

Meeting with developers of Staples site, November 2019

Present: Adam Cedar, David Warriner-Brown (owners of site, Pan Albion LLP), Jim Tarzey (consultant, Pegasus)

Anne Cooper, Alastair Boyles, Jonathon Myles, Mary Rose Baugh, Simon Baugh

On 8th November, members of the committee met the owners of the Staples site and their consultant to discuss their application again. The case has been stalled because no planning officer was available (!), But they hope it will go to committee relatively soon.

A revised proposal was submitted on 11 October following discussions with the council's officers for Conservation (Susan Smith) and Urban Design (Sarah Chubb), who are said to now be "very happy" with the design. (All documents are up to date on the planning portal except for graphic images, which will be updated soon.) We discussed the main aspects which FMC members objected to:

- Overdevelopment. The height of part of the site (the townhouses along Victoria Road) has been reduced. However, the developers are not willing to reduce the number of units, or increase the size of the rooms, saying that (a) this density is in line with relevant standards and local guidelines for Mitcham's Corner; and (b) the proposed scale is necessary to achieve a reasonable return on investment.
- Safety concerns. Although the Highways department do not consider the design hazardous, the developers have agreed to have further discussions with Highways about traffic calming, an extra pedestrian crossing on Croftholme Lane, and other possible measures to reduce risk.
- Quality of the design. The architect has redesigned the box dormer windows, added patterned and coloured brickwork, redesigned the main entrance, and added an access corridor on the Chesterton Road frontage. In discussion, the developers agreed to ask her to reconsider the design of the Chesterton Road/Croftholme Lane corner, to make it more appropriate for a significant "gateway" building like this. They also agreed to add more landscaping and planting to soften all three corners of the site.
- Failure to improve public realm. The land in front of the site on Chesterton Road is council owned, and the developers have no obligation to improve it (e.g. by planting trees). In discussion, they agreed to take measures to replace the tree at the Chesterton Road/Croftholme Lane corner, and to improve the exposed roots of the tree on Croftholme Lane. They also suggested FMC lobby the council for improvements, since it owns the land.
- Lack of permeability. The planners insisted on dedicated space for residents (i.e. not accessible by the public). The new access corridor from Chesterton Road gives residents access to the cycle store; we suggested this could be modified to allow the retail units access to their waste storage areas, reducing the risk of unsightly clutter on public land (as at the Co-op at 1 Milton Road).
- Future change of use. The developers stated that the design is highly customised for the "shared living" arrangement, and it would be very difficult to use the building for a different purpose (e.g. aparthotel, flats, student hostel).