

CROYDON DESIGN REVIEW PANEL



PANEL REPORT

3 October 2024

CONFIDENTIAL

Project Title: Heath Clark North

Review Date: Thursday, 3 October 2024, 10:45 – 11:45

Review Location: Bernard Weatherhill House, Room 1.23

Attendees:

Design Review Panel

Chair

Holly Lewis (We Made That)

Panelists

David Bickle (Hawkins\Brown)

Jay Morton (Bell Phillips Architects)

Meaghan Kombol

Croydon Council

Natalie Cho (Senior Project Officer, Placemaking)

Alicia Marsac (Senior Project Officer, Placemaking)

Georgina Betts (Deputy Team Leader – North Area Team, Development Management)

Applicant Team

Archie Mackay-James (The Hyde Group)

Jon Ackroyd (Ackroyd Lowrie)

Antoine Reaud (Ackroyd Lowrie)

Diana Thomson (Savills)

Stephanie Yu (Arup)

David Finch (Churchman Thornhill Finch)

Planning Committee Members

Councillor Michael Neal (Chair)

Conflicts of Interest

None

Project Address

Heath Clark North, Land To South Of Duppas Hill Road, Croydon

Project Description

Redevelopment of the site to deliver approximately 217 new residential dwellings and approximately 482sqm of non-residential floorspace (Use Class F.1/F.2), as well as private and communal amenity spaces, parking, cycle parking, enhanced public realm and landscaping, and relevant infrastructure works.

Panel Response

Clarifications

- The Panel asked how much engagement has been done so far.
The Applicant explained that there was an online 20-30 person consultation event held on 2nd October and they have met with the Mayor. They noted that there was engagement done on the previous scheme, with the main comments being about traffic movement, not necessarily about parking.
- The Panel asked about the motivation to uplift the scheme.
The Applicant explained that with Hyde coming in, they wanted not only a density uplift, but also improvements to the blocks and linkages, including district heating across both sites and better routes through. The opportunity for increased density also helps make it deliverable from a viability standpoint.
- The Panel asked how the community space is envisioned, including how it is accessed and how it relates to the street.
The Applicant explained that there will be some entrances on the Duppas Hill Road side, which would create an active frontage, and some on the south-facing side. There will be some entrances on the front, but also a community café at the back with the public square connected to it on the southwest as people are unlikely to gather along the noisy, busy road. The Applicant noted that they have not finalised the anchor tenant yet. There are ongoing discussions with Hyde on what that is, but some ideas include co-working space or a community hub. The previous application used changing/toilet facilities, but through discussions with Parks, it was determined to not be the right use. There will instead be contributions towards the park.
- The Panel asked if the ground floor homes will be accessed through the central core or if they will have entrances off the street.
The Applicant explained that the ground floor homes will have access to both. The front door entrances will be access through defensible garden space, but residents can also use the main core to access the bin/bike stores. There needs to be a balance of having active frontage and access to bin/bike stores. The ground floor homes on the eastern block will have access through

to the park. On that boundary, Secure by Design would like a fence there, but officers do not, so they are looking to have a soft landscape boundary.

- The Panel asked about the boundary relationship with the park.
The Applicant explained that it is currently defensible planters with no fence.
- The Panel noted that no plan showing topography was presented and asked for clarity in the level changes. In a section, it seems that there is 1.5m drop into the site, but level access is shown.
The Applicant explained that there will be level access with the bridge at the same level as the pavement. To extend the pavement, some area will be built up, but the green area to the north of the site is a dell/swale. The development itself will be raised up due to flooding issues, but the central green drops down again, so there are some level changes across the site.
- The Panel asked about the placement of the buildings and their relationship to the topography, particularly as it is supposed to be a landscape-led scheme. The Panel noted that one of the beacon buildings sits right in flood zone 1, but is treated the same way as the other buildings, and the Panel queried if there has been exploration on treating buildings differently based on topography and landscape.
The Applicant explained that the central green and the dell will fill up with water at times and they have met with the LLFA to ensure that it all works. There were previous discussions of pushing the western beacon building more east with a path running along the western side, but there were issues with safety. The Applicant noted that it is important to have a link to Waddon architecturally.
- The Panel asked whether UGF and BNG requirements are met.
The Applicant explained that the UGF is 0.46 and BNG is still pending; however, the previous BNG baseline was 11 or 12 and they are now doing more than that.
- The Panel asked for clarity on the bridge link from Duppas Hill Road into the site, noting that both bridges are drawn as lightweight but one of them will be used for emergency access and would need to be more grounded.
The Applicant noted that they have not developed the bridge design in a lot of detail yet, but acknowledged that this is an important issue in terms of design.
- The Panel asked for further information on the relation between the ground floor homes sitting next to Duppas Hill Park and how it is integrated with the landscape.
The Applicant explained that each apartment has its own access and defensible space. There is an access route towards the park and residents can walk out through their own doors or through the main circulation corridors.

