

Eden Walk Regeneration Design Review

CABE's comments and the Applicant's response

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This note provides a summary of CABE's letter and our response to the points raised. This should be read alongside the Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement submitted in support of our application.
- 1.2 The proposals were reviewed by the CABE Design Review Panel on 3 September 2015, which showcased the design as it stood at the time. It was not the final scheme and therefore did not assess the height at 16 storeys or any subsequent changes to materials and design. It also fails to fully appreciate and recognise the commercial constraints imposed by the site.
- 1.3 Design changes made to the proposals since the 3 September 2015 design review include:
 - Height was reduced by four storeys
 - Height of car park roof / winter garden was also reduced
 - The materials palette was also amended and now includes a terracotta appearance
 - The design of the top of the tall building has also been amended
 - The tall building has now been 'grounded' at street level
 - The design of block 5 has been simplified architecturally
- 1.4 This note has been structured thematically and provides an analysis of the consultation response received from CABE dated 17 September 2015, ref. DCC/0699 (identified in green italics).
- 1.5 A copy of the CABE response is appended to this note.

2 Concerns about Scale

- 2.1 Many of the comments relate to the quantum of development, and scale and massing.

"The complexity of the existing site and the demands of the brief make for a challenging project and we recognize the project team's hard work in tackling this challenge.

To help achieve the borough's ambition, re-developing this site to provide a high-density mix of uses appears to be highly appropriate. We support the Council's and the project team's efforts to transform what is currently an underperforming retail centre through collaboration, the use of planning policy and the development of this scheme.

Because the requirements of the new shops, homes and offices cannot be met by the urban pattern of the historic parts of the town centre, this development has to create a form and character of its own, which will complement the local historic environment. In place-making terms, the project's main challenge is therefore how to configure the proposed mix of uses to create a new, appealing and characterful area within the town centre. This challenge is magnified by the substantial quantum of accommodation required by the project brief."

2.2 The recognition of the complexity of the site and the appropriateness of redeveloping the site for a high density mix of uses, supported by planning policy, is welcomed. The uses will accord with national, regional and local planning policy through the introduction of:

- Town centre living;
- New offices, including flexible business space;
- Enhanced leisure and entertainment facilities; and
- High quality new comparison shopping facilities.

2.3 The proposed development will create a locally distinctive form and character, with a vibrant mix of uses to revitalise the site within the wider Eden Quarter. It will create a transition from the historic context of the Old Market. The master plan does deliver a new, appealing and characterful area within the Town Centre. The proposed development has a strong synergy within its proposed uses, focuses on the leisure and retail element of town centres, with new shops, food and beverage units and a boutique cinema. This is provided through character areas which respond to their context in the town centre, including historic buildings and the Eden Quarter area. Such character areas include United Reformed Square, Union Street Square, Memorial Colonnade and Eden Crescent.

“We recognize the viability issues in delivering mixed-use schemes and support the strategy of intensifying town centre uses. Notwithstanding these drivers, we question the quantum proposed, due to the scale of built form it is generating, the relatively limited public space created and the need to provide residents with an environment that supports good quality of life.”

“The three-storey horizontal band that is the base of this block creates a datum that emphasizes the enormity of the built form. Overall, the tall building and the adjoining lower elements create an unduly imposing ‘wall’ onto Eden Street; unfortunately they do not have the makings of a visually pleasing and valued part of the town centre. We think a more successful approach would be to create individual buildings whose verticality is expressed more clearly.”

“The bulky nature of the proposal also raises concerns in terms of mid- and long-distance views of the development, particularly given the fine grain of other parts of the town centre. A more singular tall building and a better defined skyline in the development would help the scheme sit more comfortably in its locality and would improve views from across the river.”

2.4 It is considered from the CABE response, that the Panel cannot fully recognise the viability issues that were explained at the session. There is an existing use value of c.£86m which severely constrains the brief and which drives the necessity to provide such a quantum of development on this tight town centre site. It is in accordance with London Plan policies and the Eden Quarter Development Brief.

2.5 The quantum of development is necessary to enable a viable redevelopment of an existing shopping centre and car park and office building. Any further reduction in scale and mass will render the scheme unviable and the redevelopment and its associated benefits would not be realised.

