



Report of the Woking Borough Council Design Review Panel

Woking Football Club

8th October 2019

The design review meeting

Reference no.	1300/190919
Date	19th September 2019
Meeting location	Woking Football Club, Westfield Avenue, Westfield, Woking, Surrey, GU22 9PF
Panel members attending	Chris Bearman (Chair), Architecture, Housing, Urban Design Jon Akers Coyle, Landscape Architecture, Public Realm Cara Bamford, Architecture, Housing, Planning Paula Hirst, Public Realm, Urban Design Chris Schulte, Architecture, Public Realm
Panel manager	Rosie Dennis, Design South East
Presenting team	Wayne Gold, Goldev Woking Ltd Christian Gilham, Leach Rhodes Walker Ian Cooney, Holmes Miller
Other attendees	Paul Cook, Dukelease Properties Lee Scott, Savills Tom James, Woking Borough Council Ben Bailey, Woking Borough Council Joanne Hollingdale, Woking Borough Council
Site visit	A full site visit was conducted by the panel prior to the review.
Scope of the review	As an independent design review panel, the scope of this review was not restricted. As we were reviewing the scheme at a late stage in design development, we concentrated on discussing changes that could realistically be made to improve the design.
Panel interests	Panel members did not indicate any conflicts of interest. However, Vanessa Ross (proposal Landscape Architect) is a member of the wider Design South East Panel. This was not deemed to constitute a conflict of interest.
Confidentiality	This report is confidential as the scheme is not yet the subject of a detailed planning application. Full details of our confidentiality policy can be found at the end of this report.

The proposal

Name	Woking Football Club
Site location	Land South of Kingfield Road and East of Westfield Avenue, Westfield, Woking, Surrey, GU22 9PF
Site details	The site comprises the existing football stadium and David Lloyd leisure club and is located approximately 700m south of Woking town centre. It is bounded by Westfield Avenue to the west and Kingfield Road to the north. To the east and south of the site there are clusters of trees that screen both the existing residences and the football grounds to the south.
Proposal	Demolition of all existing buildings and the construction of a replacement 10,000-capacity football stadium, approximately 1,000 residential units across 5 blocks extending to a maximum of 10 storeys plus ancillary retail facilities.
Planning stage	Pre-application. Submission of full planning application anticipated October 2019.
Local authority	Woking Borough Council
Planning context	<p>The site does not fall within any statutory designated areas. There are no other noteworthy constraints on the development site.</p> <p>The site is included within Woking Borough Council's Draft Site Allocations DPD as an allocated site for the delivery of a replacement football stadium and enabling developments including residential accommodation. The document has been subject to Reg 19 consultation in December 2018 and was supported for formal examination in July 2019.</p>
Planning history	There are no notable planning applications affecting the site.
Planning authority perspective	The local authority did not express specific concerns in relation to the proposal.
Community engagement	<p>Consultations with the general public took place in July 2019. This was preceded by more specific presentations to both the members of Woking Borough Council and supporters of Woking Football Club.</p> <p>Ongoing consultations have taken place with Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council officers in regard to flooding, drainage and highways.</p>

Summary

The panel support the ambition of this large and complex scheme where it is clear that comprehensive analysis has informed key design moves. However, there are some important elements of the design strategy that the panel feel would benefit from amendment to enhance the scheme. It is therefore disappointing that the scheme has come to review at such a late stage in design development. The panel nevertheless encourage consideration of the possibilities of changing the scheme in accordance with advice provided at review.

The proposal overcomes numerous site complexities and we commend the ambition to provide a development that will benefit Woking Football Club, prospective residents and the wider community. However, the proposal overly focuses on the success of the site on match days, and design development must address the functionality of the site on non-match days. While we support the rectilinearity of the residential block arrangement, this has been dictated by a requirement for high levels of basement parking driven by a need for building efficiency which has jeopardised the internal environment of the apartments. The residential element to the west of the site appears incomplete, and pedestrian connections require further consideration to ensure safe and easy movement across the site.