- The Panel asked if there is a more detailed landscape plan showing that boundary relationship.
The Applicant noted that the details are to come.
- The Panel asked about the relationship between both sites at the southern boundary.
The Applicant explained that there was originally a strong fence separating the two sites, but they have since been working hard to integrate the two. On the southern site, there are back gardens and a lane to access the gardens, as consented. The Applicant is looking to create a communal garden north of that and keeping a lower fence boundary. They are having conversations about the fence and potentially getting a NMA for it to come down so that space can be opened up.
The Panel noted that it would be important to have a cross section showing this relationship.
- The Panel asked the Applicant if they felt that there were particular points that need more work.
The Applicant explained that the general site layout is working much better compared to the previous application, but noted that the Panel's points on the details of the bridges and integration of the ground floor units were valid. The architectural expression also needs more work on the details and composition, but it is overall a positive scheme.

Panel Feedback

General Comments

- The Panel noted that it was difficult to offer advice on how to substantially improve the scheme as it seems fully fleshed out in many ways and only allows for small moves. However, certain fundamental aspects still require more thought and detailed design.
- The Panel noted that the site is important in historic and ecological terms, sitting between Duppas Hill, the first recreation ground in Croydon, and Waddon Park, one of the world's few chalk streams. The name Waddon comes from 'woad,' a plant from which blue dye was extracted. Waddon Valley is also a habitat for kingfishers. The Panel suggested that this could form a story/narrative and identity for the site. An example would be celebrating water and understanding water and the habitats on the site, as well as using soil design to help create an identity and place. The Panel mentioned the following examples/references: Hobson's Square in Cambridge, which contains SuDS features and sculptural work relating to its Iron Age past; Ruskin Square in Croydon, which has a strong identity and clear narrative based on John Ruskin; and Wandle Vistas by Untitled Practice, which considers how the Wandle River is viewed in its surrounding areas.
- The Panel noted that the scheme does not seem to be landscape-led.

- The Panel commented that a view showing the relationship between the terrace houses and the gable end would be useful.

Site Layout & Access

- The Panel had safety concerns regarding the primary route on the southeastern end with a hard left. People coming up the route would not know if there is an exit out the other side. There were also concerns about dead ends and potential alleyways in the southern part of the site and having unclear pedestrian routes, such as walking from the western parking court through the central green. Having clear, maintained paths and clear sightlines must be considered.
- The Panel questioned how car parking will be managed around the central green and if other options have been considered so that it does not have to be a triangle, but could rather be pedestrianised along one additional edge. The Panel further queried if the parking forms part of the park identity or the road identity, and noted that landscaping could be incorporated, such as adding trees every couple of parking spaces. The Panel also noted that if vehicles are treated as invitation only, that may change how the space is imagined, especially as this is principally a place for people.

Massing and Townscape

- The Panel noted that the relationship between the mansion blocks and the parks need to be looked at more. Introducing front doors at ground floor around the green would create an active frontage and more activity could be beneficial.
- The Panel recommended creating more dynamism in the building heights.
- The Panel noted that the blocks have a cookie cutter approach, which is understandable; however, each building should have a different response to where they sit in the landscape.
- The Panel noted that the terrace houses have been kept from the previous plan to tie in with the other buildings being constructed, but suggested making them more special as there are not many of them so they could be key, distinctive design elements.
- The Panel appreciated the strong geometry of the beacon buildings, particularly as an entrance to the site. However, the Panel noted that the ground floor plinth that sticks out detracts from this geometry, which works well on the floors above. As they are muscular buildings, they should ground themselves a bit more. The omission of the plinth element, or removal of this protrusion would help with this.
- The Panel appreciated the different coloured bricks used across the site. However, they queried whether the red bricks should instead be on the buildings along Duppas Hill Road to tie in with the buildings on the other side of the street, with yellow brick buildings behind. Traditionally, red bricks were more expensive and placed along frontages.

