

Design Review: New Ludgate

Designed by Fletcher Priest and Sauerbruch Hutton

City of London

Planning reference: 11/00049/FULEIA

10 May 2011

The Buildings

We endorse the strategy of employing two architectural design practices to develop a co-ordinated proposal for this site. The two buildings that share the site are thematically related, yet distinct, and strike a good balance between offering variety and maintaining coherence within a large, and potentially monotonous, city block.

There is much to admire in the Old Bailey building, especially the subtle use of colour that responds to different orientations. However, we are concerned that the depth and bulk of the transoms introduces an overly dominant, grey horizontality that detracts from the elegant, repeated, vertical form of the undulating coloured fins.

The Ludgate Hill building has great potential. However, there are a number of areas that require further consideration. Although we believe that the new façade makes an appropriate contribution to Ludgate Hill, we are concerned that the set-back, responding to St Pauls' restricted grid heights, introduces a potentially awkward relationship between upper and lower massing of the building. Additional view analysis of this junction is needed to confirm whether the relationship is successful or requires further refinement. Although variation of the façade, around the building, offers a richness of experience, we believe that the junctions between each change of treatment are not yet fully resolved, nor sufficiently articulated. We recommend further consideration of the design of these junctions. Finally, care should be taken in the technical resolution of the laminated, glass frame to guarantee an elegant and durable detail.

The Public Realm

We are pleased with the strategic proposal for the public realm; in particular, the pocket square and the new east-west passageway make welcome, civic contributions to the city. However, careful attention is required in the design of the passageway, to ensure that it becomes a busy and popular thoroughfare. Although the eastern approach from the square seems inviting, the western end does not open out in a legible way. This route has the potential to become a valuable civic asset; however, there is also a risk that it may become little more than an unpleasant alleyway. Proposing a combination of the

blank walls, vents or public art may not lead to the best outcome. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the design team find some means of enlivening the route. Extending some retail or cafe use along the length of the passageway could improve the quality of experience in this space, while also offering some reassuring passive supervision.

The hard landscape proposals do not yet match the quality and strength of the architectural design. We recommend that a more detailed landscape proposal is made, which demonstrates that an equally high quality experience will be delivered.

Finally, we believe that allowing members of the public some access onto the elevated terrace would produce a substantial public benefit and greatly improve the civic nature of this building.

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