2.6 The “plinth” created by the double height retail frontage to Eden Street corresponds to the cornice of the United Reformed Church which is a robust Classical building that can accommodate this scale of development adjacent to it. At the other end of Eden Street the plinth, or horizontal band, responds to the level at which the offices in the car park and residential units spring from. It maintains the relative scale and height of buildings along Eden Street, and the set-backs and gradation in height along Eden Street to the south and west have been made in response to the listed building and conservation area. This approach has architectural integrity and works well in this context.

- 2.7 Through the process of masterplan options testing, three building blocks were identified as providing the most efficient use of the site. This provides the optimum balance between movement through the site, and the quantum of development required. It has been driven by the retail brief and the need to create retail units that meet the requirements of future occupiers. It also enables the delivery of high quality, well designed residential units across the site. The introduction of individual buildings on the site would reduce the retail footprint and also impact on the size and shape of the units proposed.
- 2.8 With regard to verticality, the Eden Crescent Building was revised to create a more articulated skyline and built form by removing mass from the spines of the building. The materiality of this building has been carefully designed so that each of the cores stand out from the connecting spines by varying the palette of materials between these elements of the building. This helps the cores be read as individual vertical elements. Furthermore, the tall building has been designed to be read individually by varying the materials palette, its expression and form.
- 2.9 The CABE comments above relate to the previous 21 storey scheme and since the review the analysis of views by Tavernor Consulting has led to significant changes in the scale and massing of the tower and buildings on Eden Street.
- 2.10 As a result, the views from the most sensitive historic spaces and streets in the town centre are remarkably limited due to the “setting back” of the Eden Walk street blocks from the historic heart of the Market Square, and the screening effect of other large buildings in the town centre, such as the car park, and commercial development in Eden Street and Clarence Street. This can be seen in views 18, 19 and 20 on pages 104, 106 and 108 respectively of the Townscape, Heritage and Visual Impact Assessment (Environmental Statement – Volume 3) (THVIA).
- 2.11 The reduction in the height of the tall building by four storeys will reduce the visibility from the Royal Parks to glimpses of the very top storey of the building from a very small number of locations. This reduction in area has not been reintroduced into the scheme elsewhere.
- 2.12 The perceived bulky nature of the proposals has been reviewed and articulated through the use of set-backs, variation in height and materials, and architectural expression which strongly delineates the individuality of each element of the building in sensitive and long views.

3 Routes, streets and public spaces

- 3.1 Whilst CABE recognised the work undertaken to create new public spaces and routes through the scheme, including to Memorial Gardens, they raised concerns regarding other movement routes.

“We recognize the work undertaken to create successful routes and public spaces in the scheme. The changes proposed to revitalize Memorial Gardens, with new and improved movement routes, and active frontages to its southern edge, are very positive. The new active frontages along Eden Street would also improve the existing thoroughfare.”

- 3.2 The Partnership team has worked with a number of stakeholders to inform the works to Memorial Gardens and the public spaces. The proposals will result in a step change in the quality of streets and public spaces, including Memorial Gardens, with opportunities for the new and improved spaces to host events such as Remembrance Sunday. The permeability and connectivity with the ancient markets has been reinforced through the site layout and the increase in size of public realm and gardens.

“However, the arrangement of the other movement routes appears weak, for the following reasons:

- *The position of the southern route from the circus relates poorly to wider movement routes and partially duplicates the existing route along Union Street. Connecting to Ashdown Road and Brook Street would help people reach the site from the south-east and make walking through the development more natural. The Eden Quarter Development Brief SPD (March 2015) shows a more robust arrangement of urban blocks that appears more successful.*

- *Effective urban connections are based on routes that intersect at angles of around 90 degrees, allowing circuits of all types to be possible in all locations. The angle of the new southern route in relation to Eden Street departs from this 90 degree principle, without sufficient reason to do so.*
- *The absence of a new route to the north between Memorial Gardens and Eden Street limits the ability of sites to the north to connect with this development when they come forward for regeneration, which would open all parts of the town centre up to greater footfall.*
- *The departure from movement routes derived from a more natural grid arrangement creates a somewhat inward-facing development, repeating one of the key weaknesses of the existing Eden Walk shopping centre. We therefore recommend revisiting the movement routes through the site, paying attention to the principles set out in the wider masterplan.”*

