
Report of the Chief Planning Officer

PLANS PANEL CITY CENTRE

Date: 4th August 2011

Subject: APPLICATION 11/02799/FU – REFURBISHMENT OF 14 STOREY OFFICES INCLUDING NEW LIFT AND MEZZANINE LEVEL EXTENSION AT CITY HOUSE, NEW STATION STREET, LS1 4JR.

APPLICANT
Bruntwood

DATE VALID
13/7/11

TARGET DATE
7/9/11

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

☐ Yes

Ward Members consulted

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

☐

Community Cohesion

☐

Narrowing the Gap

☐

RECOMMENDATION: Defer and delegate to the Chief Planning Officer for approval, subject to the specified conditions and any others which may be appropriate

Conditions

1. Standard time limit.
2. List of plans to be approved.
3. All external materials to be agreed.
4. Minimum of 1:20 scale drawings of typical junctions.
5. Details of all excrescences.
6. Sustainability condition with requirement to meet BREEAM 'Excellent'.
7. The on and off site highway works must be completed prior to occupation.
8. Details of contractors' parking, storage etc.
9. Full details of refuse storage facilities.
10. Details of new landscape planter and gates.

Reasons for approval:

In granting permission for this development the City Council has taken into account all material planning considerations including those arising from the comments of any statutory and other consultees, public representations about the application and Government Guidance and Policy as detailed in the Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements, and (as specified below) the content and policies within

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), the Regional Spatial Strategy 2008 (RSS) and The Development Plan, the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDPR).

GP5, GP11, GP12, BD5, BD6, T2, T5, T6, T24, H4, A4, SA8, SA9, CC7, CC27.

On balance, the City Council considers the development would not give rise to any unacceptable consequences for the environment, community or other public interests of acknowledged importance.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 This application proposes the wholesale refurbishment of City House, a prominent 14 storey office block located in the heart of the City Centre directly above the railway station. Due to the prominence of this building and extent of refurbishment, it is considered the application should be reported to Plans Panel to allow Members to comment on the proposed refurbishment and defer and delegate the final decision back to officers. Officers are seeking comment from the Panel early in the application process to ensure the scheme can be developed and ultimately determined in accordance with the comments of the Panel.

2.0 PROPOSAL:

- 2.1 It is proposed to fully refurbish City House. City House will be re-clad to remove the current tired looking appearance of the building and present a modern appearance that will enhance the character of the City Centre. The pedestrian entrance area will be remodelled and a mezzanine link introduced to provide additional access to the basement car park. The applicant, Bruntwood intends to convert the 120,000 sq ft of office space into grade A offices, serviced offices to accommodate all sizes of business plus meeting and conference rooms for hire.
- 2.2 The existing building is to be clad with glazing with a vertical emphasis to reflect the buildings plan form and structure. Each of the existing window bays are divided into four glass panels, two of which will be clear glaze with two being back painted insulated panels. The brick clad ends to the building will be over clad with insulated render.
- 2.3 To visually emphasise the central core at the northern elevation a series of projecting fins are added that will also provide additional internal space to improve circulation and permit panoramic views over the city. The fins will provide a visual pointer to the main entrance to City House. The canopy on the roof of the eastern wing is removed and the canopy to the western wing is replaced by a plant screen.
- 2.4 The internal space created by the projecting fins is linked to the eastern stair core at the mezzanine level by a new glazed corridor that is intended to include a visual manifestation in its glazed panels. Below this corridor the Rail Gourmet unit will be re-clad with grey metal panels and the bridge structure immediately in front of New Station Street will also be clad in a fibre cement board with a grey finish. A planter will be positioned over the bridge structure to further enhance the New Station Street frontage. New gates will be added to the concourse exit adjacent to Rail Gourmet.
- 2.5 A small section of the existing Marks and Spencer retail unit will be removed at ground floor to improve visibility of the new entrance to City House; this element will be clad in render to match the end walls to the upper floors. The pedestrian

entrance has been realigned to avoid the main flow of pedestrians along New Station Street and the footpath kerb line is extended out into New Station Street. A revolving door will be introduced to the entrance and downlighters are inserted into a canopy created by the projecting fins above.

