

PRE-APPLICATION FORUM

119 CONSTITUTION STREET, ABERDEEN

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING AND ERECTION OF STUDENT HOUSING AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES AND ANCILLARY WORKS

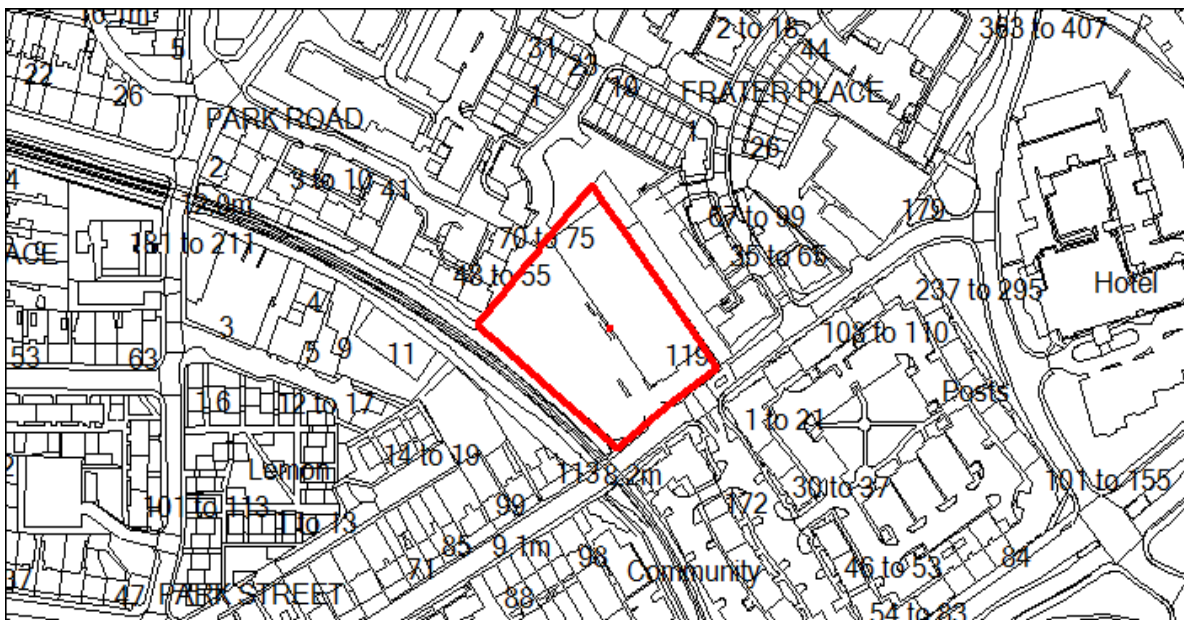
For: Unite Group Plc

Application Ref. : P141750

Officer: Lucy Greene

Pre-Application Forum Date: 26th January 2015

Ward : George Street/Harbour (A May/J Morrison/N Morrison)



SUMMARY

This is a report to the pre-application forum on a potential application by the Unite Group Plc for a major development to develop student accommodation consisting of approximately 600-700 bedrooms.

In accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended, the applicant submitted a Proposal of Application Notice on the 3rd December 2014. The earliest date at which an application can be submitted is the 26th February 2015.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Forum (i) note the key issues identified; (ii) if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and (iii) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

DESCRIPTION

The site that is the subject of this Proposal of Application Notice is the land currently occupied by Matalan, a discount retailer. It is on the north side of Constitution Street and is bounded by the railway to the west and by residential properties to the east and north.

The site is approximately 0.65 hectares in size and contains a large warehouse type building that dates from the 1980s. The building is double storey height and of no architectural merit. The remainder of the site is hard surfaced and in use as the car park.

There are the remains of granite walls around the perimeter of the site, including along the heel of the pavement on Constitution Street.

Near to the railway on the street frontage is a World War 1 war memorial to the former workers from the granite works that was located on the site from around 1830 until around 1941.

Immediately adjacent to the site are the following:

To the east: flatted development of four, five and six storeys in height, elevated in sand / beige coloured brick, with decked parking to the rear.

To the north, flatted development of three and four storeys in height, elevated in render, and sand / beige brick

To the west: the railway, within a cutting, and west of that, granite houses and flats of one and a half and two and a half storeys.

To the south, on the opposite side of Constitution Street, flatted development of four storeys, the lower level accommodation being partially below street level.

RELEVANT HISTORY

None

PROPOSAL

The proposal is for student accommodation on the site. The accommodation would be in the form of student flats of varying sizes and the exact mix is undetermined at this point. The applicants have indicated that 600 – 700 bedrooms would be provided.

The massing of the proposal has evolved through discussions with the planning authority. At the time of writing this report the latest proposal is for a mix of four, five and six storey buildings around the perimeter of the site. The six storey elements would be concentrated along the Constitution Street (south side) and railway (west) sides of the site. With the upper levels being indicated as being set back from the front of the elevation, with the aim being that the upper level set back reducing the height of the elevation as 'read' from the street.

