

## **PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM**

ABERDEEN, 20 April 2023. Minute of Meeting of the PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM. Present:- Councillor Bouse, Convener; and Councillors Blake, Clark, Cooke, Copland, Henrickson, McRae, van Sweeden (as substitute for Councillor Alphonse) and Thomson.

Also present as local Members: Councillor Macdonald.

### **INTRODUCTION AND PROCEDURE NOTE**

1. The Forum had before it the procedure note and guidance for members on the operation of Forum meetings.

#### **The Forum resolved:-**

to note the procedure note and guidance for members

### **MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 9 FEBRUARY 2023**

2. The Forum had before it the minute of the previous meeting of 9 February 2023, for approval.

#### **The Forum resolved:-**

to approve the minute as a correct record.

### **92-126 JOHN STREET ABERDEEN - 221511**

3. The Forum had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning, on a submission of a Proposal of Application Notice by Levelling Up Real Estate for a proposed major residential or quasi-residential (sui generis) use - potentially flats, build to rent private rented accommodation, student housing, serviced apartments or a mix of these plus supporting facilities and infrastructure, at 92-126 John Street Aberdeen, planning reference number 221511.

The report advised that the application site comprised a largely vacant plot of land at the western end of John Street, adjacent to the Woolmanhill Halls of Residence of Robert Gordon University. The site was previously occupied by now demolished tenement buildings, with commercial uses at ground floor and the former Ambassador Snooker Club. The site did not include the Lumsden Security Locksmith premises sited at the end of John Street. There was also a smaller separate part of the site adjacent to the turning area to the south of Woolmanhill Halls of Residence and the Inverness railway line, which sits at a lower level.

The surrounding area contained a mix of uses, with residential flats of mainly four storeys in height to the north and east, Woolmanhill Halls of Residence to the west (five storeys) and the Sandman Hotel located to the south. The southern edge of the

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application site borders the northern edge of the City Centre Conservation Area, but the site was largely out with it. The application site lies adjacent to the City Centre boundary as defined within the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, the northern boundary of which is defined by the northern edge of the John Street roadway.

The report also indicated that the Proposal of Application Notice was submitted on the 14 December 2022, with the content of the document agreed with the Planning Service on the 4 January 2023. The first public consultation event was undertaken by the applicant's agents on 8 February 2023 within the Aberdeen Central Library Committee Room with the second consultation event taking place shortly afterwards. The details and results of this public consultation would require to be the subject of a Pre-Application Consultation Report to form part of any subsequent planning application.

The Committee heard from Mr Gavin Clark, Senior Planner, who addressed the Forum and provided details regarding the planning aspects of the application.

Mr Clark provided details on the relevant planning policies noting that the following policies were relevant to the proposed application:-

### Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

- WB2: Air Quality
- WB3: Noise
- D1: Quality Placemaking
- D2: Amenity
- D3: Big Buildings
- D4: Landscape
- D6: Historic Environment •
- R2: Degraded and Contaminated Land
- R5: Waste Management Requirements for New Development
- R6: Low and Zero Carbon Buildings, and Water Efficiency
- H2: Mixed Use Areas
- H3: Density
- H4: Housing Mix and Need
- H5: Affordable Housing
- H7: Student Accommodation Developments
- I1: Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations
- T2: Sustainable Transport
- T3: Parking
- CI1: Digital Infrastructure

The Forum then heard from Mr Steve Crawford and Mr Richard Woods, Halliday Fraser Munro, agents for the application. Mr Gordon Pirie and Mr Paul Gee, Levelling Up Real Estate were also present to answer questions from members.

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Mr Crawford began the presentation and advised that the site was the largest brownfield site in Aberdeen City Centre and the site had been vacant since 2014 and was in need of redevelopment to activate the street. Mr Crawford advised that in regards to National Planning Framework 4 and the Local Development Plan, there was an aim to reuse brownfield land and compact urban growth, to have local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods and to create sustainable places.

Mr Crawford explained that two previous consents for the site had not been implemented and they were for a proposal for 5–8 storey student accommodation with 374 beds and also a 5 storey hotel with 182 beds.

Mr Crawford provided details on the consultation events held and noted that since feedback was received they had made amendments to the application. The changes were namely:-

- The height of the northern section of the building –reduced storeys to the rear from the original proposal;
- In terms of car parking –this would now be limited;
- Bird management would be incorporated;
- Boundary treatments –1.8m boundary proposed to the north;
- Proximity to existing buildings –the proposal was slightly further away than previous consents;
- There would be no public access to the roof; and
- In relation to a mix of uses, the application had now moved away from a mix of private rented accommodation to solely student housing.

In terms of the project overview, Mr Crawford advised that the proposal was for student accommodation with 383 bedrooms, would be professionally managed with communal facilities including a TV/cinema room, study rooms, laundry rooms and reception desk. The building would be 4 to 7 storeys in height with a central private courtyard and landscaped grounds. Seven parking spaces would be allocated for disabled parking and also staff with 140 cycle spaces on offer. The development would also be energy efficient and a low carbon development.

Mr Woods then provided details on the design principles and highlighted the character of the local area and how the development would blend in with the local street scape. The upper levels of the development would be set back and would also incorporate distinct window groupings. There would also be a high reader element to compliment the Denburn View. Mr Woods also provided details in regards to the massing of the proposed buildings and elevation context.

Members then asked a number of questions of both the applicant and the case officer and the following information was noted:-

- Members queried if further cycle spaces could be added to the proposed development;
- Fibre broadband would be installed inside of the building;

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- The rooms would differ in size and there would be various options available to students, taking into consideration differing budgets for students. Some rooms would have en-suite facilities with more affordable options having shared bathroom facilities. All rooms would comply with technical standards;
- The tallest aspect of the building would be seven storey in height;
- In regards to accessibility, lifts would be available to all levels of the building;
- Discussions were ongoing with both of the Universities in the city and discussions had been very positive, with both welcoming the proposed development;
- In terms of overshadowing to the surrounding buildings and properties, it was noted that a number of analysis had been undertaken and would be within the guidelines;
- It was proposed that there would be two accessible parking spaces in the courtyard with seven spaces overall and after discussions with Road Development Management they were satisfied with this figure for the proposed development;
- In relation to disabled access units, 5% of the rooms would be fully accessible;
- At the back of the development, the height would be five storey high;
- In terms of student safety, there would be one single point of access and the courtyard entrances would be enclosed;
- The developer had been in consultation with Aberdeen Heat and Power and all facilities would be electric;
- In terms of only having a single point of access, the applicant indicated they would investigate this in regards to deliveries and loading bays;
- The applicant would discuss lighting with the mechanical engineer to look at accent lighting to tie in with the surrounding buildings; and
- It was noted that there would be one electric charging point and also wiring installed for future should further electric charging points be required.

### **The report recommended:-**

that the Forum –

- (a) note the key issues identified;
- (b) if necessary, seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- (c) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicant to consider and address in any future application.

### **The Forum resolved:-**

- (i) to thank Mr Crawford and Mr Woods for their informative presentation as well as Mr Pirie and Mr Gee for answering questions in relation to the proposed application; and
  - (ii) to request that the applicant consider the points raised above.
- **COUNCILLOR DESMOND BOUSE, Convener**

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