



**CONFIDENTIAL**

CABE is now part of the Design Council

10.08.2011

Benedict Zucchi  
BDP Architecture  
16 Brewhouse Yard  
Clerkenwell  
London, EC1V 4JL

Our reference: DCC/0098

**Brighton and Hove City Council: Brighton 3Ts project, Eastern Road**

Dear Benedict Zucchi,

Thank you for submitting this scheme to us; we reviewed the proposal on 25 July 2011. This demanding brief reveals a genuine desire on the part of the client to put the experience of the patient first; the stipulation that all patient rooms should have a sea view is particularly welcomed. We appreciate the client's readiness to amend the scheme in light of our previous comments. We think the resulting design is stronger for this, responding more sensitively to the Brighton context while creating an improved visitor experience. We think the proposed site diagram is sound and will significantly improve wayfinding. We also appreciate the further thought given to possible future phasing of hospital development. The revised approach to the Eastern Road frontage, coupled with the new proposals for the helipad, has produced a calmer, more contextually appropriate design. However, we continue to think the relationship of the 'spine block' to the Children's Hospital could be improved. The new designs for the public realm at ground and upper level are welcomed.

**Site planning**

This is a hugely important development for Brighton, not only in respect of the healthcare facilities proposed, but also in terms of the impact such an important institution will have on the city. We recognise the immense challenge of redeveloping this constrained site, not least while maintaining an operational hospital in the interim. We also understand that the clinical requirements for the hospital are a key driver behind the phasing of this development. The proposed site diagram is an intelligent response that considers the relationship between existing

Design Council, 34 Bow Street, London WC2E 7DL United Kingdom.

Tel +44(0)20 7420 5200 Fax +44(0)20 7420 5300

Email [info@designcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@designcouncil.org.uk) [www.designcouncil.org.uk](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk)

Design Council Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7580913. Registered office: 34 Bow Street, London WC2E 7DL.

CABE is now part of the Design Council

Page 2 of 5

and new facilities well. The proposed northern 'spine block' will play an increasingly important role in this as a unifying element across the development as future phases are developed. The draft masterplan, which suggests a third phase of redevelopment, is helpful to understand how the current proposals fit with the longer-term development potential for the wider hospital site. In particular, we welcome the suggestion that the spine block could be extended eastwards above the service yard to provide four levels of clinical accommodation and a re-located restaurant to link to the public level six. This is particularly compelling, given the potential for this to unlock the existing restaurant site to the west to complete the upper level public loop. We think there would be value in widening the area covered by the masterplan to take in sites like St. Mary's Hall School to show how they might be able to link in to this third phase of development at a later date.

#### **Bulk, form and massing**

While a more even distribution of height across the site would have created a less imposing building on the cityscape, we understand that clinical and operational constraints do not allow for this. In these circumstances the resolution to develop two buildings fronting Eastern Road distinguished by a pronounced step in height towards the east is supported. We also acknowledge the decision to reflect the height of the existing Barry building in Phase 2 to preserve a sense of continuity of scale at this end of Eastern Road is a valid one. This, we recognise, has the added benefit of maintaining seafront views for patients of the Children's Hospital. We continue to think that the arrangement of the Phase 1 accommodation into a series of finger blocks anchored off the main core of the building is a sensible typology that could work well for patients. We unreservedly support the decision to reshape and relocate the helipad to the Thomas Kemp tower together with the associated works to re-clad the top of the building. From the views studies provided, it appears that this move will do much to reduce the hospital's impact on the skyline.

Given that the Children's Hospital was designed to be seen in the round, we continue to think that the relationship of the spine block with this building could be more sensitively handled. The revised scheme still creates an uncomfortable juxtaposition between the two and risks compromising the quality of the well-considered children's wards. The suggested murals will do little to relieve this. We think it could be a matter of future regret if the plans are implemented as currently



CABE is now part of the Design Council

Page 3 of 5

suggested. There may be ways of resolving the positioning, form and massing of the spine block to address this condition. The design team should be confident that all potential configurations to the planning of this block have been explored before pursuing the solution currently envisaged.

