



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

PLANS PANEL WEST

Date: 01 March 2012

Subject: 11/05327/FU: Change of use from office (Class B1) to college (Class D1) of Longfield House, Victoria House (entirely) and Park House (1st and 2nd floors), Victoria Road, Headingley, with associated alterations and extensions and formation of additional car parking

APPLICANT
Leeds City College

DATE VALID
20.12.2011

TARGET DATE
20.03.2012

Electoral Wards Affected:

Headingley

Yes

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

RECOMMENDATION:

Defer and delegate approval to the Chief Planning Officer subject to the conditions specified and the completion of a Section 106 Agreement within 3 months of the date of resolution unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Chief Planning Officer, to include the following obligations; and subject to further detailed discussion and amendment of car parking layout to avoid or minimise any tree loss.

1. Contribution towards the Public Transport Infrastructure
2. Travel Planning and the travel plan monitoring fee
3. Contribution towards the upgrading of a bus stop to provide Real Time Information Display
4. Contribution towards the creation of Traffic Regulation Orders in the surrounding streets

NB: The above contributions will total £121, 000, less £12, 000 if a staff shuttle bus is provided. It is considered that some flexibility is desirable depending on the precise costs of Traffic Regulation Orders etc.

5. Contribution of £6000 towards off-site replacement of trees in the locality
6. Maximum of 104 car parking permits to be in circulation at any one time

1. 10 year temporary planning permission from the date when the decision notice is issued. After 10 year temporary permission has expired the use of the buildings shall revert to B1a (offices).
2. Details of approved plans
3. Personal permission to Leeds City College.
4. Sample of materials for walls, roofing, surfacing and doors and windows
5. Details of bin and cycle and motorcycle stores to be approved
6. Car parking to be laid out prior to first use and retained for lifetime of development
7. Cycle provision to be available prior to first use and retained for lifetime of the development
8. Highway works to be completed prior to first occupation including restriction of vehicular access from Headingley Lane to pedestrian, cyclist and emergency vehicles only.
9. Tree protection for retained trees
10. Notwithstanding the submitted car parking and external works, a revised layout for parking and external works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. (To minimise loss of trees).
11. Tree felling programme and method statement to be agreed prior to commencement of development
12. Landscape scheme and implementation.
13. Implementation of the Brooks Ecological Report submitted with the application
14. Land contamination conditions
15. Hours of use
16. Delivery hours

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; E7;T2;T7a;T24;N19;BD6:

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. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1. This application is brought before Members due to the local significance of the proposed development.

2. PROPOSAL:

- 2.1. The application involves the change of use of three vacant office buildings in the Headingley Office Park to be used by Leeds City College as a campus for the teaching of Further Education. The majority of teaching will take place between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday. There is also proposed to be a limited number of evening classes

- 2.2. The application proposes external alterations to Longfield House which is the 1970s office block facing Headingley Lane. The alterations include replacement timber windows with timber sun shutters, timber panelling and rendering to the walls.
- 2.3. New pedestrian entrances would be created into Park House and Victoria House. Due to the change of ground levels between the car parking areas and these two buildings these new entrances would include the erection of a raised walkway and new entrance door at first floor level on each of the buildings.
- 2.4. Changes are proposed to the car parking area to the northern part of the site to increase car parking to 92 spaces (no figure is provided for existing parking which is informally arranged). 70 secure cycle spaces are also proposed. It is proposed to restrict the existing vehicular access on to Headingley Lane to pedestrian cyclists and emergency vehicles only and all vehicular access will be from Victoria Road.
- 2.5. To create the extra car parking and secure cycle storage a total of 26 trees are proposed to be felled.

3. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

- 3.1. The site is located within the Headingley Conservation Area. The site is an existing office park located mid way between Headingley town centre and Hyde Park centre. There are currently two vehicular and pedestrian accesses; one via Victoria Road to the south and the other via Headingley Lane to the north. The site slopes steeply from north down to south. There are 5 buildings on site of which the college proposes to occupy the three at the northern end of the site. The buildings are large office blocks of 5 and 6 storeys, 4 date from the 1980s and one from the 1970s. Car parking is located in various parts of the site amongst the buildings. The site is well covered by extensive groups of mature trees.
- 3.2 The site is within a predominantly residential area. To the north of the site are the large villas of Headingley Lane. To the east is located the vacant Leeds Girls High School site. To the west of the site is located a nursery and primary school. To the south of the site are Victorian terraced streets.

4. HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS:

- 4.1. There have been negotiations and pre-application discussions prior to this application being submitted. The applicants have also conducted pre-application community consultation in the forms of meetings with Ward Members and a public exhibition at the office park.

5. PUBLIC/LOCAL RESPONSE:

- 5.1. This application was advertised by site notice and press advert.
- 5.2. The South Headingley Community Association has objected to the application. They raise the following issues: Impact on demographic imbalance, cumulative impact of other HE and FE campus in the locality, impact on the A660 concerns over increased on street car parking in the surrounding streets.
- 5.3. The north Hyde Park Neighbourhoods Association has objected to the application. They raise the following issues: Increase in traffic along Headingley Lane and

Victoria Road, on street car parking, additional strain on public transport from students and increase of young people congregating on Hyde Park.

5.4. There have been 7 letters of objection received from local residents raising concerns over increased numbers of students in the area, impacts on local town centres and bias of shops catering for students needs, impacts on the highway network by increased cars and users of public transport, increases of on street car parking, harm to the character of the conservation area by trees being felled, unclear on how the 1970s office block is being re-clad, lack of space on site for replacement tree planting.

5.5. Councillor Martin Hamilton has raised the following points:

I would like to comment on the above application for change of use from office use to educational use (Leeds City College). Whilst I welcome the principle of bringing this site back into use, I have a number of concerns about the proposed scheme

1) Highways access. I remain concerned about the impact on the road network of these proposals given that there will be a peak (twice a day) in traffic.

2) Displacement parking. All streets North of Headingley lane and South of Victoria Road may be affected by the additional parking caused by this scheme. A S106 agreement should be secured to put in place appropriate RPZ measures IN ADVANCE of the college opening

3) It has been stated that the comings and goings will have no more impact than would be the case than the extant permission and that existing car parking provision is adequate for the scheme. I would appreciate some modelling of this to confirm that this is the case.

I accept that the usage of this college is not comparable with Higher Education use, where the impact might be detrimental to Council policies such as the Area of Housing Mix. Nonetheless, panel needs to consider if this use, in an area which already has a large transient population, does not have an adverse impact upon the amenity of nearby residents.

6. CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

6.1. **Highways:** No objections. The car parking provision is acceptable given the sustainable location of the site and together with the travel plan measures proposed, funding to restrict parking on surrounding residential streets, and a public transport infrastructure contribution

6.2. **Drainage:** No objections to the proposal. Any increases in impermeable surfaces could be mitigated by the use of permeable paving in the reconfigured parking areas.

6.3. **Environment Agency:** No objection.

6.4. **West Yorkshire Ecology:** No objections such to findings of ecological report being followed though.

- 6.5. **Contaminated Land:** No objection subject to standard land contamination conditions being applied.
- 6.6. **Travelwise:** The Travel Plan requires the commitment to the travel plan monitoring fee. The travel plan should secure funding for additional secure cycle storage should it be required following travel plan reviews. The College should consider providing a car club car. The proposed shuttle bus facility to bring staff to site from other campuses across the city needs developing.
- 6.7. **Neighbourhoods and Housing:** No objection.

7. PLANNING POLICIES:

- 7.1. As required by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 this application has to be determined in accordance with the Leeds Unitary Development Plan (Review 2006) unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan:

- 7.2. The most relevant Policies in the adopted Leeds Unitary Development Plan are listed below.
- Policy GP5 refers to detailed planning considerations and states that development proposals should seek to avoid loss of amenity.
 - Policy E7: Employment land considerations
 - Policy T2 seeks to avoid any harm or detriment to all users of the highway.
 - Policy T7a states that all development must provide adequate and secure means of cycle storage.
 - Policy T24 sets out specific criteria for parking provision.
 - N19: Alterations and extensions within conservation areas should preserve or enhance.
 - Policy BD6: Alterations and extensions should respect the scale and form of the existing building

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Headingley and Hyde Park Neighbourhood Design Statement 2010

Street Design Guide SPD

Travel Plan SPD

National Guidance/Statements:

- 7.3. In addition to the principal elements of planning policy other advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Notes and replacement national Planning Policy Statements (PPS) may be relevant, including;
- PPS-1 – Delivering Sustainable Development This PPG sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.
 - PPS-4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth. This sets out the Government's comprehensive policy framework for planning for sustainable economic development in urban and rural areas.
 - PPS-5 Planning for the Historic Environment. This sets out the Government's policy for dealing with developments within conservation areas. The main thrust of the policy is to preserve or enhance the historic environment.