3.3 The proposed southern route is aligned to achieve several objectives:

- Connect to, and help create, a new public square that enhances the setting of the listed United Reformed Church.
- Encourage an increase in pedestrian movement through lower Union Street to the Civic Quarter and the College, Courts, County Hall and University Quarter as we lose the current route into the scheme from Union Street a new link from the south (close to Union Street) is essential.
- Provide a connection for shopper and leisure movement to and from the Rose Theatre, Market Place and the riverside.
- To and from residential areas along Portsmouth Road and the southern approaches to the Apple Market and the Market Square.

3.4 There is no evidence to suggest that a route connecting to Brook Street would connect to a more important set of destinations.

3.5 The main land uses that a more southerly route would connect to be residential, and that route is adequately catered for already by Eden Street. For those residents taking the new route from the United Reformed square would involve a short walk of less than about 30 metres across the new Eden Street shop frontages.

3.6 The proposals accord very closely to the alignment and width of streets set out in Allies and Morrison’s Urban Design Principles in the Eden Quarter Brief.

3.7 Moreover, the configuration of the ground floor retail units has been both dictated by urban design principles and balanced against the need to ensure a retail provision and trading environment which meets the demands of modern retailers and the requirements of specific retailers who have expressed an interest in taking space in the new scheme.

3.8 A number of the unit designs have been worked up in partnership with specific retailers who have shown a serious interest in taking the units. Kingston does not have a rigid grid pattern. In fact, its medieval street pattern which is one of its greatest assets, and has many streets that do not intersect at 90 degrees as is typical of so many historic town centres across the UK.

3.9 The route to the north is not possible. It is blocked by Marks & Spencer (although that store has a strong flow of shoppers moving from Clarence Street to Eden Walk), the existing MSCP and Neville Yard car park. It is not possible to redevelop the Marks and Spencer store, to relocate the car park or to create a route through the Neville Yard car park as this provides essential servicing to shops on Clarence Street, Eden Street and Eden Walk itself.

- 3.10 The Eden Quarter Development Brief did not require a north south route, the constraints of Marks and Spencer's and the car park building were understood and accepted by RBK and Allies and Morrison.
- 3.11 The scheme does transform north – south movement from Clarence Street and as importantly the Ancient Market through the three new or improved connections – the transformed Pratts Passage, the transformed Memorial Gardens and connection to Memorial Square and the new pedestrian street or connection between the Everyday Church to Union Street and the Markets. This new connection has considerable heritage benefits, as well as dramatically improving permeability between the north and south of the prime shopping area, and east west between the Markets and Eden Street.
- 3.12 The masterplan sets out to create continuous active frontages to sides of the buildings and is far from inward looking as a result, it achieves over 480m of active frontages, an increase of almost 50m on the existing site, and all the streets are open and not covered.
- 3.13 In addition the proposed development will introduce a more extensive mix of uses, including shop fronts, office entrance and residential entrances to create a vibrant frontage which will be in active use 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The balconies facing onto Eden Street and Union Street will provide active elevations at all times of day and night. The Sky Bar provides a publicly accessible unit with fantastic views over Kingston that will be unique to the Town Centre and a positive addition to Kingston's tourism offer.
- 3.14 The Partnership will be investing in first class public realm and will appoint Broadgate Estates who are one of the leading managers and creators of public spaces. The two new spaces are anchor spaces, but with different characteristics. They will attract people and have a lot of seating and public art.

4 Relationship between the central space and the buildings around it

- 4.1 The relationship between the central space and the buildings around it, and the architectural style was a concern identified by CABE.

“The circular form of the central space (which we refer to here as ‘the circus’) does not appear to work well in relation to the routes and built form surrounding it, generating some awkward angles in the new buildings. It appears that sunlight to the circus will be partially blocked by the new building to the south. The area around the United Reform Church could be exploited to a greater extent as it may well provide better conditions for a significant new public space, given its aspect and position in the wider movement network.

Other town and city centres have created impressive public spaces as part of their civic offer and their identity, to support a thriving retail economy and quality of life. We would recommend taking a more ambitious approach to the public realm, by creating an ‘anchor space’ that will attract people and activity. We suggest investing in the public realm – in terms of planting, seating and some form of landmark, perhaps water-based – in a more generous and compelling way.

