

## UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 7 February 2018

ITEM NO. 10

Page 57

Ward: Church

App No.: 172045/FUL

Site Address: St Patrick's Hall, 20 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, RG2 7HB

Proposal: Construction of 836 new student bedrooms, a cafeteria/bar, bin and bike stores, sub-station and energy centre, together with a new access link and landscaping. Demolition of the existing student accommodation block at New Court, the SETS building, the warden's house, no. 4 Sherfield Drive, the reception and common room, (resubmission of application ref. 161182) (amended description).

Applicant: University of Reading

Date valid: 15 November 2017

Target Decision Date: 14 March 2018 (agreed extension)

26 Week Date: 16 May 2018

### AMENDED RECOMMENDATION

[Recommendation set out in full below for completeness. Changes explained in text below.]

Delegate to Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to:

i) GRANT Full Planning Permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a S.106 legal agreement to secure:

a) An employment skills and training plan for both construction and end user phases, or payment in lieu of a plan (construction £38,795 and end user £4,724.70), to be provided at least one month prior to commencement (construction) and at least one month prior to first occupation (end user). Any payments to be index-linked from the date of permission.

b) The sum of £30,000 towards the upgrade of the pedestrian crossing immediately to the south east of the Shinfield Road/Northcourt Avenue junction. Payable prior to first occupation and index-linked from the date of permission.

c) The sum of £6,324 for the provision and ongoing maintenance of 4 street trees on the eastern side of Northcourt Avenue opposite the application site. Payable prior to commencement and index-linked from the date of permission. Any surplus monies to be retained for ongoing maintenance of these trees, or additional tree planting elsewhere within Northcourt Avenue.

d) The submitted student management plan and a mechanism for annual review by the Council. To include requirement for compliance with parking management policy as set out in UoR Student Residence Agreement.

e) The use of the site to be *sui generis* university halls of residence and not to be used for other uses, including non-student residential use (with the exception of short term summer school and conference accommodation during university holidays).

f) The development not to be occupied until a 10 year Local Wildlife Site Management Plan for the Whitley Park Farm/St Patricks Hall Pond LWS has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. To include but not limited to:

1. Management of the woodland to ensure that it is botanically and structurally diverse
2. Management of the ponds to ensure that they do not become silted up, colonised with invasive species etc.
3. Provision of bird and bat boxes
4. Measures to manage public and student access.

Thereafter implemented in accordance with the terms of the approved 10 year LWS Management Plan.

g) Within 3 months of first occupation, the Reading University Travel Plan (updated to include this application site) to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The plan to include a full analysis of the existing / proposed modal split for staff at St Patricks Hall, reasons for the modal choice and detailed proposals for future transport provision with the aim of securing reduction in car trips generated to and from the site.

h) Three yearly review of Travel Plan

i) Student arrivals/departures and car parking management plan to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, prior to first occupation - implementation in accordance with approved plan.

j) Annual Review of student arrivals/departures and car parking management plan.

k) The sum of £5,000 [five thousand pounds] towards the implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order by the Council, to introduce or amend parking controls on Northcourt Avenue, Wellington Avenue, and Ennerdale Road.

Or

ii) to REFUSE permission should the S106 legal agreement not be completed by 14 March 2018, unless the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services agrees to a later date for completion of the agreement.

(The S106 to be subject to such terms and conditions that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services considers appropriate and in the best interests of the Council.)

**And subject to conditions to include the following:**

- *Pre-commencement conditions labelled (PC)*
- *(Conditions labelled '(PCD)' to be pre-commencement 'exempting demolition', i.e. allowing demolition to take place before the requirements of the condition apply. (Condition numbering as per main report for ease of reference)*

1. TL1 The Standard time limit
2. AP1 Approved plans condition
3. M2 Materials (details and samples) to be approved (to include details and sample panel of facing brickwork and feature brickwork showing brick type and colour, mortar mix, bond and pointing; and details and sample of roof materials) (PCD)
4. AC1 Archaeology - submission and implementation of Written Scheme of Investigation (PC)
5. PD9 Restriction on use - sui generis university halls of residence only.