- 2.6 Servicing is currently taken from a loading bay on New Station Street. Following the introduction of the new mezzanine level and service lift, servicing will take place from the basement. The basement is reconfigured to provide 56 car parking spaces (currently 79), 3 of which are disabled parking spaces, parking for 44 bicycles, shower and locker facilities and bin storage. The vehicular entrance to the basement is from Pitt Row but cyclists can enter from Pitt row or Neville Street.
- 2.7 The development is intended to include a number of sustainability targets and intends to achieve a BREEAM rating of Excellent.
- 2.8 The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement that incorporates comments on noise and ventilation and a Sustainability Statement.

3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

- 3.1 The application relates to City House, the 14 storey office building directly above the railway station. The site is located within the UDPR defined City Centre, Prime Office Quarter and Riverside Area. The southern boundary of the Central Area Conservation Area is 20m to the north across Bishopgate Street. There are listed buildings on Bishopgate Street and the site is adjacent to the grade II listed Queens Hotel.
- 3.2 The building was designed in 1962 and was vacated in 2006. It has two wings either side of a central core. Each wing is brick clad with regular window openings. The west wing sits above the station entrance whilst the east wing is above the Rail Gourmet facility located at ground level. In July 2010 Bruntwood, the owners of other office buildings in Leeds including 14 King Street, acquired the property that comprises 120,000 sq ft of office space over the 12 upper levels. The main entrance is from New Station Street that provides access to the lifts and stairs to the office floors above. To the east of Neville Street basement parking is provided for 79 cars with access taken from Pitt Row/Sovereign Street.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

- 4.1 08/01364/FU: Approval of the refurbishment and extension of City House, approved 20/8/08 after being presented to the 14/8/08 City Centre Plans Panel. This scheme introduced an extension to all levels of the rear/southern elevation to link both wings of the building and a re-clad to the whole structure. The structure was to be stripped back with curtain wall glazing introduced within a Portland stone frame.

5.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS:

- 5.1 A pre-application enquiry was submitted on 15th February 2011, since this date planning and design officers have been in discussions with the applicant and their architects and have developed the scheme to permit its recent submission.

6.0 PUBLIC/LOCAL RESPONSE:

- 6.1 The application was advertised by site notice on 22/7/11. As the application is brought to Panel early in the application process, no representations have been

received to date. Plans Panel will be updated verbally on any representations received.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS RESPONSES:

7.1 The application was received on 13/7/11, the deadline for consultee responses is 3/8/11. Panel will be verbally updated with regard to consultation responses at the Plans Panel meeting.

7.2 Statutory:

7.3 British Waterways: No comment received to date.

7.4 Non-statutory:

7.5 Highways: The widening of the pedestrian footway on New Station Street is acceptable but further work is required including the realignment of the crossing. Part of the basement layout is inaccurately drawn and further service vehicle tracking is required. Conditions are recommended. *Response: Additional information and amended drawings are being sought. Further highways comment is provided below.*

7.6 Network Rail: No comment received to date.

7.7 Access: No comment received to date.

8.0 PLANNING POLICIES:

8.1 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS): The RSS for Yorkshire and Humber was adopted in May 2008. The vision of the RSS is to create a world-class region, where the economic, environmental and social well-being of all people is advancing more rapidly and more sustainably than its competitors. Particular emphasis is placed on the Leeds City Region. There are no RSS policies of particular relevance; all issues are covered by the UDPR policies identified below.

8.2 Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review (2006) Designation: The site is within the defined City Centre boundary and in both Prime Office Quarter and Riverside Area.

GP5: Proposals should resolve detailed planning considerations.

GP11, GP12: Sustainable design.

BD5: Seeks to ensure a satisfactory level of amenity for occupants and surroundings.

BD6: Extensions and alterations should respect scale, form, detailing.

T2: Development proposals should not create new, or exacerbate existing, highway problems.

T5: Satisfactory provision for pedestrians and cyclists.

T6: Satisfactory disabled access within highway, paving schemes and new development.

T24: Parking to reflect detailed UDP parking guidelines.

A4: Development and refurbishment proposals should be designed to secure a safe and secure environment, including proper consideration of access arrangements.

SA8: Promotes 'access for all'.

SA9, SP8: Promote development of City Centre role and status.