8. MAIN ISSUES:

8.1. Having considered this application and representations, it is the considered view that the main issues in this case are:

- The principle of the development including the loss of the employment use and the introduction of a college in the locality
- Impact on the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area from the proposed extensions, building and site alterations and tree felling.
- Car parking on site and off site and the proposed travel planning measures
- Impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents including the other office blocks on site

9. APPRAISAL:

Establishing the principle of the development

9.1. It is considered that the principal policy consideration in the determination of this application is the acceptability of the loss of employment floorspace. The applicant's employment land report submission in the Planning Supporting Statement is considered acceptable, albeit limited. The report provides details of the longstanding marketing campaign for the site to be re-used for employment purposes and the lack of demand thereof. It fails to provide an assessment to substantiate 'years of supply' position within the locality but, given the nature of the proposal, there would be little value in undertaking a full scope supply assessment. The site is vacant and unallocated for employment use. The fact that it has been vacant for some time does reduce the likelihood of an employment use being re-established on the site - this is simply a reflection of the current market situation which is characterised by high levels of property on the market and downward pressure on rental values. In these circumstances, it is extremely unlikely that speculative development for employment use would be financially viable. In recent applications for D Use Class proposals on existing employment sites, officers have had regard to PPS4 defining 'economic development' not only as those in the B Use Class, but also public and community uses, main town centre uses and other development which provides employment, generates wealth or produces an economic output. Since the application relates to a proposed educational college campus, PPS4 Policy EC10 which adopts a positive approach towards determining planning applications for economic development is relevant. In conclusion, it is clear that the loss of this site to an alternative economic use would not pose any harm to the Council's interests in providing opportunities for local employment. Accordingly, there is no objection raised under Policy E7 of the UDP Review.

9.2. There is no policy basis why an educational use would not be appropriate on the site. It lies in a relatively accessible location, having access to public transport (bus and train) and within walking distance of local services and amenities. It is important that the management of the College on a day to day basis does not impact upon the occupiers of the other office blocks on site. Officers do not envisage that this relationship would result in any undue harm. The self contained nature of the site coupled with its location on very good public transport routes makes the site a good location for a large education development. Appropriate planning conditions and obligations with the S106 Agreement have been attached to this report to ensure that the neighbouring residents and office users do not suffer any significant loss of amenity from this development.

- 9.3. Leeds City College is the UK's third largest FE establishment, offering a diverse curriculum to over 45,000 students. Leeds City College has an annual turnover of over £90m and employs more than 1,700 staff, making it one of the area's largest employers. The delivery of educational establishments is considered an important element of achieving the aims of the Vision for Leeds. This also accords with the strategic aims of policy SA8 by promoting developments that are accessible and in sustainable locations and that provide necessary facilities for all sections of the community. In addition strategic policy SG3 would seek to ensure that legitimate land needs of the community are met including education facilities.
- 9.4. The need for alternative accommodation has arisen in part from problems with the existing Thomas Danby building on Roundhay Road which is an inefficient building with poor natural light and ventilation together with asbestos issues. The proposed use of the Headingley Office Park site as a college is scheduled to last up to 10 years. During this time redevelopment and relocation works across the remainder of the College's campus sites will be undertaken. After 10 years use it is anticipated the site will be vacated by the College and the buildings will be returned to an office use (B1a Use Class Order 2010). The College has stated they wish to start using the site from September 2012, should planning permission be granted.

Assessing the impacts of the proposals on the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area

- 9.5. The physical alterations to the existing buildings of the site are overall considered positive. The existing buildings do not make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of this part of the Headingley Conservation Area. In particular the prominent siting of the 1970s block when viewed from Headingley Lane actually has a negative effect upon the street scene. It is considered the recladding and renovation works to this building are welcome and will have a positive effect on the conservation area. This element of the proposal is considered to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 9.6. The creation of raised walkways and the design and appearance of the new entrances onto the two 1980s blocks is also considered acceptable. The elevations where the new walkways and entrances would be sited are fairly discrete and isolated from wider views outside of the site. The change in ground levels around the buildings combined with the need to provide level access means that a raised walkway is the only viable solution for gaining access into these blocks. There are no objections to this element of the application in relation to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area.
- 9.7. The applicant states that to meet on site car parking requirements, provide level access for DDA compliance, provide adequate space for cycle storage and ensure that the servicing and refuse vehicles can manoeuvre safely, the applicant proposes the removal of 26 trees Of these trees:

