

CITY PLANS PANEL

THURSDAY, 10TH JUNE, 2021

(4.00PM)

PRESENT: Councillor J McKenna in the Chair

Councillors D Blackburn, K Brooks,
P Carlill, D Cohen, A Garthwaite, C Gruen,
G Latty, E Nash and N Walshaw

18 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

19 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

20 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

21 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest made at the meeting.

22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: C Campbell, R Finnigan and P Wadsworth

Councillors: B Anderson was in attendance as a substitute Member.

23 Application Nos: 21/02844/FU and 21/02845/LI (Listed Building Consent) for the conversion of Leonardo Building and Thoresby House to provide student accommodation at Leonardo Building & Thoresby House 2 Rossington Street, Leeds, LS2 8HD.

Members considered a report by the Chief Planning Officer which set out details of an application which sought the conversion of Leonardo Building and Thoresby House to provide student accommodation comprising: part-demolition and alterations to existing extension to Leonardo Building;

demolition of existing roofs, addition of two storey roof extension to Leonardo Building and single storey to Leonardo Printworks and Thoresby and internal alterations. Erection of new-build eleven storey student accommodation building to existing car park. Associated works including creation of new public realm comprising resurfacing works, provision of street furniture, trees and other planting and alterations to the highway, at Leonardo Building & Thoresby House 2 Rossington Street, Leeds, LS2 8HD.

The report also sought Listed Building Consent (Application 21/02845/LI) for the conversion of Leonardo Building and Thoresby House to provide student accommodation comprising: part demolition and alterations to existing extension to Leonardo Building; demolition of existing roofs, addition of two storey roof extension to Leonardo Building and single storey to Leonardo Printworks and Thoresby House; repairs and restoration to facades including new openings to the upper level elevations and internal reconfigurations including demolition of modern stair tower extensions, installation of new glazed stair core and window replacements in Leonardo Building and Thoresby House. Erection of new-build eleven storey student accommodation building to existing car park. Associated works including creation of new public realm comprising to include limited reconfiguration of the existing listed wall and railings, resurfacing works, provision of street furniture, trees and other planting and alterations to the highway, at Leonardo Building & Thoresby House 2 Rossington Street, Leeds, LS2 8HD.

Site photographs and plans were displayed and referred to throughout the discussion of the application.

The Planning case officer addressed the Panel, speaking in detail about the proposal and highlighted the following:

- Site / location / context
- The site is the existing conjoined Thoresby Building to parts of the Leonardo Building and the car park and open spaces adjacent to them.
- The adjacent No.2 Great George Street is not part of the current proposal site and now in separate ownership.
- To the east across Woodhouse Lane is the Merrion Centre dating from the 1960s and providing a mixture of shopping, leisure, office and hotel uses. To the north across Rossington Street is the Grade II* listed City Museum and the Grade II listed 43 Woodhouse Lane in use as a bar. To the west is the Grade II listed Electric Press site with a bar use facing the site. To the south across Great George Street is the Grade II* St. Anne's Cathedral, the Grade II listed Cathedral Chambers (in office use) and the modern K2 tower complex housing a mixture of office, residential and leisure uses.
- Thoresby House and the railings and gates to the open spaces adjacent to it are Grade II Listed. Formerly known as Thoresby High School the building has been most recently in use as Council offices.
- The Leonardo Building is a Grade II Listed former print works building dating from 1900. It was extended to the North West in the late 1990s, and was most recently in use as Council offices.

- The proposals involve the regeneration and extension of the Grade II Listed Thoresby and Leonardo Buildings and the creation of a new building on the current car park and open space area. This would involve the demolition of some of the existing roof areas on the Thoresby and Leonardo Buildings.
- All proposed works would facilitate a change of use from offices to student accommodation, in the form of a mix of studio and cluster flats, of 476 bedspaces (with 218 bedspaces being in Leonardo and Thoresby and 258 bedspaces being in the new building) with shared communal spaces. The studio flats would form 28% (135 studios) of the accommodation with the cluster flats forming the remaining 72% (341 cluster bedspaces of 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 beds).
- The studio flats would range from 20 to 36.1m² and the cluster en-suite bedrooms would range from 12.3 to 24.9 m² in size. The living spaces for each cluster flat would range (dependant on the size of the cluster) from 28.3m² to 51.3m².
- In addition, six large shared communal social spaces for the whole development are proposed across the buildings, totalling 1202.1 m².
- The proposals would retain the 20th century Leonardo Building (with this element being re-clad and extended upwards. A further extension is proposed to the roofs of the Listed Leonardo Building and Thoresby Building. The new building would have 11 storey's including a ground floor double height lobby, plus a roof top plant level.
- New publicly accessible open landscaped areas would be created between the Thoresby Building and the new building and between this new block and No.2 Great George Street, on what is currently hard surfaced car parking and open space areas.
- No car parking is proposed for this development, although secure cycle parking is to be provided. Pick up / drop off and refuse servicing would be likely to be taken from Rossington Street.