### **Architectural expression**

We think the architecture of the revised scheme is more convincing in its response to the local character of Kemp Town. The elimination of the sail-like roof forms and stainless steel-clad elevations from the Phase 1 building, coupled with the more refined colour scheme, has lent the building a calmer, less imposing appearance. We understand the logic for cladding the spine block in a pale brown colour to contrast with the light stucco tones of the buildings fronting Eastern Road. However, this strategy needs careful consideration. It is open to question whether the scheme should be referencing some of the poorer quality buildings of Brighton in the approach to the colouration and tone of its materials. Therefore, the design team should employ the views studies produced to fully understand the consequences of such an approach before committing to the current solution.

We think the approach to the infill accommodation between the fingers improves upon the previous proposals. However, the decision to clad these elements in similar pale brown tones to the spine block could leave the impression that they are later additions to the original building. In our view, their expression should demonstrate that they are part of the original composition.

As currently proposed, we think the hospital buildings will achieve a more comfortable relationship with Eastern Road than the previously submitted scheme. The retraction of the overhanging rooflines should reduce the perceived bulk of the buildings. The decision to omit the double-helix design for the drum feature to Phase 2 is welcomed but, in our view, the logic for a drum here is weak given that it would not sit on axis with Paston Place. Therefore, we would question the benefit of such a feature, which we think works against the reading of the two buildings as a unified composition in the streetscape. We think the revised colonnade to Phase 1 improves upon the previous scheme, although it is unclear why the columns change abruptly at the western end of this frontage from being rectangular to circular in form. Therefore, there may be benefit in allowing the rectangular columns to continue

CABE is now part of the Design Council

Page 4 of 5

along full length of this canopy to present a more unified frontage. At the eastern end we think the extension of the building frontage as it turns the corner onto Bristol Gate is a marked improvement. The articulation of this important corner would benefit from further refinement to ensure it presents an appropriately strong termination to the building.

### **Public realm and private amenity**

We understand the challenge of making this institution open to the surrounding neighbourhood but its success will, in large part, depend on how well it functions as a genuinely public building. We think the site diagram should work well in this regard, as should the openness of the frontage to Eastern Road. We also acknowledge the proposal to integrate public art and signage.

The efforts to improve the quality of the public realm on Eastern Road are recognised, as is the significant increase of public space proposed across the site. We support the decision to create a wider pavement here, which has provided space for seating, planters and trees while still allowing for a new lay-by to drop-off visitors. The team should be confident that the function of all the proposed public and semi-public spaces is well defined and unambiguous. While the northern service route is not intended for public use, its quality should nonetheless be carefully considered.

At the upper levels, the shared courtyard spaces have potential to provide pleasant environments for patients. We welcome the design development of these spaces which acknowledges the need to provide shelter from the elements and places to sit. Finally, the quality of the basement car parking will be an important issue to consider; for most patients it will be their first experience of entering the hospital.

Thank you for consulting us and please keep us informed of the progress of the scheme. If there is any point that requires clarification, please telephone us.

CABE is now part of the Design Council

Page 5 of 5

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J Freeman".

Jonathan Freeman

Design Council CABE advisor

Email [jonathan.freeman@designcouncil.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.freeman@designcouncil.org.uk)

Tel +44(0)20 7420 5235

cc (by email only)

Kathryn Boggiano

Brighton and Hove City Council

Alan Byrne

English Heritage

#### **Review process**

Following a site visit, discussions with the design team and local authority and pre-application reviews, the scheme was reviewed on 25 July 2011 by Piers Gough (Chair), and Keith Williams (panel member). These comments supersede any views we may have expressed previously.

#### **Affiliated panels**

Design Council CABE is affiliated with independent design review panels which are committed to shared values of service, the foundation of which are the 10 key principles for design review. For further information on affiliation, please contact us.

#### **Confidentiality**

Since the scheme is not yet the subject of a planning application, the advice contained in this letter is offered in confidence, on condition that we are kept informed of the progress of the project, including when it becomes the subject of a planning application. We may share confidential letters with our affiliated panels only in cases where an affiliated panel is taking on a scheme that we have previously reviewed. We reserve the right to make our views known should the views contained in this letter be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). If you do not require our views to be kept confidential, please write to [designreview@designcouncil.org.uk](mailto:designreview@designcouncil.org.uk).