



Former B&Q Site, Great Stone Road, Stretford, M32 0YP

Appeal by Accrue (Forum) 1 LLP

LPA Ref: 100400/OUT/20

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/20/3258552

Townscape Assessment and Landscape Design

AC/4/A

SUMMARY PROOF

1.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 1.1 The Appeal Site is a former B&Q store that fronts onto Great Stone Road and is bounded by the grounds of Lancashire County Cricket Club to the north and east, and the Metrolink line to the south. It is accessible from Great Stone Road via an existing vehicular access. The site is located in a mixed use area within the Cricket Club Quarter and includes large office and hotel buildings as well as the stands, flood lights and other infrastructure associated with EOT.
- 1.2 Residential streets also form part of the wider area with predominantly two storey homes located directly opposite the site off Great Stone Road.
- 1.3 The Appeal Site is currently vacant, with street trees lining the road frontage and along the Metrolink Line. The proposal site is also located within the Civic Quarter Area Action Plan area.
- 1.4 This application (the appeal) followed the refusal of a similar (but larger) application by TMBC on 29 March 2019 (LPA ref: 94974/OUT/18) submitted by the same applicant on 28 June 2018 in the following terms:
- 1.5 The design also presented and engaged with Places Matter. Places Matter is an independent organisation, hosted by RIBA, which promotes the skills and knowledge of all those involved in new development, promoting good design and encouraging strong client leadership..
- 1.6 The applicant took the decision not to appeal against refusal of the previous application in favour of working with the LPA to bring forward a revised scheme which sought to address the previous reasons for refusal.
- 1.7 An outline application for the appeal scheme was then submitted to TMBC on 19 March 2020. The scheme included landscape proposals and a Townscape

Assessment (TVIA) which informed the layout and appearance of the proposed development.

- 1.8 The submitted scheme was determined by the Council and so this appeal is against non-determination.
- 1.9 The proposed development comprises four separate buildings of up to eight storeys in height above the ground floor. The development extends to eight storeys in the eastern corner, close to the railway tracks and steps down in height towards Great Stone Road. Three buildings are linked across three storeys (floors 2-5).
- 1.10 Vehicle parking, cycle parking and refuse storage will be provided at basement level. The buildings will be separated by two internal courtyards, creating shared amenity space for residents and pleasant views across the development. Roof terraces are provided at levels 4, 5 and 6. Balconies and private gardens are also provided.
- 1.11 There are several routes of pedestrian access into and across the site, enhancing permeability. A mixture of stepped and direct level access is provided.

Landscaping & Amenity

Level 0

- 1.12 The level 0 landscape helps to strengthen links through the landscape while offering an attractive frontage to the development. Soft planting divides the entrance pathways and creates a strong green gateway to the development.. Private units have terraced garden areas which overlook this space but are divided by a level difference (being set above the road) and hedgerow boundary treatments allowing for some privacy and definition of space. Tree planting to boundaries and Great Stone Road add screening and a quality landscape setting. Appendix C1 and CD B8

Level 1

- 1.13 The design has a decorative central square surrounded by pleached trees and an elevated lawn area, with seating elements. This pattern is mirrored across the two courtyards, restricting primary movement to the perimeter of spaces and offering peaceful space for recreation to the centres. Ground floor residential units will have private terrace space between areas of public space with low hedging defining private / public boundaries. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in Appendix C1 and CD B8

Levels 5 & 7

- 1.14 Levels 5 and 7 offer small and intimate spaces for residents to relax. Elevated views to the south are framed by planting and other landscape features. The design of the roof terraces creates intimate spaces through the use of raised planters and pergolas. arrangement is illustrated in Plans in appendix C2 and CD B8.
- 1.15 Levels 6 and 8 offer larger, more sociable spaces with more contrast in character and potential usage. The west terrace houses a large open grassed area, which acts as a flexible space for all kinds of recreation. The central terrace creates more divided and private interconnected spaces with moveable cube seating, pergolas and large wooden loungers. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in appendix C1 and CD B8
- 1.16 The TPM Townscape assessment (TVIA) concluded that the proposals will regenerate a brownfield site through the construction of residential apartment blocks and landscaping, and that this would inevitably be visible from locations close to the proposal site and have some influence in terms of change over the immediate urban surroundings.
- 1.17 The scale and appearance of the proposed buildings were considered to be contiguous with the adjacent LCC stadium and the larger office and commercial buildings within the wider area.

