
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2021

by J P Longmuir BA (Hons) DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/20/3259599

The Assembly Buildings, The Old Vinyl Factory, Blyth Road, Hayes, UB3 1HA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval to details required by a condition of a planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Martin Pearce of Weston Homes PLC against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 59872/APP/2020/508, dated 14 February 2020, sought approval of details pursuant to condition 3 of planning permission Ref 59872/APP/2018/1107, granted on 6 December 2018.
 - The application was refused by notice dated 21 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is the Reserved Matters Application regarding the appearance and landscaping for Phase 3B 'The Assembly Buildings' of the Old Vinyl Factory site, as required by Conditions 2 and 3 of planning permission ref 59872/APP/2013/3775 dated 31/07/2014.
 - The details for which approval is sought are: Details pursuant to the discharge of Condition 3 (Cladding).
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This decision is issued in accordance with section 56(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 (as amended) and supersedes the decision issued on 9 February 2021.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and the matters are approved, namely the cladding described as 'Full Height Profiled 2.5mm Aluminium Panel, textured powder coat finish (colour: dark brown), as depicted in the sample panel on site and submitted in application Ref 59872/APP/2020/508 dated 14 February 2020, in pursuance of condition No 3 attached to planning permission Ref. 59872/APP/2018/1107 granted on 6 December 2018.

Procedural Matter

2. Subsequent to the Council's decision and the appeal questionnaire, it is apparent that the site is within a Conservation Area and I have considered the proposal on this basis

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed cladding would provide a satisfactory appearance for the redevelopment of the appeal site and its surroundings.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is part of an extensive range of factory buildings for the production of vinyl records and is the subject of an overall Master Plan, based on which some of the buildings have been redeveloped. The Old Vinyl Factory is designated as Botwell: Thorn Emi Conservation Area.
5. The appeal site has reserved matters approval for three blocks of varying height up to 8 storeys, with ground floor commercial and residential above. The scheme includes projecting balconies and floor/ceiling length windows. Public realm would be created within the site and enclosed around chamfered footprints of building. Externally the site will be visible on all sides.
6. On my site visit I was able to see a large-scale sample panel of the intended cladding either side of a typical window. The cladding is a bespoke product for the development: powder coated painted with a semi-iridescent sheen, a predominantly brown colour with a reddish tinge and smooth texture. The cladding is produced in large individual vertical sections so that it would be applied with few intersecting horizontal breaks.
7. The approved scheme is for tall buildings in a wholly contemporary design. The proposed metallic cladding would also appear contemporary and therefore would be appropriate. It would also look suitable against the intended metal windows and the projecting balconies.
8. In addition, the slight sheen would reflect the light, creating interest and giving the walls a lightness. The sheeting being made in large sections would give a crisp continuity to the walling thereby avoiding a fussy appearance from intersecting joints.
9. Some of the surrounding buildings are notable for their metallic cladding. The nearby Boiler House uses light grey reflective metal tiles and is prominent on Blyth Road. The adjacent Global UTC building also uses metal cladding. The Powerhouse Building, adjacent to the appeal site, uses metal cladding covered with a wire mesh which produces a striking finish. The proposed cladding would follow this context.
10. The Conservation Area reflects the factory operations across this extensive site. The buildings are typified by large structures but with intervening spaces and pavements. There is little consistency between the style and materials for the buildings and the names imply very different uses across the factory site. This suggests that there is scope for various materials. The cladding would reflect the integrity of the contemporary design and, as manufactured metal would empathise with the factory's industrial heritage.
11. I noted on site the alternative terracotta cladding, in a uniform grey colour and small units, which the Council favours as this was the originally intended material. The terracotta would appear as a masonry finish which would be at odds with the contemporary design. I note that there has been a suggestion that the building needs to differentiate itself from its neighbours, however the proposed metal cladding would be a different shade.
12. I therefore conclude that the cladding would provide a satisfactory appearance to the site and the surroundings, including the conservation area. It would be appropriate for the approved design.

13. The decision notice refers to only one policy, DMHB 11 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two Development Management Policies (LP). This seeks high quality building materials and finishes. Paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) aims for high quality design. Paragraph 127 mentions the use of materials to create distinctive places. In more detail, The National Design Guide highlights that context is important to the choice of materials. It also emphasises that the scale, form and appearance of a building influence the choice of materials. Paragraphs 193 -196 of the Framework seek to protect Conservation Areas from harm. Policies DMHB 1 and DMHB 4 of the LP have similar intent. The London Plan policies D9 and HC1 also stress the importance of materials to the integrity of the design for tall buildings and seek to protect the character of conservation areas. The proposal would accord with the above policies and guidance.

Conclusion

14. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR