

Fletcher Street, Stockport
Reviewed 10th July 07

Synopsis

The scheme is for a 95 bed hotel, 125 flats with a 6 deck car park on a site known as 'Fletcher Street'. It is an important site located within the M60 gateway/ Stockport town centre, adjacent to the St Peter's conservation area and in close proximity to a number of listed buildings. Central to the conservation area is St Peter's Square, which has recently undergone major works, creating a new public square for Stockport (which formed an element of the recent town centre masterplan). The north western part of this site will be visible from the square and vice-versa. Given Stockport's topography, any large scale development will also be visible from the M60. There are additionally both short and long range views of the site from the surrounding area.



Stockport town centre is built on a series of levels stepping up from the lowest point which contains the town centre core, listed railway viaduct and M60 motorway. This scheme sits in an elevated position above the town centre core but below the civic area.

The site is adjacent to a 1960's government office building, the backs of 2 storey listed buildings, 2 storey modern brick buildings and a 10m high retaining wall along the fourth side.

The 2 storey listed buildings are part of a sleepy shopping neighbourhood which is dotted with small scale commercial uses. The scale of this area is intimate whilst the office buildings to the opposite side are up to 10 storeys in height. The site is flat and tucks itself into the bowl made up of the tall buildings and retaining wall on two sides while being open to the scaled down listed buildings on the opposite side.

Recommendations of the Places Matter Design Review report

- To undertake a thorough townscape and heritage analysis of the site
- To achieve a better quality understanding of the relationship of the building to the public realm
- To totally rethink the building in terms of massing, height, parking and views – these issues cannot be resolved by 'tweaking' the design
- To ensure the building overlooks and gives animation to the street front
- To reassess the corner curved façade with the conical roof which fails to relate to the remainder of the building

Evaluation

Both the Local Authority and Architect have responded to our evaluation.

The Architect described the process as helpful, the local authority as invaluable and both parties said they would use the service again, though the Architect specified he would come at an earlier stage of the development as he would then have found it valuable.

In response to the recommendations, a full townscape and heritage analysis has been undertaken and some minor changes to the detail of the design, such as surface treatment.

This scheme has not yet been submitted to planning and as the Architect stated he could not accommodate the changes suggested by the panel due to the late stage of development, so the main benefits of Design Review for this particular scheme seemed to be in introducing the Local Authority to Design Review.

“The issues raised in the Panel report supported the design related views and concerns of the officers. We have used Design Review a number of times and would again in future. The Design review process provides independent rounded professional advice, which is invaluable in helping move projects forward in a positive manner.” LA

Recommendations for improvement of the process

The designer highlighted how beneficial it would've been to have been able to bring the scheme earlier and the Local Authority highlighted how beneficial it would be for the panel members to attend a site visit, even though they accepted this may become quite time consuming.

The Local Authority also recommended further promotion of this process, suggesting it could become a prerequisite for the Council to consult Places Matter! Design Review at the consultation stage of the planning application, if the scheme in question has been to Design Review at the pre-application stage.

Since this scheme came to Design Review, we have reviewed 6 more schemes from within the borough.