The brick detailing on the tall residential blocks provides the site with a unique character, which is commendable. However, this architectural language should extend throughout the site to ensure consistency and high-quality material detailing. Further development should focus on the provision of a high-quality entry sequence, on which the concierge building plays an important role.

Overall, while the panel support the intentions of the proposal, further analysis and design development needs to focus on the experience of the end user and enhancement of character on site. This will allow the proposal to be well-rounded and successful year-round.

Key recommendations

1. The boundary treatments require further attention, particularly in relation to the perimeter footpath on the western side of the development.
2. More activity surrounding the stadium would benefit a year-round appeal of the proposal to local communities.
3. The reduction in traffic has led to an over-pedestrianised development, and the introduction of small levels of controlled traffic would benefit the efficiency and levels of activity at the site, and corresponding sense of personal safety and security.
4. The brick detailing of the tall residential blocks should be extended over all residential development, including the glass proposed at the top of the residential blocks. This will ensure consistency in architectural language.
5. The entry sequence to the development requires further consideration. This may include the extension of highways enhancements beyond the site boundary.
6. Pedestrian-scale analysis should be conducted to ensure efficient and safe movement throughout the site both on match days and year-round.
7. Reflecting the brick detailing of the buildings in the landscape strategy will enhance the high-quality character of the proposal. Additional children's play space is necessary to meet the needs of residents.

Detailed comments and recommendations

1 Landscape, amenity & play

- 1.1 It is encouraging to see a comprehensive landscape strategy informing the proposal, and the intention to retain existing trees on the boundary of the site will benefit the relationship of the development to the surrounding area by providing a level of screening. However, a large amount of importance has been placed on the provision of roof top gardens for resident use and, aside from play streets, limited play space has been provided for young children. In design development, consideration must be given to the requirements of the end users of the development. This will ensure the development is an appealing place to both live and visit.
- 1.2 We recommend further consideration of the main boulevard entrance on Kingfield Road. Currently the planting is limited and the four trees and two wedges of greenspace provide no funnelling into the site or sense of arrival. Provision of a heightened sense of arrival going toward Kingfield Road will help inform the high-quality character of the proposal.
- 1.3 While we commend the initiative to retain the boundary trees, we do not think that the trees will provide good enough cover to screen the development year-round. We recommend additional and varied tree-planting on the site, which may contribute to the screening of the stadium and residential inboard of the site boundary.
- 1.4 We consider the rain gardens on the boulevard a positive way of managing hardstanding runoff and encourage this sustainable approach. However, the panel would like to see a suitable and active management process embedded into design development to ensure an appreciation of standing water (on occasion) and litter picking is accepted, and robust edge condition is provided to such features in order to maintain positive suds operations and safety and comfort to general pedestrian movements.
- 1.5 While the site is close to nearby sports fields and playgrounds, we are concerned that there is little provision of play space for younger children. We are not convinced that the two play streets provided will be appropriately equipped or adequately safe for younger children, or sufficient in area to meet demands of the anticipated residents. Additional formal and informal play space is needed for the number of children expected on the development.
- 1.6 We do not consider the roof terraces sufficient to compensate for the inadequate levels of amenity space provided in the proposal. We recommend instead maximising the amount of courtyard level amenity space to provide a more accessible and appealing approach to the provision of communal areas on site.
- 1.7 Given the size of development, we commend the ambition to provide biodiverse routes across the site and consider the provision of brown roofs a positive environmental attribute. However, we recommend considering a mix of green and brown roofs rather than singularly sedum as this will provide a unique locally biodiverse character to the development.

2 Urban design and townscape

- 2.1 We commend the provision of a combination of uses across the site and consider the injection of a greater density appropriate for this area of Woking. The site layout has been informed by the rectangular football stadium that radiates a rectilinear layout across the residential development. While this is a positive design move, the western side of the site and boundary treatments have been undertreated. This jeopardises the

quality of connections across the development and has resulted in lengthy dark and potentially unsafe pedestrian connections across the site.

