

Redevelopment of Land at Market Parade, Havant

A Design Review

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Prepared by studio | **REAL** for Havant Borough Council

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Introduction

This is a design review of Planning Application APP/14/01225 for the Redevelopment of Land at Market Parade, Havant. **Section A** reviews the planning application as a stand-alone scheme. **Section B** reviews the proposed scheme in light of the aspirations for the regeneration of the wider area as articulated in the Local Development Order (LDO) which is currently being prepared.

The review is based upon information contained in the following documents:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Plans, elevations and CGI's of the proposed development
- Heritage Statement and Addendum
- The unnamed "bigger picture" study by Hampshire and Regional Property Group illustrating the developer's ideas for the redevelopment of the wider area (this document doesn't form part of the planning application, but is relevant to Section B of this review).

Section A - Review of application as a stand-alone scheme

The format of the review broadly follows Building for Life 12 criteria for urban locations. There are a number of criteria where the relative strengths and weaknesses of the scheme are clear-cut. Here the commentary has been kept brief and is organised in a simple "positives (+)" and "negatives (-)" format. There are a number of other criteria where the review of the scheme is more complex. Here the text is more expansive to provide a rationale to the comments.

BfL1 Connections and scale

Does the scheme respond to the scale of its surroundings, respect existing view corridors (or create new ones), and reinforce existing connections and make new ones where feasible?

Incorporated in BfL6 – see below.

BfL2 Facilities and services

Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?

+ Central town centre location in walking distance of a wide range of facilities.

BfL3 Public transport

Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?

+ Located adjacent the railway station and a short walk from the bus station.

BfL4 Meeting local housing requirements

Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?

+ A high density scheme delivering 130 new homes to Havant. Although it includes one and two bedroom properties only, it would allow for existing Havant residents to downsize and free up some larger properties in the town.

- 25 one-bed units are located on the inside of the block. The majority of these flats are single-aspect only, with views out onto a small shaded courtyard, and without balconies. These could make dark and uncomfortable places to live.

-/+ Local planning policy stipulates that a scheme of this size should deliver 30-40% affordable housing on site. This would equate to a minimum of 39 dwellings, which would be a great benefit to the town. However, this number would be subject to the viability of the development. The viability assessment accompanying the application suggest there may be no residual value for the delivery of any affordable housing on the site.

BfL5 Character

Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

At (up to) 13 storeys and with a density of 565 dwellings / hectare (and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of approximately 4), the scale and density of the proposed development is a significant departure from the existing character of Havant.

Havant is a market town with a typically fine-grained urban form where individual plots are legible through different buildings, as is evident in the St Faith's Conservation Area. Although there are several examples of modern (re)development in the town centre that do not follow this scale and grain (Meridian Centre, North Street Parade, Market Street Parade), these developments are not generally regarded as successful additions to the town and should not be considered as appropriate precedents.

The development site is on the edge of Havant's historic core some 250m from St Faith's Church. The character of the area immediately surrounding the development site is diverse. It includes:

- **Railway station and bridges to the north.** The station is a single storey structure in Art Deco style.
- **The Market Parade development to the south and west** (with the park beyond). Dating from the early 60's it is "*a set piece of its time*" and "*has some architectural merit*" (St Faith's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (St Faith's CAAMP), Havant Borough Council, 2007). It is a predominantly three storey development with retail at ground level and a further 2 storey residential uses above. Typical to many developments of this era, Market Parade relates poorly to its immediate surroundings and the character of the historic market town in general. The development introduced a new street pattern that doesn't follow historic field and property boundaries. Instead it introduces a loop road system linking Elm Road to North Street. The loop road provides access to Market Parade Plaza in the centre of the site, which in turn links to the station forecourt, thus creating a diagonal route from Elm Road towards the railway station. The scheme is inward looking and turns its back on the park. In terms of height, massing, architectural style, materials and detailing the Market Parade scheme is very much a "stand alone" scheme.

Market Parade is an environmental and economical failure. A LDO for the area is currently being prepared. This would seek to demolish the 60s development and comprehensively redevelop this part of the town.

- **North Street and the St Faith's Conservation Area to the east.** The St Faith's CAAMP describes the area as follows: *"The historic scale of the street is two storey with North Street Parade (despite its successful recladding) and the corner buildings on Market parade being out of scale with the rest of the street (figure 7). The Star Inn [now demolished] at a modest 2½ storeys terminates the street successfully at the station forecourt. There is a variation to the roof line with small groups of pitched roofs, some parapets and gables onto the street. This variation reflects the same characteristic seen in the central core. The building line is consistent to back of pavement with only a single prominent gap adjacent to The Perseverance public house. The document also observes that "Views north along the street into the character area and south from the station are dominated and partially closed (to the north) by the United Reformed church. Its sheer massing and large roof plane with a fleche to the ridge have had a significant effect on the street scene with the Meridian centre (incorrectly) taking its scale from this building rather than the predominant scale of this street."*

