

AVIC Urban Design Consultation Response

20/08/2024 – Fairhurst Architects

The proposed facility represents a strategic Council priority designed to enhance the economic competitiveness of the borough through the provision of an advanced manufacturing facility within the Atom Valley growth corridor. From an urban design perspective, locating such a facility immediately adjacent to the Kingsway Business Park Metrolink stop represents a strong opportunity to provide a landmark building of exceptional quality.

In support of this approach, the rear elevation of the building facing the tram line would benefit from increased articulation to ensure that it serves as a notable landmark building on this key public transport route within the Borough.

The building is designed as a visually contrasting facility against the backdrop of far larger grey clad industrial sheds. The building's facades are formed of high-end Cor-ten steel with punched curtain walling and elaborate manifestation. All elevations are designed to be of the same high quality, giving the building consistency in appearance from all viewpoints in the business park and the Metro. Whilst all four elevations are visible to the public a key elevation is the east elevation, which is predominantly glazed with high visibility of activities inside the building. The east elevation is the most prominent elevation from the Kingsway Business Park Metro station, where the public will have more time to view the building as trams stop at the station. Fenestration also wraps around the corner of the building along part of the north elevation highly visible from the Metro station. The west and the majority of the north elevations are simple in form to provide a visual sculptural form viewed at a distance from the north west whilst on the tram. Closer viewing will reveal the panel joints visually breaking up the monolithic form of the elevations.

Window and door reveals would appear to be relatively flat on the non-feature sections of the building; consideration of how greater depth and articulation could be achieved should be explored. These details can be conditioned.

All window, doors and curtain walling sections are set back from the Cor-ten cladding by approx. 100mm providing some depth to the façade. The doors and frames and windows are in a contrasting grey colour to the façade cladding to visually accentuate the difference between them.

A condition should be applied to secure full details of the feature window detailing, along with its retention.

It is noted that the primary frontage would be close to Michael Faraday Avenue, yet the building threshold fails to fully integrate itself into either the public highway or the main pedestrian route from the Metolink stop. Subject to an assessment of levels differences, it would be preferable if the threshold could offer a wide pedestrian connection to Michael Faraday Avenue.

The building is situated on ground which is between 1-1.5m above Michael Faraday Avenue, separated by steep banking. This follows the topography of the site. The elevated aspect of the building from Michael Faraday Avenue aims to make the building visually prominent thus landmark building along Micheal Faraday Avenue.

The existing path from the Metro station to Micheal Faraday Avenue is being upgraded with a tarmac finish, doubling in width to 3.3m and will have illumination along its length during hours of darkness. The route will also be enhanced with low level planting to one side along its length and a

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boulevard of trees. The path is also linked to the main entrance of the building via a paved route and pedestrian crossing.

Bicycle storage facilities should ideally be provided in the same design language of the building for best visual effect and to encourage use, whilst informal outdoor seating areas for staff should be considered. These details can be conditioned, although space requirements in respect of the latter should be considered prior to determination.

The bicycle shelter is located off the main entrance in the car park to encourage cycling to work and the specification meets Secured by design requirements. The shelter is designed with black mesh and frames to blend in with the car park and tarmac, without contrasting. The shelter is a rectangular form to match the form and massing of the building. Seating is to be provided outside the café area (with doors opening out from the café) beneath the brise soleil, adjacent to the main entrance.

Consideration should be given to re-locating the electricity substation to a less visually sensitive location if possible as its presence would somewhat detract from the appearance of the street-facing façade.

The Electricity North-West owned substation is located to provide direct access off Michael Faraday Avenue with a dedicated parking space off, due to their requirement of being able to access it 24/7. This limitation defines the location to the south elevation of the building, with the substation positioned at road level, with the new facility 1.5m higher.

An effective external lighting strategy for the proposed building is essential, the details of which can be conditioned.

The external lighting design will comply with BS EN 12464-2, BS 5849-1 and SLL Lighting Guide 6. The lighting installation will provide safe movement around the site, freedom of access and security during hours of darkness.

The external lighting will minimise, as far as practicable, light pollution into the building, any adjoining development areas and the environment in general in accordance with ILP Guidance Notes for reducing obtrusive Light (GN01).

We expect the final lighting design will be conditioned for approval by the Planning Authority as is standard approach on Kingsway historically. The final detailed lighting design will be submitted including the selected equipment / luminaires, positions, beam angles, column / mounting heights and the resultant lighting levels including associated overspill calculations.

Commentary on Lighting provided by BWB 23/08/24