A site plan mapping the ground levels and roof levels of the buildings surrounding the site has been produced. This shows the relationships of the indicative proposed buildings, with those existing. These mostly correspond with adjacent buildings, other than on the Constitution Street frontage. The southern block of the proposed buildings is currently indicated as a mix of four, five and six storeys. The six storey elements are indicated as being a maximum of just over 24m above ordnance datum (AOD) as opposed to the buildings opposite, at approximately 17.5m AOD, a difference of 6.5m between those elements. This will be further described verbally at the Forum, with images to illustrate.

CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations against which the eventual application would be assessed are outlined as follows:

Visual and Residential Amenity

The site is zoned within the Residential Area under Policy H1. The proposed use is for student residences and would normally be considered compatible with 'mainstream' houses or flats.

In terms of this policy the considerations would be:

- Whether the proposal constitutes over-development
- Whether the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the character or amenity of the surrounding area;
- Whether the use would be considered complementary to the residential use.

Design

Under Policy D1 – Architecture and Placemaking, new development must be designed with due consideration for its context and make a positive contribution to its setting.

Relevant factors are:

Siting, scale, massing, colour, materials, orientation, details, proportions of building elements, spaces around buildings, including streets, squares, open space, landscaping and boundary treatments.

Policy D2 – Design And Amenity, applies the following principles:

- Privacy to be designed into higher density housing
- Residential development to have a public face to a street and a private face to an enclosed garden or court
- All residents to have access to sitting out areas, including balconies, private gardens, terraces, communal gardens or other
- Parking must not dominate the space – as a guideline no more than 50% of any court should be taken up by parking spaces and access roads. Underground or decked parking will be expected in high density schemes.
- Individual flats shall be designed to make the most of opportunities for views and sunlight.
- Design proposals shall include measures to design out crime and design in safety.
- External lighting to take account of residential amenity

Drawing together the issues raised by all of the above, the key considerations are as follows:

Amenity space

The level of amenity space to be provided for any future student residents is a key issue. The level of outside amenity space has inter-relationships with both the level of car parking and the number of bedrooms to be provided and commensurate floorspace.

The latest iteration of the design shows car parking within the courtyard and Roads Officers have indicated that the parking standards should apply, at 1 space per 10 rooms, plus 1 space per resident staff member. The most recent discussions indicated the provision of amenity space on roof tops (managed to protect the amenity of existing local residents). Other than this, there would be a landscaped linear area between the pavement and building frontage on Constitution Street.

Possible options for increasing the level of amenity space:

- to incorporate areas of decking with parking underneath and amenity space on the decking. These would need to be appropriately located in relation to sunlighting.
- to reduce the extent of perimeter block to provide an area of garden. The location in relation to sunlight would need to be considered and optimum size of amenity area, to encourage use by students.
- increasing the width of the linear area along the street frontage.

These options have been discussed with the applicant.

Scale, massing and height

Scale, massing and height of development proposed in the context of the surrounding physical form. It should be noted that the physical form of the building has been through several iterations.

Members may wish to consider the relative height of the surrounding blocks and the greatest differences are on Constitution Street, with the 5 and 6 storey elements being higher than development to the south, but not significantly different to some of the development to the east.

Daylighting and Privacy

The applicant has stated the intention to submit a daylighting and sunlighting study with the application. Indications are that there would likely be an acceptable impact in terms of the methods of assessment used for domestic properties.

In terms of privacy, the 'rule of thumb' distance would be achievable between properties.

Parking and Transportation

Policy T2 and Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance, as well as initial comments from Roads Officers indicate that:

The guidelines for vehicle parking would be 1 per 10 students plus 1 per resident staff member. The minimum cycle parking required would be 1 per 3 students. A Transport Statement and a site specific Travel plan would be required.

It may be that the local area will need infrastructure improvements to encourage sustainable transport modal use, This would have to be investigated through the Transport Statement.

Under the current Strategic Transport Fund guidelines no contribution would be required.

A drainage impact assessment for the site would be required.

Contaminated Land

Policy R2 – Degraded and Contaminated Land

The site has been occupied by industrial uses in the past and there could be conditions attached to any approval in relation to contaminated land.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The Proposal of Application Notice application detailed the level of consultation to be undertaken as part of the Pre-Application Consultation process. Consultation with the local community council: Castlehill and Pittodrie, has been proposed within the Proposal of Application Notice. A public consultation will be held on 27th January at Beach Ballroom, which will be advertised in the local press.

CONCLUSION

This report highlights the main issues that are likely to arise in relation to the various key considerations of the proposed development. It is not an exhaustive list and further matters may arise when the subsequent application is submitted. Consultees will have the opportunity to make representations to the proposals during the formal application process.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum (i) note the key issues identified; (ii) if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and (iii) identify issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.