- 2.2 The combination of the desired residential unit numbers and building height strategy has resulted in a rigid site layout that has been forced to respond to the high levels of gridded, basement level car parking beneath the buildings. A reduction in the number of units or in the number of parking spaces provided, or an increase in the height of some of the buildings, would allow for a more natural response in the site layout, enabling the stadium to be central to the proposal.
- 2.3 We also recommend considering whether greater height in some of the residential buildings might provide a more interesting approach to counteract the horizontality of the stadium. The taller aspects may be elongated, which will allow for lower and potentially more relaxed edge conditions and provide more variation across the development without jeopardising the number of units provided.
- 2.4 The tight proximity of Blocks 4 and 5 to the site boundary has resulted in narrow and dark alleyways to the rear of the residential blocks. We urge the design team to provide detailed boundary treatment sections to show the relationship between the buildings and the site boundary to demonstrate how more space will be provided at the edge of the development for the provision of safe and well-lit pedestrian routes.
- 2.5 While the orientation and location of Blocks 1 – 3 successfully respond to both the stadium and surrounding streets, this approach has not been extended to Blocks 4 – 5, which makes the design strategy appear unfinished. We recommend further consideration of the orientation of Blocks 4 – 5, to better engage with the different context and edge conditions addressed by each block.
- 2.6 The late stage in design development means that the site layout will be inflexible to change. There are a number of pockets, edges and corners that appear incomplete, and these issues will need to be overcome within the design strategy to allow the development to operate successfully.
- 2.7 We urge the design team to undertake further site analysis at a pedestrian level. This will permit greater fluidity in pedestrian connections across the site.
- 2.8 Due to the scale and complexity of the development, the panel would like to see detail of site management embedded into the design strategy. An active management company will need to be in place upon completion to ensure successful operation of the site.
- 2.9 The panel would like to be provided with greater clarity over the logistics of visitor movement into and out of the site. We consider locating both visitor and resident parking together overly complicated and recommend instead considering a single visitor parking area close to the entrance of the development to aid easier access.
- 2.10 There is a significant distance between the entry to the development and Blocks 4 – 5. Without permitting any vehicular access on the site this distance may be intimidating to pedestrians, particularly those less mobile. We urge the design team to consider ways to permit low levels of vehicular access onto the site to make the route to and from the site entrance as easy as possible for residents.
- 2.11 We consider the location of the retail units, on the side of the stadium with the main entrance, too limited and as a result there are low levels of activity to the rear of the site. We urge the applicant to consider providing more uses around the outside of the stadium, including potential smaller workspaces or studio space for small businesses and groups. Doing so will drive the proposal more as a place to visit, meet and congregate and benefit the overall appeal of the site.

- 2.12 We recommend incorporating more detail of the two play streets into future design progression. This should include how vehicular routes end and pedestrian routes begin, and how the streets can be safe for children to play on.
- 2.13 We do not consider the dead end of the road abutting Blocks 4 and 5 appropriate and recommend instead providing a useable vehicular turning point to aid efficient movement of traffic throughout the site.