CC7: The redevelopment of City Centre tower blocks will be encouraged where there appearance is unattractive and buildings are functionally obsolete.

CC27: Proposal areas within the City Centre.

8.3 Supplementary Planning Documents:
Building for Tomorrow Today – Sustainable Design and Construction (Draft).
The Leeds City Centre Urban Design Strategy (2000).
Tall Buildings Design Guide (2010).

8.4 National Planning Guidance:
PPS1 General Policies and Principles.
PPG13 Transport.

9.0 MAIN ISSUES

- Visual amenity including impact on the character of the adjacent Conservation Area and setting of listed buildings.
- Highways.

10.0 APPRAISAL

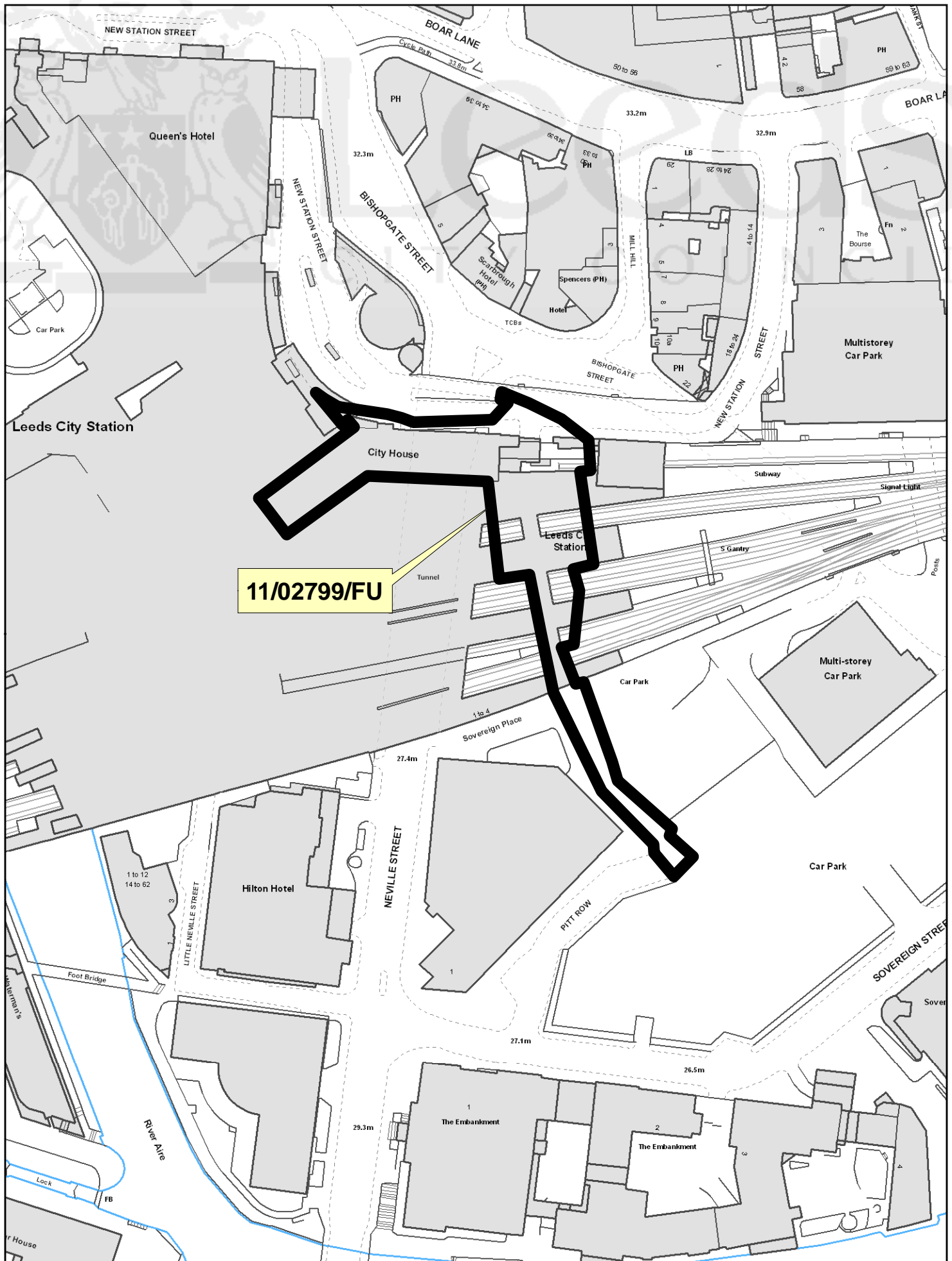
- 10.1 Visual amenity including impact on the character of the adjacent Conservation Area and setting of listed buildings.
- 10.2 City House has is in need of significant visual enhancement and the proposed scheme is considered to achieve that. The existing form is largely retained but with the notable addition of the projecting fins that denote the central core to the northern elevation. This gives the building a strong presence and defines its ground floor entrance whilst providing improved internal spaces.
- 10.3 The new mezzanine walkway will project forward of the existing flat fronted building but is considered acceptable as it greatly enhances circulation and also gives the building much better definition at the lower level. There will be clear views into the new walkway therefore highlighting the activity in the building unlike at present where views into the building are limited.
- 10.4 At roof level the existing unsightly canopies are removed and a plant screen in keeping with the character of the rest of the proposed cladding is introduced to the western wing. This new screen will give the roof of the building a much neater finish and also provide the opportunity to introduce high level signage.
- 10.5 The end walls to both the east and west wings are retained and over-clad in render. Retaining these masonry features retains the strong frame they provide to the glazed office areas. The applicant was requested to consider stone for the end walls but this would not have been possible due to weight restrictions regarding the span over the station or without removing all the existing brick that would in turn have raised significant problems regarding the station below. As stated above using render retains the masonry appearance and a 'stone' colour to the render will be used. It is considered that a lighter 'stone' appearance will provide a more attractive building rather than the use of a grey finish as was originally proposed.
- 10.6 The vertical emphasis to the glazing gives the building some scale and provides an interesting detailing whilst still highlighting the internal structure and workings of the building. Whereas the pattern is quite varied and complicated, the use of similar colour shades to the glazed panels will ensure the building still has a subtle appearance and therefore does not adversely affect the setting of the Queens Hotel or views into and out of the adjacent Conservation Area.