Overall, the proposed built form appears to be made up of a set of disparate and disjointed elements. Looking up from the circus, for example, the complex arrangement of buildings and forms appears confusing. One element of this arrangement is the canopy over the dining space, which appears over-designed for its size. The large rectangular mass of the car park building sits uncomfortably with the homes added to its north-east side, and with the circular form of the public space to its south-west. A simpler, clearer set of architectural forms and features would create a calmer, more enduring place to live, work or shop in.

To achieve this, a clearer approach to dealing with constraints and absolute requirements may be helpful. For example, if the existing multi-storey car park is definitely to be retained, we would expect its form to be a design driver to a greater extent. The hierarchy of requirements, constraints and aspirations should be carefully thought through. We would also recommend paying further attention to the junctions of old and new in the scheme; durable materials, simply and effectively detailed, will be an important contributor to the scheme's success.”

- 4.2 As mentioned before, CABE assessed the previous scheme which has since been modified to improve the public realm. The Partnership is confident that the public realm will be of a signature quality, as will the tall building and other buildings within the scheme.
- 4.3 The central space in a circular form is liked by residents and this was confirmed in our consultations. Other consultees have commented that the central space and dining terrace, including the addition of a canopy, could be an exciting addition to the urban fabric of Kingston, creating a different experience than is currently experienced by the river. The design of the canopy has been tested throughout the design development process and is considered to create an attractive environment for al fresco dining.
- 4.4 The different architectural characters of the 3 buildings are not considered to be disparate and disjointed, but are necessary to create a distinctive response to the changing urban forms on each side of the site.
- 4.5 The space around the United Reformed Church sets up the north side of a much larger space / square which remains the aspiration of RBK for the future delivery of this is outside the Partnership's control to deliver.
- 4.6 The two new spaces are anchor spaces, but with different characteristics. They will attract people and have a lot of seating and public art.
- 4.7 The car park must be retained and this was explained during the review session. The car park form and scale has been a driver and given us a publically accessible sky bar and restaurant with cinema. This is considered to be an imaginative use of design to provide a leisure offer in Kingston.
- 4.8 The car park will have such a diverse mix of uses and architectural expressions that it will be a rich architectural experience, with retail at ground and first floor, offices, residential, car parking, boutique cinema and sky terrace restaurant.

5 Tall building – not an independent structure

- 5.1 The tall building is welcomed in principle, but concern was expressed that it was not an independent free standing structure at the end of a route, and that it does not read as a distinct structure on the skyline.

“In our view, a tall building could work well in this location.”

“To be a valued part of the urban fabric, a single tall building here would need to be a singular element, whose base, middle and top are visible and understandable from the public route from which it is entered. The tall building in the proposal for Eden Walk, however, rises from a larger body of mid- to high-rise built form and does not have a clear enough identity of its own.”

“In terms of the way the tower interfaces with the public realm, we think that any tall building here should have a clearer and more comfortable relationship with public routes and spaces around it. Positioning a more autonomous, elegant tall building at the end of a public route might help its role as a marker and a focal point make sense to people living in and using the town centre.”

- 5.2 Following the CABE review, design changes have been made and the base, middle and top will be understandable and distinguishable from Eden Street.
- 5.3 The tall building will have a clear identity, with a high quality GRC architectural expression, and a distinctive but restrained “top” visible from the spaces and streets around Eden Quarter, and some approaches to the town centre.
- 5.4 The tall building has been strategically positioned within the site at the geographically furthest point away from both conservation areas. Further movement of this element of the scheme to the west or south would compromise its relationship with heritage assets in the town centre.

- 5.5 The Partnership has taken the decision to reduce the height of the tall building by 4 full storeys in response to consultation and the findings of the Heritage Assessment. It will remain one of the tallest buildings in the town centre, will provide a new marker on the skyline of the town centre, but will not dominate.
- 5.6 The tall building is at the end of a public route, and forms a marker at one of the highest pedestrian flow junctions in the town centre, but one which currently is not visible in long or medium distance views. The location of the tall building and the junction of the east west route to Eden Street accords almost exactly to the Eden Quarter Development Brief.
- 5.7 Significant efforts have been made since the CABE review to ensure the tallest building is read as a strong independent structure on Eden Street.

