

Plans Panel (City Centre)

Thursday, 2nd August, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor N Taggart in the Chair

Councillors S Hamilton, J McKenna,
E Nash, M Hamilton, G Latty, P Gruen,
M Ingham, N Walshaw and D Blackburn

19 Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Members and Officers to introduce themselves

20 Late Items

There were no late items

21 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

In accordance with Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 and paragraphs 13-18 of the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Martin Hamilton declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Applications 12/00662/FU and 12/00663/LI relating to The Algernon Firth Building, Thoresby Place LS1 as the University of Leeds, where Councillor Hamilton was employed, was a joint applicant of the proposed development (minute 24 refers)

22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Procter

23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Plans Panel City Centre meeting held on 5th July 2012 be approved

24 Applications 12/00662/FU & 12/00663/LI - Full Planning and Listed Building applications for the change of use and alterations to former medical institute to form student accommodation comprising 17 cluster flats and 26 studio flats (total 110 bed spaces), with associated gym, cycle store, laundry, reception, plant room, bin store and detached sub station; alterations to car parking, access and landscaping - The Algernon Firth Building, Thoresby Place, Leeds LS1

Having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in this matter, Councillor Martin Hamilton withdrew from the meeting

Plans, drawings, photographs and graphics were displayed at the meeting. A site visit had take place earlier in the day which Members had attended

Officers presented the report which sought planning permission and Listed Building consent for a Change of Use and alterations to form student accommodation at the Grade II Listed Algernon Firth Building - formerly Leeds University's Institute of Pathology – on Thoresby Place LS1, which was situated in close proximity to the Central Area Conservation Area

Members were informed that the proposals were for 110 bed spaces in a mixture of cluster and studio flats over three floors, with some duplex accommodation being provided on the third floor

A sympathetic conversion was proposed, with the existing porter's reception area and the stair core being retained and refurbished. Externally the non-sensitive additions in the form of ducting and escape staircases would be removed with the existing feature railings being retained, although an existing electricity sub-station within the site would need to be retained

The lightwell to the southern side would be increased in width and made a feature of with seating and planting to enhance amenity and outlook for residents. The existing car parking adjacent to the building is for NHS staff. This would be retained but would be altered from chevron to tandem parking, leading to a reduction in the number of spaces from 21 to 12. However, the provision of one disabled parking space for the proposed use had been agreed with the applicant with all the other spaces being for the sole use of NHS staff

If minded to approve the application in principle, Officers requested the following amendments to the proposed conditions:

- Condition 4 – landscaping proposals to be submitted before commencement of the landscaping works
- Condition 7 – to require servicing arrangements to be carried out in accordance with the submitted revised servicing strategy
- Condition 8 – storage and disposal of litter and waste materials – details to be agreed prior to occupation of the development
- Condition 15 – to be deleted
- Application ref:1200663/LI
- Additional condition requiring the two plaques within the building to be retained and reused

Members commented on the following matters:

- the electricity sub-station, the size of this; its proximity to the accommodation and whether everything had been explored to avoid this being sited so prominently
- the suspended ceilings and whether there was a sufficient gap between this and the windows
- the need to ensure the partitions to be used to divide the rooms provided adequate noise insulation
- that some of the duplex units were narrow in comparison to others with concerns that inferior living conditions should not be created
- the possibility of securing two disabled car parking spaces within the revised parking layout

Officers provided the following responses:

- that consideration of the siting of the electricity sub-station had taken place but due to the need for it to be accessible at all times, this was considered to be the most appropriate location for it. To create a softer effect, its appearance would be improved as the sub-station would be clad in timber
- in respect of the suspended ceilings, these had been set back as much as possible and the gap would be approximately 600mm, which had been agreed with the Conservation Officer
- regarding the sound attenuation qualities of the partitions, a sound insulation scheme was required to be agreed by a condition and if required, the materials used could be tested
- concerning the size of the units, all exceeded the guidance from colleagues in Environmental Health in respect of achieving appropriate spaces for studio rooms. Whilst it was accepted that some of the duplex rooms were narrow, they did benefit from double height space and were consistent with what had been approved elsewhere. The Central Area Planning Manager stated that whilst Members' concerns could be discussed with the applicants, the number of bedrooms being provided in the scheme was key to its viability
- that the possibility of securing a second disabled car parking space could be discussed and dealt with by condition