Architectural Expression & Detailing

- The Panel noted that introducing front doors at ground floor could also add to the architecture, adding more interest and a slight difference.
- The Panel recommended that the horizontal ribbing on the plinths of the beacon buildings be reconsidered.
- The Panel noted that the corners of the beacon buildings work well with the columns that cap around the balconies.
- The Panel further noted that the beacon building in the northwest has a great corner, but the drawings show parking and a fence, which can hinder how the community hub spills out. While the level drop is a challenge, the fence could be better designed.
- The Panel recommended adding more colour or playfulness to the mansion blocks, such as introducing another texture or using the references of historic ornate entrances of nearby Edwardian buildings to inform more beautiful, less plain entrances or balconies.
- The Applicant mentioned during the presentation that they had considered a mural, which would have added some colour. The Panel noted that this could be done with key entrances that look out onto the central green and would give a sense of a main entrance point and add activity and joy.

Landscape, Amenity, and Public Realm

- The Panel noted that topographic plans with levels and long sections are needed to fully understand the complexity of the site. How the level changes are managed throughout the site remains unclear, but is essential to understanding how people will experience the site.
- The Panel suggested lining the boundaries with a softer landscape treatment, such as low hedges, rather than hard fences. The Panel also noted that all thresholds and edges must be dealt with in a sensitive way. The boundary with the park is a particularly complicated transition that needs to account for safety and also speak to a biodiversity narrative.
- The Panel queried whether something could be done by the allotment that sits on the southern site to make it more robust.
- The Panel noted that there is an opportunity to make the central landscape distinctive, such as by using a different surface or creating unique features that fit in with a narrative.
- The Panel noted that defining the community spaces is essential as they gatepost the entrance from Duppas Hill Road. The square is the most prominent part of the site, where people gather and where most pass through as the majority of residents will not have cars, so it needs to be successful and resolved in more detail. As the community use is not defined, the Panel cannot be confident that what is presented is the right design for its function. The square currently looks quite empty and hardscaped. If the uses on either side are known, both the architecture and the square could be more specifically designed to fit the character of the space and be distinctive.

Summary

The Panel was generally supportive of the proposed scheme. However, key concerns were raised regarding the lack of architectural playfulness/distinctiveness, landscape narrative, and defined community use.

The Panel was concerned with how the blocks are treated similarly in terms of design and how they fit in the landscape. The Panel felt that while there is a change in material/brick colour across the site, the blocks seem to be placed and designed in a cookie cutter approach and appears flat. The Panel also felt that for this prominent and important site, there is no clear narrative or identity, which would help guide the design. Without defining the community spaces, the Panel is also not able to comment on whether the design is appropriate. Other significant concerns were regarding safety coming up through the southern route and managing potential illegal car parking around the central green.

The Panel strongly recommends the Applicant to add some specialness and joy in the design of the blocks, such as through pops of colour, varying heights and textures, celebrating entrances, and referring to the landscape and historic context. The design of the beacon buildings could be strengthened by removing the plinth and continuing the columns to the ground. Given the ecological importance of the site, a strong landscape narrative should inform and be integrated in the design, and the edge/boundary treatments must be carefully considered. The use of the community spaces must be defined in order to inform the design. The Panel also recommends considering invitation-only vehicles to help manage parking and to maintain a pedestrian-led design.

Panel members are to provide independent, non-statutory and impartial place critique and design advice for development proposals; such advice (verbal or written) to be provided on the basis that Applicants are strongly advised by the Design Review Panel that the panel feedback is not actioned until officially fed back into the pre-application process by Council officers and that any advice which is actioned before this is fed back into the pre-application process will be done at the Applicant's own risk.