6 Quality of the living environment above the shops

- 6.1 Concern is expressed about the quality of the living environment above the retail, and whether there will be adequate private spaces and attractive entrances to the residential apartments.

“The proposed ‘dwelling spaces’ appear small in relation to the quantum of development and the number of future residents, workers and shoppers.”

“The residential entrance indicated on South Crescent – recessed, with metal cladding – appears well-defined. However, as a place that will be home for hundreds of households, we are concerned that in general, the retail environment is being prioritized over a sense of privacy and domesticity for new residents. On Union Street, for example, it will be hard to create a comfortable domestic environment where there are two vehicle entrances, for retail servicing and residential parking. We therefore recommend revisiting the routes to the residential entrances, the conditions at those communal doorways and their relationship to neighbouring shops.”

- 6.2 The proposals increase the area of private communal space in Eden Walk by c.2,370sqm, in addition to extensive public spaces and will provide a high quality environment. It creates communal gardens and terraces for residents in each building of different character.
- 6.3 The assessments of daylight, sunlight and the amenity of the proposed residential apartments demonstrate that a good quality living environment will be created. The dwelling spaces have been designed with regard to the London Plan housing standards, and meet the vast majority of these standards.
- 6.4 The routes to the residential entrances include the new United Reformed Church square a pedestrianised space and the semi pedestrianised section of Union Street which is right on the edge of the Ancient Markets and Memorial Square and Gardens. Since the consultation, these residential entrances have been increased in size and scale to create distinct entrances on both vehicular and pedestrian streets alike. These will create a quiet and special character for the residential apartments. The Eden Street entrance is from a busy thoroughfare but residents will enjoy a double height entrance lobby of a grand scale, which in itself will be an oasis. There is nothing unusual or problematic about residential entrances facing onto busy thoroughfares, and in fact it is to be welcomed and helps to activate frontages in line with best practice.
- 6.5 The residential units have been designed to be attractive to a wide range of occupants – first time buyers, professional couples, downsizers and all different age groups – looking to live in a safe, well designed environment close to vibrant markets, shops, cultural attractions, parks, education and jobs.

“Next steps

We would advise that these strategic design principles – the configuration of built form, movement routes, public spaces and building entry points – should be resolved as a priority. We would suggest that creating a ‘signature public realm’ and ‘signature building’ should be central to this.”

6.6 The Partnership is confident that the public realm will be of a signature quality, as will the tall building and other buildings within the scheme.

“Three large, conjoined buildings are unlikely to be the basis for a successful solution. Once the design principles have been established successfully, the next level of design can be developed and evaluated. We would expect that next level to include:

- *An effective environmental strategy for the operation of the buildings and spaces*
- *A strategic approach to transport for new residents*
- *Creating appealing new homes with good access to private outdoor space”*

6.7 We believe all of these suggested areas for focus have been addressed thoroughly and that the proposals offer exemplary solutions within the context of a complex existing developed site.

6.8 For example, chapters 16 and 18 of the Planning Statement set out the environmental and transport strategies that have been incorporated into the proposed development. They demonstrate the Partnerships commitment to creating a truly sustainable community, for whom the vast majority of trips for work, shopping, education, recreation, and leisure could be undertaken by foot, or cycle, or bus and rail, or using a Car Club car, or with the support of the Shop Mobility scheme that will be available for residents, such are the advantages of an accessible town centre location. Each building meets or exceeds the London Plan requirements for outdoor amenity space.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The Partnership has had regard to CABI’s comments which are critical of the pattern of streets and the quantum, scale and massing of the proposals. Some design changes have been made and detailed justification for the design of the scheme has been submitted with this planning application.

7.2 The application has been supported by much more detailed information on the relationship of the proposals to the heritage assets (THVIA) and the townscape of the town centre, and substantial design development (Design and Access Statement) which has been undertaken since the CABI review. All of this information provides evidence that the quantum of floorspace can be accommodated and high standards of design, residential amenity, public realm, and townscape achieved.