3 Access, movement and carpark

- 3.1 While minimizing vehicular traffic across the site is a good intention, we are concerned about the negative effects this will have on the operation of the development. We recommend considering permitting low levels of traffic, including vehicular and motorbike access at certain hours, to allow greater activity across the site and enhance visual surveillance and security.
- 3.2 We urge the design team to provide greater clarity over the vehicular entry sequence to the site and how the new access route will work. While we understand that this has not been finalised, provision of up to date visuals will be beneficial to provide better explanation of the efficiency of the access.
- 3.3 The design strategy and approach to parking numbers per unit has resulted in large areas of basement-level parking, which is an expensive approach to the provision of car parking on site. We recommend reconsidering the balance of units and car parking levels to allow greater economic efficiency in the proposal whilst permitting greater flexibility in site layout.
- 3.4 Further consideration is required over the provision of safe and easily accessible pedestrian routes across the site. Easy pedestrian movement is key to the success of the proposal, and we would like to see more detail of how safe, well-lit and secure walkways will be provided.
- 3.5 We recommend considering how the development could give more to the public externally. This could be achieved by extending the public realm improvements beyond the site entrance through provision of raised crossings or shared space. This will benefit the sense of arrival to the development and provide welcoming highways improvements.
- 3.6 Further consideration of movement throughout the site from a human-scale perspective would benefit the appeal of the proposal to the end user. For example, question how residents will easily access the concierge, how they will get home safely while crossing the site, and how items may be delivered to the residential blocks.

4 Internal arrangement

- 4.1 The panel were not provided with internal plans at review, and therefore advice regarding the internal arrangement of buildings is limited. However, from the presentation it was clear that the internal layout of the accommodation is compromised due to the proportion of single aspect, north facing apartments alongside lengthy double loaded corridors. While the scheme has been presented at a late stage in design development, we urge the design team to consider how to reconsider the internal layout of the apartment blocks to provide more appealing internal living accommodation and lighter corridors. This will ensure that the development is easily marketable in comparison to other large-scale developments in Woking and provides for a more attractive place to live for its future residents.

5 Architecture

- 5.1 We do not consider the glass blocks on top of the residential buildings to mirror the architectural language across the wider site. Instead, we urge the design team to consider extending the brick detailing over the full extent of the buildings, to continue the high-quality character achieved wider in the proposal.
- 5.2 We commend the architectural distinction within the scheme shown by the brick detailing and consider the warmth in the materials appealing. If done successfully, the warm pallets proposed for the balustrading allied with planting will provide a highly characteristic and appealing development. The threshold between the public realm adjacent to the stadium and the raised ground floors of the residential blocks facing it also appears to be handled well in the information provided at review.
- 5.3 We commend the variation within the proposal provided by the stadium at the centre. While the glazing on the exterior of the stadium is a positive design move, we recommend making the glazing as transparent and as robust to show the high-quality detailing of the stadium, and to create a greater sense of site activity for passers by.
- 5.4 The architectural detailing of the concierge building requires further attention. The building is in a distinctive location at the entrance to the site, and high-quality architectural treatment is necessary to provide a distinctive entry sequence to the development. We recommend using the building as an opportunity to potentially reflect the 1930's crafted architectural character of the surrounding area into the development.
- 5.5 We consider the mansion block quality of the residential accommodation an attractive and positive attribute of the proposal, however the high-quality detailing must be mirrored in the ancillary buildings and public realm to enhance the character across the site.
- 5.6 We recommend extending the architectural language expressed by the taller residential buildings to the shorter buildings. This will ensure greater continuity throughout the development and ensure the calm and high-quality character is continued across the site.

6 Material & detailing

- 6.1 The panel did not review the material and detailing of the architecture and landscape proposals in significant detail. The applicant team and local authority should note general guidance on material quality and detail, which accords with national policy. Paragraph 130 of the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework states:

'Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).'

At the full planning application stage, the quality of the detailing should be demonstrated through large scale drawings at 1:20 and 1:5 of key elements of the building/landscape and should be accompanied by actual material samples which should be secured by condition as part of any planning approval.

Confidentiality

Since the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the panel, this report is offered in confidence to those who attended the review meeting. There is no objection to the report being shared within the recipients' organisations. Design South East reserves the right to make the contents of this report known should the views contained in this report be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). Unless previously agreed to remain confidential, this report will be publicly available if the scheme becomes the subject of a planning application or public inquiry. Design South East also reserves the right to make this report available to another design review panel should the scheme go before them. If you do not require this report to be kept confidential, please inform us.



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