- 10.7 Significant improvements will be made to the pedestrian experience along New Station Street following the visual improvements to the Rail Gourmet unit and existing bridge structure. These are currently extremely unsightly but are to be re-clad with a landscape planter introduced on top of the bridge and new gates introduced to the concourse exit.
- 10.8 The proposed refurbishment of City House is considered to enhance many views within the City Centre due to its prominence whilst also enhancing the visual amenity around the station entrance.
- 10.9 Highways
- 10.10 Further service vehicle tracking and amended layout drawings have been requested by Highways Officers. The Panel will be updated verbally with regard to highways issues. Brief comment is provided below.
- 10.11 Servicing is currently taken from a loading bay on New Station Street. Following the introduction of the new mezzanine level and service lift, servicing will take place from the basement via a new loading bay. This will reduce the traffic flow along New Station Street and therefore benefit this area with regard to highway safety and general amenity. The widened pavements and alignment of the entrance will ensure an easier pedestrian flow to and from the station. The detailed nature of these works is currently being explored further.
- 10.12 Whereas the numbers of parking spaces are reduced from 79 to 56, there are benefits introduced as a result of the new servicing strategy highlighted above and the introduction of 44 secure long stay cycle spaces in the basement. Six showers are introduced into the basement with space for a significant number of lockers. The reduction in car parking would not cause highway problems in this City Centre location, with good access to public transport and widespread on-street parking controls.
- 11.0 CONCLUSION**
- 11.1 City House has a tired appearance and is in need of refurbishment as it currently provides little visual benefit in the City Centre. Being such a tall and prominent building it is considered the character of the City Centre, adjacent Conservation Area and setting of nearby listed buildings would be significantly enhanced following the proposed refurbishment. The pedestrian experience along New Station Street will be improved and the introduction of a highly sustainable office building accords with the City's sustainability ambitions. For the reasons outlined above Members are requested to agree the principle of the proposed redevelopment and associated design principles and defer and delegate the final decision to the Chief Planning Officer.

Background Papers:

Application file 11/02799/FU.

Certificate of Ownership, signed by the agent on behalf of the applicant.



CITY CENTRE PANEL