CONFIDENTIAL

17 September 2015

Nicola Smith
Lead Officer Major Projects
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Guildhall 2, High Street
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 1EU

Our reference: DCC/0699

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames: Eden Walk Shopping Centre

Dear Nicola,

Thank you for attending Cabe's design review meeting on 3 September 2015. This is our formal response to the scheme presented on that date.

The complexity of the existing site and the demands of the brief make for a challenging project and we recognise the project team's hard work in tackling this challenge. We make the following comments to provide constructive assistance to the borough as it pursues its ambition of a creating thriving and successful town centre in Kingston.

Principles

To help achieve the borough's ambition, re-developing this site to provide a high-density mix of uses appears to be highly appropriate. We support the Council's and the project team's efforts to transform what is currently an underperforming retail centre through collaboration, the use of planning policy and the development of this scheme.

Because the requirements of the new shops, homes and offices cannot be met by the urban pattern of the historic parts of the town centre, this development has to create a form and character of its own, which will complement the local historic environment. In place-making terms, the project's main challenge is therefore how to configure the proposed mix of uses to create a new, appealing and characterful area within the town centre. This challenge is magnified by the substantial quantum of accommodation required by the project brief.

We recognise the viability issues in delivering mixed-use schemes and support the strategy of intensifying town centre uses. Notwithstanding these drivers, we question the quantum proposed, due to the scale of built form it is generating, the relatively limited public space created and the need to provide residents with an environment that supports good quality of life.

Currently we feel the proposal does not meet this challenge sufficiently, for the reasons given below. We recommend re-visiting the principles of the arrangement of movement routes, public spaces and buildings in order to ensure that this important regeneration project becomes a major asset to Kingston town centre for the long term.



Streets and public spaces

We recognise the work undertaken to create successful routes and public spaces in the scheme. The changes proposed to revitalise Memorial Gardens, with new and improved movement routes, and active frontages to its southern edge, are very positive. The new active frontages along Eden Street would also improve the existing thoroughfare. However, the arrangement of the other movement routes appears weak, for the following reasons:

- The position of the southern route from the circus relates poorly to wider movement routes and partially duplicates the existing route along Union Street. Connecting to Ashdown Road and Brook Street would help people reach the site from the south-east and make walking through the development more natural. The Eden Quarter Development Brief SPD (March 2015) shows a more robust arrangement of urban blocks that appears more successful
- Effective urban connections are based on routes that intersect at angles of around 90 degrees, allowing circuits of all types to be possible in all locations. The angle of the new southern route in relation to Eden Street departs from this 90 degree principle, without sufficient reason to do so
- The absence of a new route to the north between Memorial Gardens and Eden Street limits the ability of sites to the north to connect with this development when they come forward for regeneration, which would open all parts of the town centre up to greater footfall
- The departure from movement routes derived from a more natural grid arrangement creates a somewhat inward-facing development, repeating one of the key weaknesses of the existing Eden Walk shopping centre

We therefore recommend revisiting the movement routes through the site, paying attention to the principles set out in the wider masterplan.

The proposed 'dwelling spaces' appear small in relation to the quantum of development and the number of future residents, workers and shoppers. The circular form of the central space (which we refer to here as 'the circus') does not appear to work well in relation to the routes and built form surrounding it, generating some awkward angles in the new buildings. It appears that sunlight to the circus will be partially blocked by the new building to the south. The area around the United Reform Church could be exploited to a greater extent as it may well provide better conditions for a significant new public space, given its aspect and position in the wider movement network.

Other town and city centres have created impressive public spaces as part of their civic offer and their identity, to support a thriving retail economy and quality of life. We would recommend taking a more ambitious approach to the public realm, by creating an 'anchor space' that will attract people and activity. We suggest investing in the public realm – in terms of planting, seating and some form of landmark, perhaps water-based – in a more generous and compelling way.

Buildings

Overall, the proposed built form appears to be made up of a set of disparate and disjointed elements. Looking up from the circus, for example, the complex arrangement of buildings and forms appears confusing. One element of this arrangement is the canopy over the dining space, which appears over-designed for its size. The large rectangular mass of the car park building sits uncomfortably with the homes added to its north-east side, and with the circular form of the public space to its south-west. A simpler, clearer set of architectural forms and features would create a calmer, more enduring place to live, work or shop in.

