

Design Review: Tipping Street

Designed by 3DReid

Stafford

Planning reference: 08/11454/FUL

17 February 2009

We welcome this proposal as a successful piece of architecture; it sits comfortably within the urban pattern of Stafford and provides a welcoming retail environment. We are supportive of the design and our comments only concern the treatment of the listed building adjacent to the proposal.

Architecture

In our opinion, the proposal works well on this site close to Greengate Street and the historic monuments of Stafford and we appreciate, for example, the integration of the views to St Chad's church. Stafford's heritage has a unique character but we understand that the town is in need of a careful redevelopment strategy in order to repair the urban structure. We think that the proposed block with the diagonal street at its heart provides a successful route which will draw people through the site and which will potentially connect the town centre and the future development to the south.

The proposal for the Tipping Street site has the potential to set a precedent in terms of the architectural quality for following projects. Ultimately, the success of the scheme will be dependent on the quality of materials and detailing. We also recommend the local authority assure itself as to whether the screening of the plant equipment on the roof is sufficient as it is likely to be visible from the ground.

Listed Building

We think that the relationship between the proposed eastern block and the listed building on Tipping Street is the weakest part of the scheme. We feel that the space behind the old buildings is not sufficiently generous to allow it to be considered a proper square nor does the narrow gap between the two buildings leave any breathing space for the older neighbour. The way the current scheme addresses the listed building is unassertive while, overall, the new design appears well-mannered and confident.

Conclusion

While we think that this proposal has the makings for a successful piece of architecture, we believe that it would be helpful for Stafford Borough Council to develop a wider masterplan concept for the whole town. This masterplan should include the redevelopment of the land along the River Sow which plays a crucial role for the future of Stafford and Tipping Street in terms of establishing new routes and public spaces.

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