- 6 are not in connection with the development – all Category R (remove)

- 8 are Category C trees (lower value trees that should not constrain design)
- 9 are Category B trees (which are of amenity value)

The 9 Category B trees proposed for removal are not generally visible from adjoining public areas but their loss is nonetheless undesirable in a Conservation Area. Members may recall the Inspector's appeal decision on the adjacent site, the former Leeds Girls High school, where the inspector noted that the trees were particularly important to the character of the Conservation Area. Some replacement tree planting can be achieved on site, and the developer proposes to make a financial contribution for tree planting in the surrounding area, but officers remain to be convinced at this stage that the loss of trees can be justified. The recommendation to members is therefore on the basis that there will be further discussion and amendment to the proposals to minimise loss of trees.

Car parking on site and off site and the proposed travel planning measures

- 9.8 One of the main issues in the determination of this application is the impacts of the development in relation to the 'comings and goings' of staff and students and the concerns of the local community over the possibility of overspill car parking and the effects on the existing public transport infrastructure. The travel plan is one method by which the applicant has sought to mitigate its impacts upon the surrounding highway network. A second is the applicant's commitment to contribute towards the Council's Public Transport Infrastructure SPD. Thirdly the applicant is being asked to contribute towards the creation of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in the surrounding streets to ensure that any over spill parking is adequately managed and local residents do not suffer a loss of amenity which may have been caused by the development.
- 9.10 Members will see at the Head of this report the proposed Section 106 package and also the proposed planning conditions designed to ensure that effects of this development are mitigated to an acceptable level. The submitted travel plan sets challenging targets for the College to ensure that within 3 years of the development being occupied there will be no more than 40% of staff travelling to work by private car and no more than 8% of students travelling to college by private car. Given the College anticipates that there will be between 88-93 staff on site at any one time it can be shown that there will be almost no overspill car parking in the surrounding streets after 3 years provided travel plan targets are met. The College will issue permits for staff and students to allocate the on site car parking spaces. 87 spaces in total will be provided on site for permit users. 6 will be retained for visitors. Highway officers accept that parking provision is acceptable in combination with the other travel measures which form part of the application package. It is noted that the College has students in the 16-18 age range and as such car usage would be expected to be lower than for other Higher Education colleges or universities.
- 9.11 Whilst on site car parking is being increased and there are a range of travel planning measures, the development may still give rise to some on street overspill parking Accordingly officers are of the view that this development needs to fund on street parking restrictions to limit long-stay parking in nearby residential streets and again this forms part of the application package.
- 9.12 It is envisaged that many of the staff and students will use public transport to get to the site. In principle this is of course welcome, however some representations have been received that relate to concerns that the network will struggle to cope with the increases. The commitment by the developer to contribute towards the Council's

SPD on Public Transport Infrastructure is welcome and should help to ameliorate these concerns. In addition the upgrading of the bus stop on Headingley Lane to provide for Real time Display will also be beneficial. The provision on site on secure cycle provision and also of lockers and showers within the buildings will also provide alternative travel options. There are no objections to the application from Metro or highways officers in regard to public transport provision.

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents including the other office blocks on site

- 9.12 The proposed campus would accommodate around 600 students and about 100 staff at any one time. It is noted that the existing lawful use of the buildings as B1 office generates substantial numbers of people that in theory could use the buildings and therefore also impact upon the surrounding community. There is some concern from the representations raised about the potential impacts of large numbers of young students visiting the area. It is noted that the age of the students is such that they would for the most part be present during teaching hours only and not have the type of community impact associated with the University students. It is not considered that the impact of young people visiting the site could amount to grounds for refusal.

10. CONCLUSION:

- 10.1. The office buildings subject to this application have been empty for a number of years and seem unlikely to find office tenants in the current climate. The condition of the building fronting Headingley Lane is deteriorating and is of concern in this prominent Conservation Area location. This application presents the opportunity to provide a positive new use for the buildings whilst also supporting the development of a major employer and education provider in the City.

Background Papers:

Application and history files.



11/05327/FU

WEST PLANS PANEL