- 1.18 The nature of change was assessed as being a combination of elements with the new development bringing real benefits to the site and to the street scene of Great Stone Road. This is a reflection of the ability of the proposals to offer a strong and striking architectural form at the corner of an existing urban block which is defined by other large and notable urban forms alongside the regeneration of the site, bringing vacant brownfield land into active use.
- 1.19 No notable townscape effects are recorded and no notable effects are assessed for the local Conservation Area and historic assets.
- 1.20 For those visual effects that are notable at moderate-substantial or above, the mitigation proposals reduce some adverse impacts over time through screening and integration. Those that remain are expected to become an accepted part of the established urban scene with the nature of change altering from adverse to neutral. No notable or significant effects are recorded over 0.6km from the proposal site.
- 1.21 The proposals before this appeal were developed through an iterative process which took onboard the results of various technical assessments and surveys including the townscape and visual report. They have additionally undergone several further revisions to attempt to accommodate the concerns of the Local Planning Authority and then more recently to respond to the comments of the Places Matter panel.
- 1.22 The resulting proposals in my view are a high quality design response which proposes development that is appropriate to its setting, cultural character and identity and of a height, mass, density and appearance that will both integrate into the existing townscape character and bring beneficial aspects to the urban block and street scene. These are matters with which the Places Matter panel agreed.
- 1.23 The Places Matter panel also agreed explicitly that the height and massing of the buildings as now proposed is a strong and appropriate response to the site and they saw no reason to limit the potential height of the development to six

stories, specifically directing the design team to consider taller buildings towards the metrolink boundary to consolidate the corner of the urban block.

- 1.24 The proposals will not have an undue adverse effect on residential properties and the outlook for proposed dwellings has been carefully considered so as to provide landscape settings for ground floor apartments and views of landscaped courtyards, roof gardens and boundaries for others.
- 1.25 A detailed analysis of the Council's own evidence base makes clear that there is a great deal of common ground and agreement for both townscape and visual assessment. The Randall Thorpe findings indicate townscape change over Medium sensitivity areas able to accommodate large scale development which includes those that neighbour development of up to 20 storeys in height.
- 1.26 The change that the Council does assess for the appeal site as part of its evidence base includes imagining the site developed for leisure and parking provision with buildings of up to six storeys in height. This is considered as a beneficial townscape effect.
- 1.27 In contrast the appeal proposals, which are for residential development, and at a standard of design praised by the Places Matter Panel, are found to: *“represent poor design as its form, layout, height, scale, massing, density and monolithic appearance are inappropriate in its context and would result in a building which would be significantly out of character with its surroundings. This would have a highly detrimental impact on the street scene and the character and quality of the area.”*
- 1.28 In my view this is both inaccurate and unjustified. Indeed, what is available as comparable evidence from the LPA suggests the opposite – that the proposals are of form, layout, height, scale and massing that is appropriate in the context of the existing townscape and the evolving AAP masterplan.
- 1.29 Furthermore, where comparisons are able to be made against the Council's own evidence base the appeal proposals are clearly similar or identical to

proposals within the AAP that deliver beneficial townscape and visual change. The suggestion that the proposals represent poor design belies the Council's involvement in the Places Matter presentation and the expression from the Places Matter team within the meeting that the proposed design was of a high architectural standard. In particular, the panel concluded that "*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*" (bullet k report from Places Matter).

- 1.30 I am not able to find any justification or explanation as to how the AAP masterplan proposals, when assessed by Randall Thorpe, are capable of delivering beneficial townscape and visual effects across the combined townscape character areas whilst the appeal proposals, with all their clear benefits and similarities to what is conceived within the AAP plan, are viewed by the LPA as seemingly wholly negative and adverse.
- 1.31 It is my opinion that the work done by the design team, through its engagement with the LPA and Places Matter and through the willingness to adapt and change the proposals to accommodate comments and concerns as they have arisen, has led to a high quality proposal. I believe the assessment work within the TVIA by TPM Landscape is an evidenced and professional piece of work that, when compared against the Council's own evidence base, is found to share many of the same conclusions. I believe that this assessment work and the work of Randall Thorpe demonstrate that the appeal site is capable of accommodating the appeal proposals and that this will bring benefits to the local character area and the wider AAP masterplan through the regeneration of an unused site; the formation of a strong and attractive architectural corner piece fronting onto Great Stone Road; and the provision of housing within an area where residential homes are an established character element.