



Historic England

Mr Toby Feltham  
Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames  
2 Guildhall  
High Street  
Kingston upon Thames, KT1 1EU

Our ref: P00442431

27 January 2016

Dear Mr Feltham,

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 &  
T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015  
DEVELOPMENT SITE AT FORMER POST OFFICE, KINGSTON UPON THAMES  
Application No 14/13247**

Thank you for your letter of 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016 notifying Historic England of the latest revisions to the above application. Further to our advice dated 13th May 2015, 30th September 2015 and 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015, we can offer you the following comments.

Historic England welcomes the alterations that have been made to the scheme since the refusal of the earlier proposals by your Council's planning committee. The reduction in the height and bulk of the proposed building between the former Post Office and Telephone Exchange, in conjunction with the restoration and reuse of the two listed buildings, has addressed concerns regarding the harm that the scheme would have caused to the significance of these two important heritage assets. In our view the more harmonious relationship that the latest iteration of the building on Ashdown Road will have with its listed neighbours and wider context illustrates the value of the guidance on heights in the Eden Quarter SPD.

The revised palette of materials and architectural detailing of the brick and stonework across the scheme are also welcomed. The proposed architectural detailing provides a more contextual response beside the listed Telephone Exchange and Post Office, and Kingston town centre more generally. Were the Council minded to approve the scheme we would strongly recommend conditions regarding the detailed design and materials, as the illustration of the materials provided risks creating a flat – mass produced – finish which may not match the quality suggested by the other images submitted. In particular we would suggest that sample panels are matched to neighbouring buildings, such as the listed former post office and the locally designated houses on the southern side Wheatfield Way, in terms of variety of colours, texture, brick bond and pointing colour.



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However, despite these positive changes not all of our concerns have been addressed. We welcome the further detailed design development that has taken place, particularly on the Brook Street elevation, of the 16 storey corner building, but this has not significantly mitigated the impact of the height of the building in the setting of the Market Place and Market house.

Our comments dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 (attached for reference) set out in detail why we consider the presence of the tower element harmful in the setting of the Market House. If the glazed storeys at the top of the building were to be removed we believe the impact on the setting of the Market House and Market Place would be almost negligible. Similarly, for most of the mid-range and longer views the tall building would become subservient to existing landmarks, while still serving the landmark function desired in the Eden Quarter SPD in views from the south. Were this mitigation achieved we would regard the potential heritage benefits of repairing and providing a new viable use for the listed buildings to be very significant in the context of any residual harm.

In conclusion, while the revised proposal would have a better relationship to its context than the previous designs, we consider the top of the 16 storey element would still cause harm to the setting of significant heritage assets notably in the Market Place. For this reason, despite the other positive changes, we do not consider that the scheme complies fully with the NPPF or the Council's policies relating to heritage, design or this town centre.

We acknowledge that this site would clearly benefit from development and as a key part of the Eden Quarter Masterplan, we encourage your Council to resolve the outstanding issues identified above.

Please note that this response relates to historic building and historic area matters only. If there are any archaeological implications to the proposals it is recommended that you contact GLAAS for further advice (Tel: 020 7973 3732).

Yours sincerely,



**David English**

Historic Places Adviser

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