Project: New City Court
LBS reference: 21/AP/1361
16 August 2021

Landscape design responses to concerns raised by Urban Forester at Southwark Council

1. 'The ground floor planting is severely constrained by limited soil depths due to the podium condition, narrow alleyways and the oversailing extent of upper floors, which completely cover the largest bed on Kings Head Yard, making this feature of doubtful longer term sustainability.'

Response: The trees in the courtyard are planted in soils of 1.5m depth. Three trees planted in 50m2 x 1.5m (ie 75m3) and two trees in 37m2 x 1.5m (55m3) mean an average of over 25m3 soil per tree. We believe this to be an appropriate volume for the sizes and types of trees proposed in this space, especially as they are planted in shared rooting volumes. However, we welcome your thoughts on what would be adequate volumes.

Most of the planter along the colonnade will receive some natural light during the day. A baseline planting palette will consist of shade-tolerant species supplemented with flowering plants for seasonal interest and wildlife value. The plants will also benefit from some supplementary lighting during the day, which can be integrated into the external lighting scheme and designed to visually blend with the daylight.

2. Similarly, the three proposed trees on St Thomas Street are of unknown feasibility. These would need to be agreed in principle by TfL with the location of services confirmed and relocated where necessary to ensure appropriate soil volumes. Fibre optic and other utilities are likely to be problematic.'

Response: The current proposal is based on a historic track and trace of below-ground services, but there would be investigations below ground via slip trenches. The project team did not consider it appropriate to attempt this during the recent peak of the pandemic due to the temporary measures introduced to significantly widen the pavements to enable social distancing.

3. Well-treed terraces and roof levels are welcome. However, reference to a truly woodland habitat is of limited relevance to the limited area of landscaping at this level and without mature canopy sizes, requiring substantial soil and windloading considerations. The woodland feature would not, overall, compensate for the poor ground floor conditions.

Response: The proposed woodland will be planted in a large contiguous volume of soil comprising most of the terrace footprint. Certain areas will be mounded more than others to support healthy tree growth. The proposed coppicing management approach helps to keep the scale of the trees appropriate to the terrace, and certain specimens could be allowed to grow to greater maturity as part of the long-term management plan. Input from a soil scientist in Stage 3 will be integrated as we develop the detailed design.

All trees and large shrubs will be anchored by underground guying systems to match the environmental conditions and the scheme has been designed to create a benign wind environment suitable for pedestrian access. Tree species will be selected to avoid those associated with sudden branch drop and automatic irrigation will be provided to reduce the impact of climatic conditions that tend to cause sudden branch drop.