

Architectural Rebuttal of Council Evidence



Evidence Submitted by

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Site address

334-340 High Street and 8-22 Harborne Park Road, Harborne, Birmingham

Appeal Reference;

APP/P4605/W/23/3336011

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844-D5A-00-XX-RP-A-0011-Architectural_Rebuttal_of_Council_Evidence-S3-P01

Date;

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Proposed view from the junction with Harborne Park Road to High Street looking east



Preface

I am Ian Saunders BA(Hons), DipArch(Birm), PG Dip, ARB, RIBA partner at D5 Architects LLP (D5). I trained as an architect at the Birmingham School of Architecture then located in Perry Barr at Birmingham Polytechnic (latterly Birmingham City University). I achieved full qualification and entry to the Architects Registration Board (ARB) register(reg. no. 057586K) in 1990. I have practised as an architect in a full time capacity since.

I am a founding partner of D5 with specialisms in the residential and transportation sectors. I practice throughout the UK and have completed construction projects from the Scottish Borders to Hampshire, from Kent to Cornwall. In the last decade I have been lead partner on numerous residential schemes in Birmingham and have constructed in excess of 600 apartments around the city including developments at Heaton House Lofts, Equipoint, Assay Lofts, Concord House and Honduras Wharf. Some of these completed projects such as Assay Lofts and St Pauls House, both in the historic Jewellery Quarter have been used by BCC as illustrations of good design within the Birmingham Design Guide SPD.

In addition to being a Birmingham trained and based architect I am a Harborne resident having lived in the suburb for more than 30 years.

1.00 Introduction

- 1.01** Following receipt of Council evidence we make the following rebuttal to Council evidence points 3.5, 3.11 and 3.16.
- 1.02** We make the following rebuttal strictly in response to the stated sections, our failure to comment on other sections of the Council evidence does not mean nor imply acceptance of any statements made by the Council.

2.00 Council Evidence Section 3.5

- 2.01** Council evidence states;

The appeal scheme is a maximum of 6 storeys high on the High Street peaking at 17.9m tall (Block A). This scale is considered to be excessive especially when the site is positioned next to 350-352 High Street which is a very modest 3 storeys (9.3m high), a difference of over 8m.

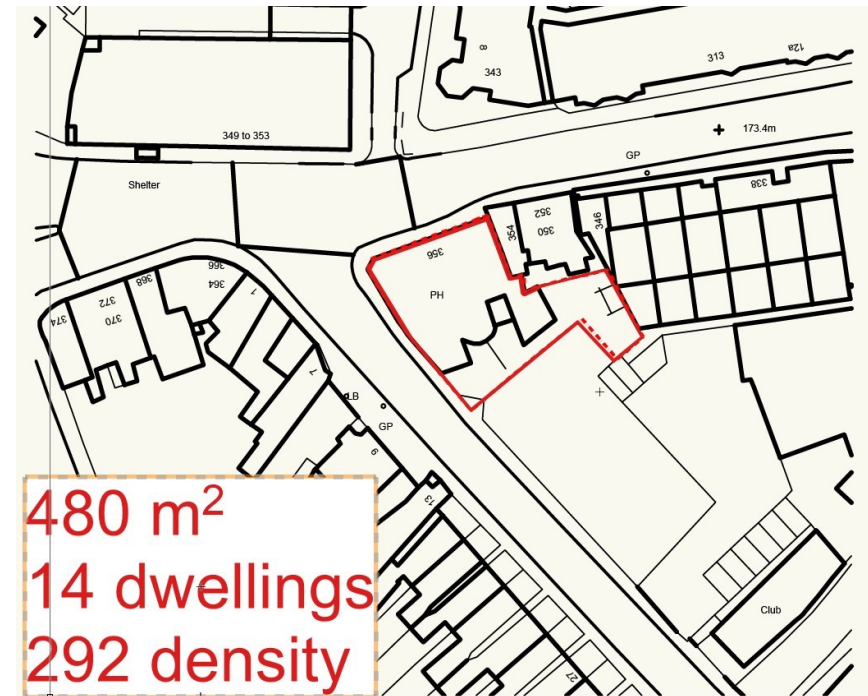
- 2.02** The statement is not representative of the proposed design it attempts to describe. The calculation of height differences does not take into account the articulation of the appeal scheme formed, in accordance with Council guidance, to mitigate the array of building heights in this section of the High Street.
- 2.03** The illustration below is included on page 15 of my evidence illustrating the proposal within the wider street scene. I have added building heights to demonstrate the relative levels.



