

Design Review:
**Jericho
Canalside**

Designed by PRP Architects

Oxford

Planning reference 14/01441/FUL

20 August 2007

Whilst we think that the principle of residential development facing the canalside is acceptable on this site, we have concerns regarding the apparent lack of thought given to the design of the public space and its relationship with the surrounding buildings. This is an interesting site with fine assets of the canal to the west and the grade II listed St Barnabas Church to the east. We support the removal of the church boundary wall as this creates another potential asset, providing a visual focus for the square. This space is central to the development and the immediate neighbourhood, and needs to be thought about as a project in its own right.

A square of this size would benefit from more activity and a mix of uses. We are not convinced that single use is the right approach for this site and have reservations about the lack of animation of the central space. The indicated community facility (which is not the subject of this application), if realised, will have little presence on the space and, in our view, is not enough to provide the level of activity that this space requires. A study of primary pedestrian routes into the site and views in from Cardigan Street and Dawson Place will help inform landuse distribution.

The concept of opening up views of the church from the canal side is potentially a good one. However, the manner in which this concept has been realised has led to an awkward geometry of the corners of both buildings and leaves an odd shaped public space. Landscape design ideas for the central space must work alongside the architectural concepts for a robust and holistic response to this site and its assets.

The material provided suggests that the relationship between the private and public functions has not been satisfactorily addressed. For example, it is unclear as to how the private residential use on the south edge will interface with the public space. The canalside walk is a significant part of the public realm, but there is not enough evidence in the drawings to show that its continuity has been maintained in front of the proposed residential blocks. The Planning Authority should assure themselves that public access is maintained, and that it fits into a wider canalside strategy.

We think the general quantum, form and massing of the building, in terms of its plan and height, is an appropriate response to the site. The shape of the site which runs along the canal has determined the built form, which is a linear arrangement of 1 or 2 bedroom flats. We are pleased to see that the internal arrangement of both blocks is efficient with

dual aspect for each dwelling. However, it is disappointing that the flats are accessed through the parking courts, which has limited the interaction between the built form and the canalside. The articulation of the elevations is well structured, simple and clear. Ultimately the success will be dependant on the quality of materials and detailing and we urge the Planning Authority to condition them as necessary.

Whilst we are generally supportive of the aspirations to develop this site in the manner proposed, we feel the scheme would substantially benefit from further design work in order to address our concerns.

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