The design approach taken to the application scheme is set out in the DAS. The key elements are as follows:

- Lay out: The proposed scheme follows the block structure established by the 60s Market Parade development. This maximises the site area and is a logical approach when considering the block in isolation. However, this "locks in" the block and route structure established in the 60s and may not result in the best outcome when considering the comprehensive redevelopment of the whole area (see Section B below).
- Building lines: These follow existing building lines at back of pavement, with buildings facing outward on all streets. Continuous ("terraced") development with "sweeping curves" are a reference to the 60s Market Parade scheme.
- Height and massing: This is significantly higher (5-13 storey) and bulkier than surrounding buildings. The development seeks to establish a distinct identity and introduce a "landmark" for this area of Havant.
- Architectural style and detailing: Modern and uniform. Limited information available on materials and detailing.

The application scheme appears to be conceived, and has the identity of, a single block (of varied height), rather than being considered as four elevations that form an edge to, and work as part of, the distinctly different streets or spaces that surround the site.

+ The aspiration to create a landmark development is appropriate to its location adjacent the railway station and in line with ideas set out in the Havant Urban Development Framework. It is accepted that departing from the scale of development currently prevailing in Havant is one option to achieve this.

- None withstanding the above, a stronger reference to context would help the integration of the building in Havant's townscape. The proposed scheme and design rational doesn't demonstrate an appreciation and response to the diverse character of streets and buildings along its edges.

- The building is monolithic. All elevations are similar in style and design, varying only in height. This is strong contrast to the fine-grained character of the market town.

- Where reference has been made to the existing development this has been to the "sweeping curves" of the 60s Market Parade scheme. Considering the inherent weaknesses of this development, its commercial and physical failure, and the council's aspirations to demolish and

redevelop the area, it seems that there may be little to be gained by referring to this particular aspect of Havant's townscape.

BfL1&6 Connections and scale & Working with the site and its context

BfL1 Does the scheme respond to the scale of its surroundings, respect existing view corridors (or create new ones), and reinforce existing connections and make new ones where feasible?

BfL6 Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), trees and plants, wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimate?

As set out above, the proposed scheme will be distinctly different from the scale and density of development currently prevailing in Havant. The development would have significant impact on views and local streetscape.

Views

The main impact will be from the railway line, North Street and Leigh Road (north of railway line). Further glimpses of the development are likely to be seen from other areas throughout the town.

+ Development would "mark" the location of the railway line from various locations in the town.

+/- Development would make a strong statement about Havant from the railway line both to visitors to Havant and people passing the town in through-trains. The existing outlook is very poor and needs improving. However, establishing a new image by means of a large monolithic building is a risky strategy; it relies much on the quality of the building and is subject to architectural / planning "fashion".

- The eastern façade, and the south-east corner in particular, will enclose the view up North Street. The monolithic nature and bland styling will be inappropriate to the intricate, fine-grained and varied nature of North Street.

-/+ The DAS and planning statement emphasise how *"the height of the proposed development will act to channel sightlines along roads and spaces aligned north-south. This will promote views between the station and town centre."* Visual links between the town centre and railway station are desirable. However, the route through the centre of the Market Parade area could compromise future development of the area to the west of the application site (see Section B).

Streetscape

As set out above, the development makes little reference to its surroundings. Considering the varied character (and quality) of surrounding development, copying its style and scale is not necessarily required (or desirable, or feasible). However the impact of the development at ground level needs to be considered and gains and losses carefully assessed. The development will form a new side to four streets. The impact on each is considered below:

Station forecourt

+/- The commercial units on the northern elevation of the scheme will help to animate the edge to station forecourt. However, due to topography the units will be set below the level of the station forecourt and have no direct access onto the square. Thus the positive effect would be limited. There appears to be an opportunity for a new building to master this change in level and establish a direct connection between building and forecourt which has not been realised.

- The proposed 5 to 13 storey development on the south side of the forecourt will overshadow the space throughout the day, affecting the micro climate of this meeting / greeting / waiting space.

- /+ Tall buildings are often affected by wind turbulence and the impact of the proposed scheme on the station forecourt should be investigated.
- The sheer “wall-like” appearance of development would be overbearing on the relatively narrow space. There is no stepping back of upper floors to soften impact.

Market Parade Plaza (west)

- + Shops and restaurants at ground floor level, together with entrances to apartments, will help to animate the Plaza.
- /+ The space will catch the sun from late morning into the evening. However, this relies on the building to the west being of relatively low height.
- Space will be very “lob-sided” with 7-13 storey development on one side and just 3 on the other. This could be readdressed through future development of western block, however a taller block would cause significant overshadowing of the space.

Market Parade (south)

- The 7-storey sheer facade will be out of proportion to the existing 3 storey block on the south side of the road. The 5 storey block is acceptable.

North Street

- The 5-8 storey development would be overbearing and overshadow development on the east side of North Street.

BfL7 Creating well defined streets and spaces

Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?