### *Trees and Landscape:*

6. L2a Landscaping - full details of hard and soft landscaping to be submitted, to be in accordance with the principles shown on submitted landscape drawings 3025\_L\_SW\_0\_01 Rev 02 and to include full details of proposed and existing services above and below ground and including SuDS drainage proposals. To include large canopy, native and wildlife-friendly species. To include a timetable for the provision of landscaping. (PCD)
7. L4 - The standard tree protection condition (PC)
8. L6a - Submission of Arboricultural Method Statement for protection of all trees within and adjacent to the site (PC)
9. L10 - The standard landscape boundaries condition - details to be submitted (PCD)
10. L2b - Implementation of approved landscaping plans and documents in accordance with approved timetable.
11. Detailed section drawings and details of works to provide retaining walls surrounding Block I, including measures to address ground stability and groundwater (PCD)
12. Detailed landscaping proposals for rear of Block I (drawing 3025\_L\_SW\_1\_01 dated 16 January 2018) to be implemented prior to first occupation of Block I.
13. L3 - Standard Landscaping Maintenance - any plants/trees that fail within 5 years of planting to be replaced.
14. L5 - Landscaping Management Plan to be submitted
15. L6b - Arboricultural method statement to be followed (PC)

### *Ecology*

16. N16 External Lighting - Full details to be agreed. To include a plan indicating the locations of the lights, specifications, height, luminance (isolux contour map); lens shape/beam pattern and any hoods/shades and should have due regard to the location of existing and proposed trees. Plans to indicate areas identified as being of importance for commuting and foraging bats. No lighting other than in accordance with approved details. (PCD)
17. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP:Biodiversity) to be submitted for approval prior to commencement. Approved CEMP to be adhered to throughout the demolition and construction period. (PC)
18. Submission of Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to include all mitigation and enhancement measures detailed in submitted Ecological Impact Assessment rev.06 dated 25 January 2018 together with a timetable for implementation to be submitted for approval. (PCD)

### *Transport*

19. *[Deleted as a duplication of condition 34]*
20. DC5 Bicycle parking - provision in accordance with plans to be submitted prior to commencement.(PCD)
21. DC1 Vehicle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans prior to occupation.
22. DC2 Vehicle access provided in accordance with approved plans prior to occupation
23. Visibility splays of 2.4 x 70 to be provided for new access prior to occupation
- 24, 25, 26, 27. *[Travel Plan, Review, Car Parking Management Plan and Annual Review - moved to S106 legal agreement - as above]*

### *Environmental Protection*

28. CO3 - Establishing if site is contaminated (PCD - to Ground Floor slab level))
29. CO4 - Remediation scheme needed as site is known to be contaminated (PCD - to

Ground Floor slab level)

30. CO5 - Remediation to be implemented (PCD - to Ground Floor slab level)

31. CO6 - Reporting unexpected contamination

32. N2 - Noise assessment for mechanical plant (including that associated with CHP plant) before installation, to include details of noise insulation or mitigation measures. Installation in accordance with approved details.

33. Glazing and entrance of the front façade of the 'Hub' building to be installed in accordance with the specifications recommended within (SRL, Acoustic Report for Planning, 15 November 2017, report number C13904A/T09/JEE prior to first occupation.

#### *Construction*

34. CO2 - Construction and Demolition Method Statement (to include controls on noise and dust and bonfires) (PC)

35. CO1 - Construction and Demolition - standard hours (0800hrs to 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 0900hrs to 1300hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays, without prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority)

#### *Amenity*

36. All building heights and floor levels to be in accordance with approved drawing number StP-WIA-00-GF-DR-A-000004 Rev.B dated 25 January 2018, prior to first occupation of the building to which they relate.

37. No part of Block I to be occupied until all projecting privacy fins have been fitted to the north east elevation as shown on the approved drawing. Fins to be maintained as approved at all times thereafter.