Members largely welcomed the proposals, particularly the reuse of a Listed Building to provide student accommodation in a highly sustainable location and requested that a further site visit be undertaken on completion of the scheme

RESOLVED - To defer and delegate approval to the Chief Planning Officer subject to the conditions set out in the appendix to the submitted report – subject to the amendments outlined by Officers and including a further condition requiring the two plaques within the building to be retained and reused (and any other conditions which he might consider appropriate) and subject to further discussions on the number of duplex units to be provided in view of Members' concerns about the four smaller units being proposed and the possibility of securing a second disabled parking space in the altered NHS staff parking provision adjacent to the building

Following consideration of this matter, Councillor Martin Hamilton resumed his seat in the meeting

25 The Application for an Order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 for the Leeds Southern Station Entrance

Plans, photographs and graphics were displayed at the meeting

Officers presented a report of the Chief Planning Officer informing Members of the progress on the Leeds Southern Station entrance

Members were informed that the application for an Order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 to authorise the construction and maintenance of the scheme had been submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport in May 2012 by Metro and Network Rail; the Council's role in this being that of a consultee. The proposals are almost identical to the proposal that was granted planning permission in May 2012.

The necessity and importance of the proposals in providing an improved access from the south of the city; an additional stimulus to continued regeneration of this part of the city, providing shorter journey times and helping to reduce congestion at the main station entrance were outlined

Whilst the proposals would have an impact on a small number of flats located closest to the new entrance structure, this had been fully considered when Panel had approved the scheme in May 2010 with the possible benefits the scheme would bring outweighing these considerations

Amendments to the scheme had been made with Little Neville Street now to be pedestrianised to discourage the use of the road as a vehicle drop off / pick up point, although this would still provide a service access that would be controlled by a Traffic Regulation Order. Along the south side of Little Neville Street a pedestrian route/safe route would be provided using high quality surfacing which would be augmented by tree planting, lighting and signage.

As barges would be used to bring the building materials into the area, a construction compound would be sited on Water Lane. This was currently a derelict area, within the City Centre Conservation Area, although the remnants of a former building and its foundations were present. It would be necessary to remove these and level the ground, although the stone archway which mirrored an archway on a listed building in close proximity – at 2 Water Lane – would be rebuilt upon completion of the development, with Officers being satisfied that these proposals would adequately preserve the heritage value of the remains.

In terms of the consultation on the scheme, this had ended on 28th June 2012 and Leeds City Council had confirmed its support for the proposals. In the event of substantive objections, a Public Inquiry could be held in November 2012. If the scheme was approved, work would commence in 2013 and end in 2014

Members commented on the following matters:

- the possibility of retaining the wharf which would need to be created to service the construction compound once the scheme had been completed
- the importance of this development for Leeds; the strong support for the scheme throughout the city; concerns at the lengthy timescale envisaged to determine the application for the Order and that the Secretary of State should be advised of the need for this to be considered quickly
- the improvements the scheme would bring, especially to the walkway under the Dark Arches, which despite attempts to improve the pedestrian experience remained grim

In respect of the demolition works relating to the construction of the wharf, the Central Area Planning Manager advised Members that the Secretary of State had been asked to consider a Conservation Area application and a condition had been requested by the Local Planning Authority to be added to this to require details of the

final treatment and how the site would be reinstated to be agreed by the Chief Planning Officer

The Chair commented on the overwhelming public support the scheme had received and welcomed an early positive decision by the Secretary of State, without the need for the Public Inquiry

RESOLVED - To note the report and the comments now made and that the Chief Planning Officer be asked to write to the Secretary of State requesting early consideration of the Order

26 Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 30th August 2012 at 1.30pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds