

CD9.6

2-4 Ringers Road and 5 Ethelbert Road, Bromley

Summary Proof of Evidence of Richard Hammond - Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Application DC/21/05585/FULL1

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/W/24/3340223

For Ringers Road Properties Ltd

June, 2024

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CONTENTS

1.0 Witness Information2

2.0 Baseline2

3.0 The Proposed Development3

4.0 Response to Reason for Refusal3

5.0 Conclusion4

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1.0 WITNESS INFORMATION

- 1.1 My name is Richard Hammond and I am an Associate Landscape Architect with EDLA, specialising in Townscape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (TVIA). I hold a Post Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) and a Practitioner of Environmental Management and Assessment (PIEMA). I have 20 years' experience in townscape and landscape planning, design and environmental matters, as set out in my main Proof of Evidence.
- 1.2 In relation to this Public Inquiry, I was appointed in December 2020 and I undertook the Tall Building Study and TVIA for the planning application (CD1.54). I was not involved with the design of the internal courtyard, although this was undertaken by colleagues at EDLA (formerly ETLA).

2.0 BASELINE

- 2.1 There are a variety of land uses surrounding the Site, resulting in a varied urban structure in terms of building heights, massing and architectural styles. In respect of Ringers Road and Ethelbert Road the street scene is varied and generally of low scenic quality, with access into buildings often demarcated by steps and ramps which provide additional clutter to the streetscape. Due to this, the architectural quality and streetscape of the townscape surrounding the Site is varied.
- 2.2 Taller buildings are interspersed across the High Street, with the Churchill Theatre in the northern part of the town centre, Henry House and William House ('the Crest Building') on the southern side of Ringers Road (opposite the Site) and the Mall Tower in the central part of the town centre, beyond The Glades. St. Marks Tower and Perigon Heights are in the southern part of the town centre.
- 2.3 In respect of townscape and visual matters, I consider that the context for the Proposed Development and the baseline for the townscape and visual assessment must also include 62 High Street (Laura Ashley) and its roof extension and 66-70 High Street, a 12 storey building on Ethelbert Road, to the east of the Site, as these are permitted schemes.
- 2.4 66-70 High Street will demarcate the eastern side of Ethelbert Road and result in a notable change in scale between the adjacent single storey café and Salvation Army Church and Centre, as well as two storey residential properties on the northern side of Ethelbert Road. 66-70 High Street will also locate a tall building in close proximity to the Site, like Henry House and William House on the opposite side of Ringers Road. Like 66-70 High Street, Henry House and William House already denote a marked change in scale from adjacent two storey residential properties, as well as a range of architectural styles and forms. The eastern parts of Ringers Road and Ethelbert Road are demarcated by taller buildings, set within a relatively wide street pattern, such that there is not a perception of 'canyoning' or enclosure in relation to the human scale and experience of the townscape.
- 2.5 The existing buildings at the Site do not contribute positively to the townscape due to their overall lack of architectural detailing and scenic quality. The Site is part of a townscape assessed by the Bromley Town Centre SPD as having a 'medium to high' development potential and where there is an acceptance in principle of a change in building scales between the existing townscape and new development within the Site 10 allocation. The Site is therefore part of a townscape which is considered able to accommodate future change and with 66-70 High Street, Henry House and William House and the extension to Laura Ashley, taller buildings immediately adjacent to lower height properties and set back from the High Street. The Proposed Development would reflect this pattern of the townscape.
- 2.6 In close range views, the existing buildings within the Site are visible from along Ringers Road, Ravensbourne Road, Ethelbert Road and Ethelbert Close. The existing buildings are seen as part of the varied building styles which extend across landform which falls from the High Street to Ravensbourne Road. The composition of views is channelled due to the alignment of these roads, with the extent of views either truncated by the more elevated High Street or extending westwards across the residential suburbs and interspersed with tall buildings, including St. Mark's Tower.
- 2.7 As one moves along Ringers Road and Ethelbert Road, the sequential experience of views results in existing building forms merging due to changing angles of views, with buildings at close range 'combining' in terms of massing, despite gaps between their building footprints, such as with the Henry House and William House, such that form a very short amount of time, they appear as 'one building' and mass. But they do not dominate, nor are they overbearing because of the street width and architectural detailing to the facades.
- 2.8 In mid-range views, particularly to the west of the town centre, the more undulating pattern of landform enables a greater visibility of buildings across the town centre. The composition of views consists of a consistent scale of residential properties in the foreground, with taller massing in the town centre in the background of the view. This taller massing includes the Mall Tower, the Churchill Theatre, St. Mark's Tower and Henry House and William House, which extend above the skyline, such that views towards the Site are already characterised by tall buildings forming the background of the view. This will continue to be the case with 66-70 High Street, as well as future development as part of the Site 10 allocations. The Site is therefore visually seen within the direct context of taller buildings and will increasingly be so with 66-70 High Street, which in many views will back-cloth the Proposed Development, whilst being seen at distance from the Churchill Theatre and lower in the skyline.
- 2.9 In long range views, including from the elevated terraces of Crystal Palace Park there are panoramic views which include Bromley. The upper parts of the Churchill Theatre, Henry House and William House and St Marks Tower are visible, but form a very small part of wider views, with the Site again consolidated to directly within this context.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 Block A, adjacent to Ringers Road, would extend up to 12 and 14 storeys in height, dropping down in height towards the High Street. Block B, adjacent to Ethelbert Road, would extend up to 10 and 12 storeys in height, dropping down in height away from the High Street, along Ethelbert Road and towards Church House Gardens.
- 3.2 The building façades to Blocks A and B will provide a clear definition between the lower, middle and upper parts of the building, as well as delineating between the co-working spaces and residential parts of the building, enabling active frontages at the street level and a high quality design.
- 3.3 An internal courtyard will provide a link between Block A and Block B, which along with new planting, seating and a water feature and green roofs atop both Block A and B, provides opportunities for new green infrastructure.



Image 3-1: CGI Aerial (refer RH Volume II), illustrating the Proposed Development (centre) in its townscape context, along with 66-70 High Street (red building left of image).

4.0 RESPONSE TO REASON FOR REFUSAL

- 4.1 In relation to views of the town centre skyline, the visibility of the Proposed Development would vary between not being visible due to intervening buildings, partly visible or visible in most of its entirety; as is common with a townscape environment.
- 4.2 Within all the views where the Proposed Development is visible, it will be seen as an integrated part of a cluster of existing buildings, accounting for both the existing situation of Henry House and William House and 66-70 High Street. The Proposed Development will also be seen as part of a varied skyline of tall buildings extending between St. Marks Tower, Henry House and William House, the new 66-70 High Street and the Churchill Theatre. There will be sufficient physical and visual separation between the Proposed Development and the Churchill Theatre, as well as the Proposed Development being seen as lower on the skyline, such that the visual function of the Churchill Theatre as an important civic landmark will remain.
- 4.3 The Proposed Development would provide additional visual interest to the skyline via the stepped form of Blocks A and B, which will both reflect the underlying landform, as well as provide visual interest between their alternating roof profiles.
- 4.4 The combination of the high quality design of the Proposed Development, the improved streetscape and the reduced perception of the massing via the stepped roof profiles, in combination with the relatively wide streets and existing and future tall buildings in proximity to the Site would ensure that the Proposed Development was neither overly dominant nor an overbearing addition to the town centre skyline.
- 4.5 In combination with the height of Henry House and William House to the south of the Site and 66-70 High Street to the east of the Site, the Proposed Development would not be out of context with its immediate surrounds. This is because these existing buildings already denote a notable change in scale from adjacent properties and this in turn is the character of the Site's immediate context, as part of varied townscape where buildings of differing architectural styles, heights and forms are all juxtaposed to one another.
- 4.6 The experience of the immediate surrounds from the High Street, roads and parts of Church House Gardens will not adversely change in townscape and visual terms as a result of the Proposed Development. This is because the Proposed Development reflects the existing townscape pattern and beneficially adds to this via its own building form, detailing, interest to the streetscape and skyline.
- 4.7 For the above reasons, the Proposed Development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. The Proposed Development also responds positively to the relevant London Plan and Bromley Local Plan policies in respect of design and townscape and visual matters cited in the RfR.

- 4.8 The Proposed Development will protect the skyline because it will be located in proximity to existing tall buildings and 66-70 High Street in views from the west and north-west of the Site (the main locations of views of the Proposed Development), such that it will either be back-clothed by 66-70 High Street, being lower in height than 66-70 High Street, or seen in its immediate context, along with the Henry House and William House.
- 4.9 The Proposed Development is not contrary to the Urban Design SPD, as the Proposed Development responds positively to the relevant overarching design principles, which are the stated '*performance indicators*' of good design.
- 4.10 In respect of the Bromley Town Centre SPD, the Proposed Development would not impact the key element of the Churchill Theatre and would appear as an integrated development with 66-70 High Street and the Henry House and William House, such that it would be well related to these existing buildings and the street scene, in accordance with the SPD guidance. Also in accordance with the SPD guidance, the Proposed Development has not been designed in isolation and has respected the landscape character of Church House Gardens via the lower heights of Block B and their stepped arrangement towards the gardens and Ethelbert Road.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 In conclusion, the Proposed Development reflects the SPD approach of '*replace*', whereby it is a unique solution through the contemporary use of form, materiality and detailing, given the Site is in an area of inconsistent character.
- 5.2 The Proposed Development will be beneficial change to the townscape and visual amenity of the area, forming a co-ordinated and integrated part of the Ethelbert Road and Ringers Road townscape, where taller buildings are located on the eastern and more elevated landform, thereby following the existing townscape pattern, as well as that to come via 66-70 High Street and the extension to Laura Ashley.