38. PD5 - No use of roofs - flat roofs not to be used as terrace, roof garden or similar amenity area.

#### *Environmental Sustainability*

39. SU5 - SuDS Detailed Drainage Design to be submitted including timetable for implementation and management and annual maintenance plan. (PCD)

40. Site Waste Management Plan re-use and recycling of demolition waste - Policy CS2 (PC)

41. SU3 - BREEAM Interim Certificate - 'Very Good' standard with minimum score of 62.5 (PCD)

42. SU4 - BREEAM - Development to achieve Very Good Standard with minimum score of 62.5. Final BREEAM Certificate to be submitted within 6 months of first occupation of the building to which it relates.

43. CHP Plant to be provided prior to first occupation.

44. SU6 - No building hereby permitted shall be occupied until the sustainable drainage scheme for the site has been completed in accordance with the submitted and approved details.

#### Informatives

1. Positive and Proactive Approach

2. Drawings

3. Highways - recovery of expenses due to damage caused by construction traffic.

4. S106

5. Compliance with terms of permission.

6. CIL

7. Parking Permits - no entitlement to permit (any future permit scheme)

## 1. Changes to recommendation

### *Conditions*

- 1.1 The applicant has requested that a number of pre-commencement conditions be altered to allow for demolition work to take place before compliance with the condition is required. This is considered reasonable in most cases as the subject matter of the condition is unaffected by demolition. These conditions are now labelled 'PCD' in the recommendation. A number of pre-commencement conditions require discharge prior to demolition due to the nature of the condition, (e.g. the construction and demolition method statement). These are recommended to remain as pre-commencement and remain labelled 'PC'.
- 1.2 The travel plan requirements and 'Student arrivals/departures and Car Parking Management Plan' requirements (previously conditions 24-27) have been changed from being secured by condition, to being secured by S106 legal agreement. This is considered more appropriate due to the ongoing nature of the review processes.
- 1.3 Condition 36 has been updated to refer to the newest version of the Building Levels Plan (rev.B).

### *Travel Plan*

- 1.4 The applicant has requested that the travel plan be reviewed on a three-yearly rather than annual basis. Based on the minimal parking on site and the recommended parking controls the Council's Transport section accept that the Travel Plan can be incorporated within the existing University Travel Plan and be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis.

### *S106 - Traffic Regulation Order*

- 1.5 The concerns raised by residents regarding overspill car parking associated with the development have been considered further by Transport and Planning Officers. This is within the context of the parking survey information submitted by the applicant and accepted by the Council's Transport Development Control team which shows little difference between the term time and non-term time parking associated with the existing halls of residence. This suggests that whilst parking pressures clearly exist, student parking is possibly not the main cause.
- 1.6 It is relevant to note that work is ongoing within the Council's Transport Network Management Team to address increasing on-street parking during the day in Northcourt Avenue and this is likely to result in formal restrictions being recommended. Any restrictions would be subject to a public consultation and approval by the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee. Although student parking has not been identified as the main source of parking problems, it is acknowledged that a residual risk of a limited amount of overspill parking from the new St. Patrick's accommodation may remain, despite the best efforts of controls secured under the Student Management Plan, Travel Plan and Car Parking Management Plan (as set out in the main report).
- 1.7 On this basis it is considered reasonable to secure a small financial contribution towards implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order to introduce or amend parking controls within Northcourt Avenue and adjoining streets. A contribution of £5,000 is sought towards a Traffic Regulation Order to implement the parking restrictions.

- 1.8 With regard to the CIL Regulation 122 tests it is considered that this is:
- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms - in order to deal with the residual risk of additional pressure on street-parking over the lifetime of the development.
  - Directly related to the development - the monies would be limited to facilitating the TRO in streets immediately surrounding the site.
  - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development - the amount is relatively small and is the minimum required to facilitate implementation of a TRO.
- 1.9 The S106 Heads of Terms for the TRO are set out in the recommendation above.

*S106 - Employment Skills and Training*

- 1.10 The timing of the end user has been adjusted to one month prior to first occupation instead of prior to commencement, reflecting the likelihood that staffing and training matters would be finalised later on in the development process.

**2. Re-consultation, and Additional Representations Received**

- 2.1 Neighbours and objectors were consulted on 18 January regarding the changes to 'Block I' with a deadline for comments of 31 January 2018 and again on 25 January regarding the reduced scale of Blocks A and B, with a deadline for comments of 6 February 2018. This re-consultation is referred to in paragraphs 4.113 and 4.114 of the main agenda
- 2.2 There is no statutory requirement for changes to planning proposals to be the subject of further consultations and the Planning Section do not usually re-consult where, as in this case, the change will reduce the scale of the original proposal in response to comments made. However, in view of the interest in this application neighbours and consultees were re-consulted and it is considered that the timescales given are reasonable given the nature of the changes proposed.
- 2.3 The changes to Block I involve an overall improvement in terms of the reduction in scale and reduced overlooking to the adjacent neighbouring dwelling. The changes to Blocks A and B, maintain the same character of development as originally consulted upon and involve a reduction of one storey across the two blocks. The architectural approach remains the same in all other respects with little deviation from the original scheme. The degree of change does not suggest the need for a new application, or a longer period of re-consultation. It is considered that the changes made by the applicant are intended to address concerns raised and do not introduce new areas of concern or new material considerations.
- 2.4 38 additional objections have been received, resulting in a total of 105 during the application.
- 2.5 2 letters of support have been received.
- 2.6 Matters raised are summarised as follows:
- The proposal is still non-compliant with RBC's Planning Policy as highlighted previously.

- The changes are tinkering around the edges.
- The heights, mass and separations of the blocks around the locally listed Pearson's Court remain unchanged.
- The scale is totally out of keeping with the surrounding area.
- Blocks A and B are about twice the height of any other building in Northcourt Avenue.
- Removing one floor of the tallest tower block is a token gesture.
- The reduction from 6 storeys should have been to 4 storeys - this would be far more appropriate relative to all the nearby buildings.
- The amendments propose no substantive changes to the architectural form of the development which remains more akin to an office park development than one suited to a residential area.
- The height and mass of the buildings would still overwhelm the locally listed site of Pearson's Court and fail to enhance the character and appearance of the area. Contrary to Policy CS33.
- We ask again that the Planning Application in its current form be rejected as we maintain it is not compliant with RBC's policies CS33, CS7, CS15 and National Planning Policy Framework and Reading Council Core Strategy Policies.
- SETS building is an integral part of the locally listed Pearson's Court and should be retained. It was designed as single storey to allow sunlight into the courtyard.
- Loss of view of open sky and trees.
- Submitted information is misleading, including Indicative 3D Concept Site Model which excludes 24A Northcourt Avenue and does not present a complete view of the impact of the development on 24A Northcourt Avenue. Over 60 windows would look onto 24A Northcourt Avenue.
- These are not minor modifications, they are significant major changes from the original plans.
- The still excessive increase in the number of bedspaces and students in a site which is a low density residential area remain unresolved.
- There is insufficient time for residents to comment on the changes.
- Request that the application be withdrawn and resubmitted.
- Lived in Northcourt Avenue for 60 years and experienced quite a few changes but not to the extent proposed.
- Lack of parking, access for bin collections and emergency access.
- Reading University have already developed extensively at the rear of the site which has caused traffic and parking problems which residents already have to put up with every day.
- Litter is a problem and will increase.
- Anti-social behaviour of students late at night which would increase.
- Overlooking from Block I to bedroom window of 24 Northcourt Avenue. Overlooking of 2 and 3 Sherfield Drive.
- Block I sits uncomfortably within site due to excavation proposed.
- Land stability and drainage concerns regarding Block I retaining wall.
- Pressure on local services.
- Disruption from construction vehicles.
- The Council's draft structure plan allows for an increase of 450-500 (max) students not 655.
- The massing of the buildings would irrevocably impair the street scene as well as setting a precedent that could make it hard to refuse future applications for high commercial developments in the vicinity.
- Oak T82, has its diameter seriously under-estimated (960mm instead of 1130mm), and hence the RPA has been underestimated (11.52m instead of 13.56m). Similarly, for lime T64: tree diameter 590mm instead of 630mm, and resulting RPA of 7.1m instead of 7.56m. These issues would need to be addressed in terms of root incursion for any planned new building.
- Very concerned about the lack of community infrastructure levy and Reading missing out on £1.75 million by a commercial enterprise, UPP, hiding behind the charitable

status of UoR. That is scandalous - it may be legal but is morally wrong and depriving Reading of its just entitlement.

