

# Key recommendations from Design Review Panel workshop 3 (March 2025)

## Leret Partnership Responses (reflecting the content of the Hybrid Planning Application (submitted in November 2025)

### Bull Hill site

1. Reconfigure the northern edge of the site, including a reconsideration of the location of the car park and the office block, to create a welcoming gateway to Leatherhead from the railway station.

**LP Response:** Extensive analysis has been conducted given the topography of the site, the proximity to the train station and the surface water flood risk preventing other building uses being located in this area of the site, that this is the most appropriate location for the MSCP, which has been accepted by the LPA. Part of this analysis tested the office building being located to the northern edge of the site where building E/F is located. Following consultation with institutional investors, the office development has been placed outside this area in order to preserve institutional investment value.

The design of the Multi-storey Car Park (MSCP) provides an opportunity to present a welcoming gateway into Leatherhead to those arriving by train. Our illustrative design references the literary history of Leatherhead through an intricate façade pattern that will create a memorable and distinctive marker to this corner. The design of this has evolved through consultation with local stakeholders and the community Design Review Panel. The MSCP has been set back from the street edge to provide a new public square at this arrival point, fronted by new residential use and with clear visibility into the park significantly improving an arrival that is currently blighted by surface car parking.

1. Address the uncomfortable discrepancy in the scale of the townhouses and the blocks along Station Hill, addressing the excessive mass of the tall buildings on the south-west corner of the site.

**LP Response:** The south-western corner of the illustrative masterplan is least sensitive to height, with the sorting office/telephone exchange adjacent and proximity to the railway embankment and business park. Given the lower sensitivity of this area, this is a key location to deliver much needed new homes, away from existing residents. These taller buildings have been designed to present a short gable to the arrival point into town from Waterway Road, creating a focal marker to those arriving from Fetcham and Bookham. The building proposed to the south-western corner of the Bull Hill site steps down in height to the east, comprised as a pair of distinctive buildings with front doors activating Station Road, and enjoying views over the park to the rear. Materially, these buildings will respond to their immediate setting, taking inspiration from the design of the sorting office, predominantly red brick with white banding and detailing.

Further to the east in areas of increased sensitivity to height, townhouses are located to better respond to this constraint, providing a street rhythm and consistent set back that sits comfortable with the existing residential buildings on the other side of the Station Road.

In the illustrative masterplan the taller buildings step down in height to the lower townhouses, and the design codes and parameter plans have been designed with flexibility to facilitate several ways of doing this, i.e. it could be a more gradual reduction in height, to be determined by a future Reserved Matters Application (RMA).

2. Create a strong presence on the south-eastern corner to draw people into the site, integrate this edge of the development into the town centre, and terminate the view from North Street.

**LP Response:** The south-east corner of the site has been reconfigured in response to the feedback received to provide an improved arrival sequence, and better visibility into the Bull Hill park area. The buildings to the south-east corner frame a pocket arrival square and signpost the beginning of the diagonal cycle and pedestrian route through the park. They are of a scale that responds positively to the listed cottage, and is subservient to Wesley House, ensuring that its prominence at the end of North Street is maintained.

The arrangement of the new buildings to the south-east corner creates a consistent building line, and a clearly legible arrival and crossing of Bull Hill, whilst also being carefully sited to preserve as many of the existing trees as possible.

3. Interrogate the flooding impact, particularly of the removal of the large existing car park from the site and consider whether this can be seen as an opportunity to create a ‘dry route’ into the site.

**LP Response:** Extensive consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has been held throughout the pre-application period, including four meetings to date. The LLFA’s advice has been clear throughout – development within the surface water flood zone must not increase the level of the surface flood water when flooding events occur and must not displace additional flood water during a flood event on to adjacent third party land. The LLFA have advised that any development within the surface water flood zone must be set at 1200mm above existing ground level to avoid the impact of surface water flooding. The Leret Partnership’s civil and structural engineer has carried out detailed modelling of the development proposed within the surface water flood zone demonstrating these requirements are satisfied by the proposals. This analysis has been shared with and reviewed by the LLFA prior to the hybrid planning application being submitted.

The MSCP and building E/F have both been designed such that the ground floors of these buildings are partly located over the surface water flood zones and partly over land that is outside the surface water flood zone to the south. This approach ensures that safe/dry egress from these buildings can be achieved during a surface water flood event. The access point to the southern elevation of the MSCP for example is outside the surface water flood zone and can be used to both access and egress the MSCP.

4. Clearly define the entry points to buildings to ensure optimal legibility from the surrounding streets and within the site.