- 2.04 I have demonstrated in my evidence at figure 32, page 23 that distinct steps between adjacent forms are a clear characteristic found along the full length of High Street Harborne and, as illustrated overleaf the difference in height between the appeal proposal and the adjacent 350-352 High Street is in reality only 3.7m where the buildings meet and not 8m as stated in Council evidence.
- 2.05 The difference in height between the appeal proposal and 350-352 High Street is significantly less than the difference between 350-352 High Street and 356 High Street (Kings Oak apartments) as also illustrated.

3.00 Council Evidence Section 3.11

- 3.01 In their commentary relating to the density of surrounding developments the Council benchmark Kings Oak apartments (356 High Street) as 280dph. Analysis of the consented planning scheme demonstrates the density for the development to be 292dph as I have illustrated in my evidence figure 30 on page 22.
- 3.02 Analysis of the consented planning drawings below indicates an actual site area of 480m² resulting in a density of 292dph. We assume the miscalculation in the Council’s evidence is due to the site area being rounded up to 0.05Ha.



4.00 Council Evidence Section 3.16

- 4.01** In their evidence presented in section 3.16 the Council make reference to City Notes LW-6, LW-7 and LW-8 found within the 'Healthy Living and Working Places' City Manual SPD. This document forms one part of the wider City Design Guide and was adopted in September 2022.
- 4.02** This is the first reference the Council have made to these specific City Notes. No reference was made to these City Notes in either the reasons for refusal, the case officer's report recommending refusal of the application or their Statement of Case and as such their evidence is the first time the Council have elaborated upon these points and been specific in their reason for refusal. We would therefore, like to take this opportunity to briefly address the requirements of each design note.
- 4.03** City Note LW-6

The primary statement of City Note LW-6 states;

The concept behind a building should be drawn from the creativity of the architect, whilst pulling and utilising appropriate elements of the surrounding character area to help the building knit into and positively add to its surroundings.

The appeal scheme consists of 2 blocks each facing the two principal streets creating enclosure where non currently exists to reinforce the character of both streets in this location. Both blocks include dormer windows to pitched roof's reflecting a common theme found along the High Street and Harborne Park Road. The formation of the blocks creates a south facing courtyard and south facing roof terraces all of which receive high degree's of direct sunlight throughout the day and year.

The Block A on the High Street is expressed as 2 forms to create articulation to the street frontage with stepping forms responding positively to the existing structures on either side of the site to create a more coherent street scene than currently exists.

The composition of the elevation similarly references local characteristics with the expressed ground floor echoing the formation of shopfronts along the High Street topped with residential scale accommodation with diminishing storey heights.

The Block B to Harborne Park Road is a lower form than the corner building adjacent and similar in scale and form to the existing terrace houses opposite. This simple pitched roof form is animated with projecting bays which are a modern interpretation of similar features found on the houses opposite creating a similar rhythm and sense of enclosure to the highway.

The city design manager and application case officer have both agreed with the general overall approach in correspondence during the application with the above design philosophy closely related to their own recommendation for the scale, massing and nature of development as illustrated in my evidence in figure 20 on page 15.

4.03 City Note LW-7

The primary statement of City Note LW-7 states;

The form, mass and scale of the building should generally have been informed by the character of the surrounding area and appropriate adjacent buildings. Whilst a modern interpretation may not need to follow an historic form, the scale and mass should align with its surroundings, unless there is a clear design justification for deviating from this.

I did deal with how the appeal scheme meets the guidance on LW-7 in section 6.01.1 on page 23 of my evidence. In summary we do not accept it is credible to ignore the adjacent building at 326 High Street, that the design proposed is in keeping with the stepping forms found along the High Street, that the appeal scheme related very closely to the recommended High Street massing proposed by the Council and that the City Design Manager confirmed the height of the scheme to both High Street and Harborne Park road is acceptable.

4.04 City Note LW-8

The primary statement of City Note LW-8 states;

The building's façade, allied with its form, will play an instrumental role in delivering coherent architecture. The nature of the building's use and location may dictate how bold or contemporary an approach is. Whatever the architectural style, buildings must display a coherent architectural approach, with well-proportioned, balanced facades that have attractive, considered detailing and a limited palette of quality materials.

Without specific reference to LW-8 I did deal with the elevational composition of both blocks in section 6.01.2 on page 23 of my evidence. In summary, I explained how the ground floor of the High Street block echoes the formation of single storey shop fronts along the High Street harmonising with the strong horizontal aspect found to ground floor structures with upper floors formed with punched windows often reflecting a different building rhythm to that found on ground floors. I also described how traditional techniques expressing reduced storey heights higher up the façade reflect the local traditional vernacular whilst providing suitable daylight, window and ceiling heights.

With regard to Block B on Harborne Park Road I described the re-interpretation of the traditional dwelling opposite into a contemporary pitched roof primary form with secondary bay windows providing depth and rhythm to the façade contemporising the composition of the existing buildings opposite.