that it is seeking a placemaking approach to this development and the others in the area. The Panel supports this principle, which would suggest separate blocks, lower levels of car parking and higher levels of liveability;
- r. The Panel suggests that you fragment the plan form and sculpt the roofline, reordering the mass slightly to help make this happen. Greater height, than currently proposed, adjacent to the tramline is not considered an issue, especially if this maintains a viable development quantum, allows for breaking up the blocks and secures greater liveability;

- s. Use your strategic diagram and sections to show how these issues can be reconciled and the benefits of moving the development towards the southern edge and creating a landmark element to the tramline side. Do not let the quest for permeability risk making potentially delightful semi-private spaces less usable for residents though;
- t. Making a series of individual buildings engage more directly with Great Stone Road will have the beneficial impact of reducing the sense of one large mass, whilst still allowing the opportunity to create a landmark element as you emerge over the bridge from The Quadrant, and help connect to the amenities there. It would also allow you to use three distinct street addresses, help improve wayfinding to individual blocks, which currently feel as if they lack legibility and would perhaps even allow you to introduce different tenures;
- u. A none-uniform building line might help you to respond to the bridge and the gradient and add to the sense of a more dramatic approach. There is no need for you to be apologetic at the bridge end – seek to make more of a feature here;
- v. The landscape and roof terraces need a very strategy and management plan from the outset. This is a high level of investment and you must ensure that each space has a defined function to ensure its future use is maximised;
- w. The introduction of bookable communal spaces adjacent to the roof terraces would help maximise their value and use;
- x. The Panel directed you to The Malings, Newcastle as a example of how very modest private spaces interact with wider public spaces to create a hierarchy which blends uses and drive ups liveability;

Summary

In summary, the Panel thanked you for engaging with Places Matter Design Review and for the level of your contributions on the day.

You were encouraged to maximise the engagement with the street and to break up the mass of the blocks to allow more sunlight and a greater number of individual entrances to the development. The north-eastern façade needs particular attention to address issues with liveability.

You need to ensure that the edge conditions work much harder, both to the street and the courtyards. The introduction of more height on the tram side would be supported if this allows for a redistribution of mass and unit numbers to create the better conditions of the north-eastern side.

You should seek a landmark statement next to the bridge and direct pedestrian access from Great Stone Road, by drawing the development to the south.

The Panel thanked you for your active participation in the enabling process and would welcome the opportunity to see the revised development proposals, perhaps at Desk Review.

Yours sincerely

Richard Tracey
Panel Manager
for PlacesMatter

c.c. Paul O'Connell - O'Connell East
Aleks Hayward - O'Connell East
Carl Taylor - TPM Landscape
Matthew Hard - Indigo Planning
Hannah Payne - Indigo Planning
Debra Harrison - Trafford Council
David Pearson - Trafford Council

Appendix

Strategic Diagram