**LP Response:** Residential buildings fronting the gyratory have entrance doors to the street, creating a clearly legible arrival and street address, giving clarity to deliveries and refuse handling. Townhouses front publicly accessible streets rather than private cul de sacs, improving safety and wayfinding across the site.

The pavilion blocks to the east each have a recessed feature entrance with a chamfered metal panel detail, providing a distinctive and visible arrival and creating an arrival space for future residents to pause whilst entering the building. All residential buildings (apart from blocks E&F, over the potential GP Surgery) have ground floor residential units, together with residential entrances helping to activate frontages and improve legibility.

5. Implement improvements to the character and feel of the ring road by taking measures to tame it and reclaim it as an urban street.

**LP Response:** The highway proposals include the provision of 5 Toucan crossings to the ring road promoting safe crossing by both pedestrian and cyclists and seeking to re-balance the relationship between pedestrian and cyclist movement and car movements. This is a delicate balance as interventions of this nature need to be balanced with maintaining traffic movement around the ring road and avoiding excessive delays to traffic movement, which the proposals achieve. Pre-application consultation has been carried out by the LCWIP team working for SCC Highways to ensure the Bull Hill highway proposals co-ordinate with and support the LCWIP team's draft proposals.

Additional landscaping is proposed that creates a green buffer to the ring road, further softening its impact. The four buildings to the east directly respond to the setting of Bull Hill Road, with its gentle curve and topography picked up in the radial placement of buildings, a series of four identical pavilions that rotate and step up the hill. This creates a distinctive arrival into Leatherhead and a robust yet permeable edge to Bull Hill, helping to tame the ring road whilst also allowing for greenery to connect between the buildings and better connect the park with the memorial gardens.

6. Work with the community to strengthen local distinctiveness by introducing materials and features that draw on the architecture and landscape of Leatherhead.

**LP Response:** The design team has undertaken extensive studies of the surrounding context and cultural background from the inception of this project. This includes both desktop research, site studies and engaging with wider community stakeholders. Following on from this recommendation by the panel, members of the design team attended a 'Pride in Place' workshop hosted by one of the community DRP panel members in Leatherhead. The workshop provided a valuable insight into Leatherhead's rich history which has been reflected in the design. The output of these studies and consultation has informed the architectural and landscape proposals, ensuring the design is rooted in its surroundings and contributes positively to Leatherhead.

Examples of this approach include exploring brickwork details and patterns that reference flint cottages, prevalent in the surrounding area. Distinctive and bold arches that will frame the arrival into the Swan Centre, drawing from the industrial heritage of the railway and bridges over the River Mole. A series of materials that are varied but draws from a palette found across the town. A landscape planting strategy that includes native and local species, ensuring the new park will thrive and contribute to surroundings.

Leatherhead has been a source of inspiration for a number of significant literary figures and the design of the MSCP provides an opportunity to present a welcoming gateway into Leatherhead to those arriving by train. Our illustrative design references the literary history of Leatherhead, using a variety of cladding colours to playfully imitate a bookshelf across the elevations. Louvres and fins create the striking vertical lines with many of the supposed spines referencing literature inspired by Leatherhead, etched and perforated into the cladding. The illustrative cladding design has evolved through consultation with local stakeholders and the community DRP.

Within the outline area of the site, the detailed Design Code that has been produced to secure the quality of design guides future applications to choose complementary materials, and characteristics that will preserve and enhance the unique identity of Leatherhead.

7. Create clear, immutable parameters, supplemented by a design code within the outline planning application to secure high quality for the apartments and open spaces; and coding for external spaces, including streets as well as building.

**LP Response:** A detailed design code forms part of the hybrid planning application along with parameter plans to secure the quality of design across all building and public open space in the outline section of the application and also limit the height and mass of the buildings within the outline areas of the site. The design code submitted with the application has been heavily consulted on including workshops on it with the LPA and their feedback being incorporated. Likewise, feedback received from Design South East has also been incorporated to create a very detailed and robust Design Code that will be effective in securing the design quality of the outline phases of the Bull Hill masterplan.

## Swan Centre site

8. Develop the relationship between external and internal spaces to generate activity and bring the public realm to life.

**LP Response:** The design of the Swan Centre proposals have continued to develop prior to the hybrid application being submitted in November 2025 reflecting this feedback.

9. Test the integration of the architecture into its context.

**LP Response:** Similarly further design development of the architecture has been undertaken between when this feedback was provided and the hybrid application being submitted in November 2025.