To achieve this, a clearer approach to dealing with constraints and absolute requirements may be helpful. For example, if the existing multi-storey car park is definitely to be retained, we would expect its form to be a design driver to a greater extent. The hierarchy of requirements, constraints and aspirations should be carefully thought



CONFIDENTIAL

through. We would also recommend paying further attention to the junctions of old and new in the scheme; durable materials, simply and effectively detailed, will be an important contributor to the scheme's success.

In our view, a tall building could work well in this location. To be a valued part of the urban fabric, a single tall building here would need to be a singular element, whose base, middle and top are visible and understandable from the public route from which it is entered. The tall building in the proposal for Eden Walk, however, rises from a larger body of mid- to high-rise built form and does not have a clear enough identity of its own. The three-storey horizontal band that is the base of this block creates a datum that emphasises the enormity of the built form. Overall, the tall building and the adjoining lower elements create an unduly imposing 'wall' onto Eden Street; unfortunately they do not have the makings of a visually pleasing and valued part of the town centre. We think a more successful approach would be to create individual buildings whose verticality is expressed more clearly.

In terms of the way the tower interfaces with the public realm, we think that any tall building here should have a clearer and more comfortable relationship with public routes and spaces around it. Positioning a more autonomous, elegant tall building at the end of a public route might help its role as a marker and a focal point make sense to people living in and using the town centre.

The bulky nature of the proposal also raises concerns in terms of mid- and long-distance views of the development, particularly given the fine grain of other parts of the town centre. A more singular tall building and a better defined skyline in the development would help the scheme sit more comfortably in its locality and would improve views from across the river.

The residential entrance indicated on South Crescent – recessed, with metal cladding – appears well-defined. However, as a place that will be home for hundreds of households, we are concerned that in general, the retail environment is being prioritised over a sense of privacy and domesticity for new residents. On Union Street, for example, it will be hard to create a comfortable domestic environment where there are two vehicle entrances, for retail servicing and residential parking. We therefore recommend revisiting the routes to the residential entrances, the conditions at those communal doorways and their relationship to neighbouring shops.

Next steps

We would advise that these strategic design principles – the configuration of built form, movement routes, public spaces and building entry points – should be resolved as a priority. We would suggest that creating a 'signature public realm' and 'signature building' should be central to this. Three large, conjoined buildings are unlikely to be the basis for a successful solution. Once the design principles have been established successfully, the next level of design can be developed and evaluated. We would expect that next level to include:

- An effective environmental strategy for the operation of the buildings and spaces
- A strategic approach to transport for new residents
- Creating appealing new homes with good access to private outdoor space

Thank you for consulting us and please keep us informed of the progress of the scheme. If there is any point that requires clarification, please contact us.



CONFIDENTIAL

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Toms
Programme Leader, Design Council Cabe
Email rachel.toms@designcouncil.org.uk
Tel +44(0)20 7420 5241

cc

Chloë Clay	Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Stephen Senior	Historic England
Matthew Secker	British Land
Miles Price	British Land
John Adams	Deloitte Real Estate
Amy Douglas	Deloitte Real Estate
Jeremy Sweet	BDP
Gregory Fonseca	BDP
Robert Tavernor	Tavernor Consultancy

Review process

Following discussions with the design team and local authority, a site visit was undertaken and the scheme was reviewed on 3 September 2015 by Paul Finch (chair), Joyce Bridges, Alex Ely, Deborah Nagan, John Previc and Tim Stonor. These comments supersede any views we may have expressed previously.

Affiliated panels

Design Council Cabe is affiliated with independent design review panels which commits them all to shared values of service, the foundation of which are the 10 key principles for design review. Further information on affiliation can be found by visiting our website.

Confidentiality

Since the scheme is not yet the subject of a planning application, the advice contained in this letter is offered in confidence, on condition that we are kept informed of the progress of the project, including when it becomes the subject of a planning application. We may share confidential letters with our affiliated panels only in cases where an affiliated panel is taking on a scheme that we have previously reviewed. We reserve the right to make our views known should the views contained in this letter be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). If you do not require our views to be kept confidential, please write to cabe@designcouncil.org.uk.

