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Report of the Chief Planning Officer

**CITY PLANS PANEL** 

4<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Application to discharge condition 26 (details of public artwork) of planning permission 17/03618/FU for a new multi-disciplinary physics and computing building incorporating alterations and extensions to the Old Mining Building, University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds (18/04016/COND)

Applicant – University of Leeds

| Electoral Wards Affected:  | Specific Implications For: |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Hyde Park and Woodhouse    | Equality and Diversity     |
| Yes Ward Members consulted | Community Cohesion         |

# **RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve drawings SK(0)002, SK(0)003, SK(0)004, SK(0)005, SK(0)006, SK(0)007, SK(0)008

# 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Planning permission and listed building consent for a new multi-disciplinary teaching and research facility at the University of Leeds for the Schools of Physics and Computing referred to as the Integrated Campus for Physical and Engineering Sciences (ICEPS) was granted on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017.
- 1.2 In considering the applications on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 Members requested that City Plans Panel should be consulted on the proposed artwork on the gable end of the new building fronting Woodhouse Lane. Details of the artwork have now been submitted pursuant to condition 26 of the planning permission and recognising Member's interest in this aspect of the application, it is brought to City Plans Panel for determination.

# 2.0 Site and surroundings

2.1 The ICEPS site is centred around the Old Mining Building which is located towards the northern fringe of the University of Leeds campus between the School of Chemistry and the Faculty of Engineering. Woodhouse Lane abuts the northeastern edge of the site and falls gradually from the northern to southern extents of the site. Other than for the grade II listed Old Mining Building neighbouring buildings (former Estates and Boiler room buildings) have been cleared and ground works are underway. This part of the development lies just to the north of the Woodhouse Lane – University Precinct conservation area.

# 3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 The sculpture would be formed in anodised aluminium bars and flat-bar with a mixture of clear, brass, bronze and stainless steel finishes. The metalwork would be shaped to form Greek symbols as a direct reference to the scientific functions of the new buildings. The sculpture would be attached to the stone panels at first and second floor level of the building by aluminium rods anchored into the paneling. The filigree character of the sculpture will be a visually lightweight wash over the lower levels of the gable end of the building. The materials utilised in forming the sculpture will respond to the anodised metallic finishes that will be utilised around the exterior of the new building. It would be lit by lighting units set into the new retaining wall on the back edge of the Woodhouse Lane footway.
- 3.2 The intent is to install the artwork early in 2020 prior to completion of the external landscaping around the development.

# 4.0 Relevant planning history

- 4.1 The development proposals were presented to City Plans Panel at pre-application stage on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016 and 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (PREAPP/15/00494).
- 4.2 The planning and listed building applications were considered by City Plans Panel on 31st August 2017 (17/03618/FU and 17/03619/LI).
- 4.3 The approved development proposals involve the construction of an additional storey on the existing roof of the Old Mining building. A new glazed atrium will be attached directly to the rear of the existing building as a connection between the new and the old. The new building will sit behind the atrium and parallel to the Old Mining building. It will be wider than Old Mining, extending close to Chemistry West to the south, and towards Woodhouse Lane and the Electrical Engineering building to the north. The front third of the new building, beyond the atrium, will incorporate a 5 storey tall office zone, whereas the rear two-thirds will step up a further storey beyond a stair tower.
- 4.4 The northern and southern elevations of the new building will incorporate areas of reconstituted stone panels with joints lining through with the building datums. The taller element of the building, including the chamfered return facing Electrical Engineering, will incorporate curtain walling up to the fifth floor. The spaces to the front and eastern side of the completed development will be reorganised and new hard and soft landscaping introduced.
- 4.5 Members supported the development proposals commenting that the design of the extension was impressive. However, Members stated that City Plans Panel should be consulted on the proposed art to the gable end facing Woodhouse Lane.

## 5.0 Public / local response:

5.1 No comments have been received in response to the application to discharge the condition.

## 6.0 Consultation responses

- 6.1 LCC Conservation no objections. The filigree character of the sculpture will be a visually lightweight "wash" over the façade of building. The constructivist nature of the sculpture is also appropriate to the mid-20th century group of university buildings.
- 6.2 LCC Highways no objections.

# 7.0 Policy

#### 7.1 **Development Plan**

- 7.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of decision making at this site, the Development Plan for Leeds currently comprises the following documents:
  - The Leeds Core Strategy (Adopted November 2014)
  - Saved UDP Policies (2006), included as Appendix 1 of the Core Strategy
  - The Natural Resources & Waste Local Plan (NRWLP, Adopted January 2013) including revised policies Minerals 13 and 14 (Adopted September 2015).

# 7.2 Leeds Core Strategy (LCS)

- 7.2.1 Policy P10 requires new development to provide good design appropriate to its scale and function, delivering high quality innovative design.
- 7.2.2 Policy P11 states that the historic environment and its settings will be conserved.

# 7.3 **Saved Unitary Development Plan Review policies (UDPR)**

7.3.1 BD15 states that works of public art will be encouraged in all new developments where appropriate.

# 7.4 **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 7.4.1 Chapter 12 of the revised NPPF "Achieving well-designed places" states that developments should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture (paragraph 127).
- 7.4.2 Chapter 16 "Conserving and enhancing the historic environment" indicates that the impact upon the setting of heritage assets should be considered and any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification (paragraph 194).

#### 8.0 Main issues

Visual appearance and impact upon the setting of the neighbouring listed building and conservation area.

# 9.0 Appraisal

- 9.1 The focus of the artwork is on physical sciences and engineering, designed for the heart of the ICEPS development which will include the new Bragg Centre. Sir William Bragg held the Cavendish Chair of Physics at the University in 1915 when he and his son won the Nobel Prize in Physics for the development of X-ray crystallography. Fundamentally an abstract work, the sculpture is made up of a distinct vocabulary of shapes. Crucially, these are Greek symbols found in Bragg's law which explains the relationship between x-ray light shooting onto and its reflection from a crystal surface. In the sculpture the equation is revealed as spectators move around the artwork. Circular forms are dynamic focal points shifting the perspective; they are a universal symbol relating to the lines in a magnetic field and X-ray diffraction, while also working on a metaphorical level, to circle a group of people sharing ideas, an interconnected whole, a visual portal to a possible future in the mind's eye. As a consequence, it is considered that the nature of the sculpture is appropriate to the mid-20th century group of university buildings in which it would be located.
- 9.2 The sculpture will add visual interest to what otherwise would have been a blank, largely unrelieved, gable in a prominent location adjacent to Woodhouse Lane. At the same time, as a result of its scale and lightweight form the sculpture will not have a material impact upon the setting of the conservation area or the listed building to the south. Conversely, it will be observed as one of a developing series of artwork introduced by the University alongside Woodhouse Lane, just to the south of the grade II listed Mechanical Engineering sculptural relief by Allan Johnson, and to the north of the chimney structure installed to the front of the Laidlaw Library.
- 9.3 In conclusion, the proposed artwork accords with policies P10 and P11 of the Leeds Core Strategy, saved policy BD5 of the Unitary Development Plan Review and the NPPF.



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