- + Building addresses and encloses street on all sides.
- + Access to all apartments (stair cores) from the street.
- Rounded corners on three out of four street corners. This reinforces the monolithic nature of the building, making it appear as a “single lump” formed by a continuous, wrap-around façade, rather than forming part of the existing townscape that extends existing streets.

BfL8 Easy to find your way in and around

Is the scheme designed to make it easy to understand the links between where people live and how you access the building, as well as how you move through it?

- + Front doors to (stair cores accessing) all apartments access from street level.
- Position of front doors / stair cores not articulated in elevation design.

BfL9 Active Streets

Does the development engage with the street so passers-by will understand the movement between the building and the street, and is there an obvious visual link between inside and outside?

- + Commercial uses on all sides of the development creating potential for active and lively streets.
- + Residential access from main streets on three sides.
- + Car parking in basement minimising negative impact on street level.
- + Servicing at ground level wrapped round with commercial units, minimising negative impact on street level.

BfL10 Cycle and car parking

Will the development be likely to support and encourage cycling by providing cycle storage which people can use with confidence? Where parking is provided, is this easy to use? Are accesses to car parking designed not to impact on those not in cars? Are entrances to car parks overengineered, visually obtrusive or obstructive to pedestrians and cyclists?

- + Secure cycle storage provided on ground floor service area as well as in the basement. No number specified.
- /+ There are 58 car parking provided in the basement. With 130 units this works out as 0.45 spaces / dwelling. This is below HCC standards. This may be acceptable considering the highly accessible location. However, low car use does not necessarily mean low car ownership. This should be managed to avoid issues of residents' car parking in surrounding streets.
- + Entrance to the basement car park from North Street is integrated in the design of the facade with relatively little negative impact on streetscape. This concept would need to be followed through in the detailed design phase – i.e. the North Street elevation would need to include an attractive garage “door” to screen views down the ramp into the basement.

BfL11 Shared spaces

Is the purpose and use of shared space clear and it is designed to be safe and easily managed? Where semiprivate or private spaces are created, are these clearly demarcated from the public realm?

- + Shared amenity space in centre of the block is easily accessible from all four stair cores.
- Amenity space is very small. Due to the height of the buildings surrounding it, it is unlikely to catch much sun and could potentially be an unpleasant space.

BfL12 Private amenity and storage

Are outdoor spaces, such as terraces and balconies, large enough for two or more people to sit? Is there opportunity for personalisation of these spaces? Is waste storage well integrated into the design of the development so residents and service vehicle access it easily whilst not having an adverse impact on amenity for residents.

- + Servicing areas clearly segregated from amenity and parking spaces.

- + Most apartments have private balconies.
- No secure storage facilities in basement (at least not apparent on available drawings).
- /+ Not enough information available to assess storage provision within apartments.

Section 2 - Review of application in relation to regeneration aspirations for the wider area as articulated in LDO (in preparation)

The construction of the application scheme in its current form would fix the alignment of the Market Parade Plaza at the centre of the LDO area. This would impact on the development potential of the LDO, in particular its north-western corner.

The application scheme introduces active frontages on the Market Parade Plaza. The vision is for a lively, animated space, which would require a similar design treatment of its western edge as is proposed for the application scheme to be realised (commercial uses on ground floor with entrances from the square). However, the footprint of the application scheme, together with the space required for the plaza itself, would make it difficult for a perimeter block to face both the park and the western edge of the plaza.

Without a perimeter block, it would be very difficult to design a building that successfully introduces a lively frontage on both the park and the plaza. The “bigger picture” study prepared by the Hampshire & Regional Property Group (not contained in the planning application) shows a new parade of shops replacing the existing western block and illustrates this point with a service yard and car park located against the park edge.

As is outlined in Section A of this review, the current Market Parade development has severe issues which are partly related to its urban form and layout. It is inward looking with a focus on the little-used Market Parade plaza and introduces service backyards onto what should be important frontages such as Havant Park. The road layout built as part of the scheme is alien to the historic fabric of Havant.

The emerging LDO seeks to respect and extend Havant’s (historic) street pattern and create new building frontages to the most important public streets and public spaces: the park, North Street, the station forecourt and also create an east-west street which directly links North Street with the park. It is proposed that each of these frontages has “active edges”, i.e. the buildings address the public realm with building entrances placed along these frontages and public uses such as shops, services and community spaces opening onto the public realm. The redevelopment of both the northern and southern part of the existing Market Parade area would take the form of perimeter blocks. As well as achieving the desired physical outcomes, these are also likely to maximise the Floor Area Ratio achievable in the overall redevelopment.

The construction of the application scheme in its current form is likely to mean that the wider LDO area would need to be redeveloped by building on a very similar footprint to that which has been established by the 60s Market Parade development. This layout is flawed and lies at the root of the area’s problems. The LDO demonstrates an alternative approach, which would more successfully integrate the station area in Havant’s urban form. However, this cannot be fully realised if Market Parade Plaza, rather than the park, is introduced as the primary development frontage.