Members raised the following questions to officers/ applicant's representatives:

- The top corner to the Leonardo Building appears to look unfinished
- The apartments/ flats appear to be very small, do they meet minimum standards
- Could the buildings be reconfigured if the demand for student accommodation was to reduce.
- Does the new building need to be so tall
- The issues raised by the Historic England and the Leeds Civic Trust, have they been satisfactorily responded to
- Could Officers respond to the concerns raised by the Leeds Civic Trust suggesting that the windows on the Leonardo Building only open a small amount and could be insufficient on a hot day
- Women feel unsafe in the city at night, was this development safe at night-time

- Could this matter be brought to panel at the same time as 2 Great George Street as it seemed wrong not to look at them together given their proximity and relationship
- Is there an example of the proposed brick to be used. It appears to be a speckled brick?

In responding to the issues raised, officers said:

- Although the previous application for this site proposed a lantern feature at this location, this application is looking at different ways to finish the Leonardo Building corner. The details of this could be considered further with the applicant if that was the view of Panel.
- Members were informed that policy space standards did not apply to this development as student accommodation falls outside the remit of that policy, however all apartment/ flats were comparable with other recently approved residential student accommodation schemes
- The Planning Case Officer confirmed that the buildings could be internally reconfigured if required for alternative use, but the developer would need to seek permission for any change of use
- The Group Manager, City Development explained the immediate area was characterised by a mix of building heights and that due to the urban grain and topography, the new building would not be readily visible in full elevation but more generally in oblique views. In addition the top floors would be set back from the main building frontage. As a result officers were of the view that the scale of the new building was acceptable in terms of its townscape impact
- The Planning Case Officer reported that the issues raised by Historic England and the Leeds Civic Trust had been captured in the appraisal section of the report
- Members were informed that the windows were part of the special character of the Listed Building and had restricted opening mechanisms. In order to avoid the need to change the windows, mechanical ventilation maybe needed to ensure acceptable level of internal amenity
- Members were informed the building was managed, there was a concierge and security areas. Additionally the architect explained that despite being on the ground floor, the ground floor windows would in fact be too high for any passers-by to look into.
- The developer and owner of 2 Great George Street were different, therefore not possible to bring forward at the same time. The application at 2 Great George Street was not advanced enough to be brought to panel at the current time.
- There was not a sample of the brick to show but it was not proposed to be a speckled brick. The exact details of the brick would be agreed by condition with the objective of reflecting the historic character of the area

In offering comments Members raised the following issues:

- The proposed new building dwarfs the adjacent building, the relationship between the old and new is not right
- The comments made by Historic England and the Leeds Civic Trust are good points, could these comments be revisited by officers
- The roof extensions to the Leonardo building dominate and are considered bulky.
- The principle of this development was sound and the nature of city centre uses was changing. The reuse of the building rather than demolition was supported.
- Could there be a predominance of glass to the ground floor of the new building
- The proposed roof extension to the Leonardo building looks like an “add on”, could mirrored glass be considered
- The scale and massing of the new building is not right and requires revisiting
- Could further consideration be given to the choice of materials on the new building
- The façade of the Leonardo Building runs horizontal while the new building runs vertical, could this be looked at again
- There is a lack of active street frontage. It’s not appropriate to be able to see into the halls of residence.
- There was a concern that the new building projected over the footpath to Great George Street
- Could a heading/paragraph on public safety (safety at night) be included in all future reports to Plans Panels

In drawing the discussion to a conclusion, the Chair said Members had raised a number of issues, all of which required further discussion with the applicant, there was clearly more work to do on this application.

It was moved and seconded that the application be deferred to look again at the scale, massing and the treatment of the new building; the design of the proposed roof extensions; and the approach and treatment of the street frontages

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was passed unanimously

RESOLVED – That the application be deferred to look again at the scale, massing and the treatment of the new building; the design of the proposed roof extensions; and the approach and treatment of the street frontages

24 Date and Time of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting will take place on Thursday, 8th July 2021 at 1.30pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.