

DC/16/1371 | The part demolition, reconfiguration and extension of the western part of the shopping centre to provide new A3 (restaurants and cafes) uses at ground floor level, a new Class A1 (retail) unit at mall level and Class D2 (leisure) uses above; construction of new mall and entrance; provision of an outdoor seating area onto Springfield Road; and other associated works | Swan Walk Shopping Centre Horsham West Sussex RH12 1HQ

These are the comments on behalf of Horsham Society regarding the above application:

The site for the cinema is highly visible in a important location. Horsham Society consider that the appearance and materials for the proposed cinema have no relation to the buildings in the locality in materials or style, nor have the restaurants' public realm works any connection with the Town Vision.

- The appearance and the use of large areas of vertical metal cladding in a town centre location causes great concern and detracts from the concept of the design. Use of such cladding is more appropriate to industrial zones and has no precedent in a historic market town centre crossroads. The cladding and elevations have significant horizontal mass without any windows or relief which creates a bland facade of up to 12.5m high (for screen and projection levels). There is an opportunity to introduce openings or interest to the facade with perhaps a restaurant or glazed walkways internally and windows. This may involve re-planning the layout of the cinema screens internally so they are back to back, not opposite sides of a corridor as the application. In the current design the store and fire exit corridor behind the cladding could benefit from windows.
- Whilst small areas of bronze and light grey cladding has some limited interest, the sole use of large masses of cladding in a town centre constructed mainly of brick is ill conceived; there is no other metal cladding in sight. Consideration should be given to including materials, mixed bright and entertaining colours, with vertical emphasis on the facade at all levels.
- The dropped area for licensed restaurants R2, R3 & R4 on Springfield Road highway land results in reduced width for pedestrian flow and necessary vehicular access. Floor levels of building should be raised to match the street, not vice versa to avoid permanent land-take from Springfield Road.
- Access to Swan Walk is now relegated to entrance north of the site, away from the crossroads and should be reintroduced around the old Shelley Fountain area as it is currently. It is noted that the entrance onto Springfield Road will have a considerable land-take of the highway, which is presumably not in the applicant's ownership.
- The external works take no account of public realm works to improve the crossroads. This is essential to ensure that the development features fit into the Town Vision work.
- The Townscape and Visual Impact Study claims that the visual effect from Bishopric looking east is of low sensitivity with medium change and moderate beneficial (p26, view 6). Horsham Society's view this is not true and the visual impact is a significant change and is significantly detrimental.

The full application text in the Townscape and Visual Impact Study reads:

Nature of Change as a Result of Proposed Development: This view [No.5] looks to the western elevation. As above, the use of a variety of materials (glass and buff colour textured brick to ground [text unclear] matching copper coping above, with a set-back light grey metal cladding with ridging) would serve to break down the western elevation. The bronze copper cladding would eventually introduce a warm brown colour that would add texture and visual interest. Public realm improvements would also be introduced to this view and would enhance it. The replacement of a poor quality building with one that is slightly larger in height and massing but that introduces high quality materials and a landmark element would be a medium change to the view.

Role of Site in View / Baseline Description: The site is prominent and is a major negative feature in the view

Sensitivity: Low sensitivity. View with limited scenic/amenity value.

Horsham Society profoundly disagree with this analysis and consider the proposed cinema elevation is inappropriate for this sensitive and highly visible location.

This view [No.3] is taken from the edge of Horsham Conservation Area outside some Grade II listed buildings on West Street. The view looks out of the Conservation Area.

Sensitivity: Low sensitivity.

Role of Site in View / Baseline Description The site is fairly prominent in this view and terminates the right hand of the view. The building is taller than surrounding buildings. It plays a minor negative role in the view

Nature of Change as a Result of Proposed Development: The additional height of the proposed development would be broken down by the use of varied materials. Textured buff brick with glazing (some obscured) would be introduced at lower levels. Bronze copper cladding with light grey metal cladding with ridging above would break down the upper parts of the development. The bronze cladding would be sympathetic to the colour of surrounding buildings and the street paving. This view is of less sensitivity than view 2 from West Street. The proposed development would provide a high quality, well detailed replacement to the existing building that would provide an appropriate termination to the street through the introduction of a vibrant and prominent building.

Horsham Society considers that the additional height with cinema advertising will have a significant impact on this view and is detrimental.

Views 5 and 9 are also significantly affected and Horsham Society consider that the sensitivity of these views are significant and that the effect of the proposal is detrimental. Horsham Society disagree with the applicant's claim that the effect is low and moderately neutral.