- The developer is hiding behind Reading University's charity status and avoiding the usual financial commitments private developers normally have to make to the Council for the local community.
- NARA has submitted an alternative proposal which could tick all the boxes and has yet to receive significant attention as part of the consideration process.
- Vehicles travelling at high speed and using this road as a rat run. No traffic calming measures have been considered and a study should be carried out to protect local residents' safety.
- Enlarged bike store implies a greater number of cyclists who may be tempted to cycle on pavements - danger to elderly residents. There is a need for dedicated cycle route from the site to campus.
- [Matt Rodda MP] *"I am aware of the recent amendments to the above proposed development, but despite these small changes, the objections and concerns that I raised in my letter to you of 18th December 2017 still stand. I would request that you and the Planning Committee continue to take the contents of my letter of 17th December fully into account and that my points are considered as part of the decision-making process. I felt it important to register my ongoing objection, which I hope will be noted."*
- [Support] Student Minds (student mental health charity). Student accommodation can play an important role in helping students to make this transition and adapt to living independently. On-campus accommodation ensures students can access university facilities and activities where their time can be spent with friends, which is crucial to wellbeing. Improving belonging can also ensure a strong connection to the University and help with retention.
- [Support] Reading University Students' Union. The university needs to improve its facilities to offer the best possible student experience. St Patricks Hall is in desperate need of renovation. RUSU are committed to lobbying for increased capacity in halls as this offers a significantly more supportive environment than renting privately and increases the University's ability to manage impacts on residential areas.

## Discussion

- 2.7 The majority of comments reiterate previous concerns in terms of character and heritage impacts, traffic generation, parking, neighbouring amenity and student behaviour. It is considered that these are adequately addressed in the main report.
- 2.8 The points raised regarding the misleading nature of the indicative 3D Concept Site Model are noted. However this image is labelled as indicative and is intended to give an impression of the development as a whole. It is not a replacement for the scaled proposal drawings which accurately plot the development within its context and these do show the relationship with 24A Northcourt Avenue. The effect of the development on 24A Northcourt Avenue is assessed in paragraph 6.57 of the main report.
- 2.9 The trunk girths of T82 and 64 have been re-measured to the satisfaction of the Council's Tree Officer. This confirms stem diameters of 975mm for T84 and 610mm for tree T64. These measurements are 15mm and 20mm greater respectively than the previous survey (Feb 2016), which is expected for two years growth. This means that the RPA's referred to in the submitted AIA are accurate and the impact of this minor growth upon the development is negligible.
- 2.10 It is considered that road safety and traffic generation are adequately addressed in the main report.
- 2.11 The concerns raised regarding cyclists using pavements are noted, however this activity would be a summary offence under the Road Traffic Act and not a matter for



Planning to control. The need for cycle lanes is also noted. However the campus is a short walk and the pedestrian crossing improvement is considered more appropriate.

2.12 The alternative proposal prepared by NARA is noted. However the Local Planning Authority is required to determine the current application on its own merits.

2.13 Demolition of the SETS building is addressed in paragraphs 6.22 and 6.25 of the main report. It is considered that the relationship between the 'new SETS' building and the retained Pearson's Court would maintain a reasonable level of daylight within the courtyard and student bedrooms, being a similar arrangement to other taller courtyard blocks within the development.

2.14 The concerns raised regarding the potential charitable relief from CIL are noted. This matter is addressed in paragraph 3.5 - 3.15 of the main report.

### **3. Conclusion**

The application is recommended for approval on the basis of the main report and this update report, as set out in the amended recommendation at the head of this update report.

Case officer: Steve Vigar