

Pre-Application Forum

ADDRESS: UNION SQUARE, GUILD STREET, ABERDEEN

DESCRIPTION: EXTENSION TO UNION SQUARE SHOPPING CENTRE TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL MIXED USE FLOORSPACE, POTENTIALLY INCLUDING: RETAIL, LEISURE, HOTEL, AND CATERING USES; CAR PARKING AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE - MAJOR DEVELOPMENT CATEGORY (THE GROSS FLOOR SPACE OF ANY BUILDING, STRUCTURE OR ERECTION CONSTRUCTED EXCEEDS 5000 SQUARE METRES).

FOR: UNION SQUARE DEVELOPMENTS LTD

REFERENCE NO: P151362

OFFICER: KRISTIAN SMITH

PRE-APPLICATION FORUM DATE: 29 OCTOBER 2015

WARD: TORRY/ FERRYHILL (Y ALLAN/A DONNELLY/J KIDDIE/G DICKSON)



SUMMARY:

This is a report to the pre-application forum on a potential application by Union Square Developments Ltd for the extension of the Union Square shopping and leisure centre. As well as shopping and leisure related uses, there is also potential that any future proposals would include hotel and restaurant uses, car parking and other associated infrastructure. Although the description indicates

that the gross floor area of the proposals would exceed 5,000m² (the threshold for major developments of this type), it is understood from ongoing discussions with the applicants/ agents that the total is likely to be significantly in excess of this figure.

In accordance with the provisions of the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended, the applicant submitted a Proposal of Application Notice on 18th August 2015. The earliest date at which an application can be submitted is 10th November 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, as identified in the Proposal of Application Notice submission, comprises the entirety of the existing Union Square centre and associated car parking and service areas, as well as areas of adjacent land. These areas of adjacent land include, but are not limited to: the pedestrian/ vehicular/ taxi access off Guild Street to the rail station; ticketing hall and offices associated to the rail station; Aberdeen Bus Station; and, properties fronting both Palmerston Road and Market Street, both immediately adjacent to the access/exits to the existing Union Square surface car park.

In general terms the site is bounded by: Aberdeen Rail Station and associated rail tracks to the west; Guild Street to the North; buildings fronting both Guild Street and Market Street, on the corner/ junction of these two streets, to the North-East; Market Street, and beyond Aberdeen Harbour, to the East; buildings fronting both Market Street and Palmerston Road, on the corner/ junction of these two streets, to the South-East; and, Palmerston Road, and the 'North Dee' area beyond, to the South.

The Union Street Conservation Area is immediately to the North of the site, and there are a number of listed buildings also adjacent, including: the 'A' listed Rail Station and Roadway Overbridge; the 'B' listed Station Hotel; the 'A' listed Tivoli Theatre; and 'C' listed Railway Viaduct and Arches.

RELEVANT HISTORY

Planning permission was granted for the development of Union Square in October 2000 (Ref: 982204), with the centre opening in October 2008.

Otherwise there have been numerous applications for amendments to the design of the centre its environs, and for matters such as the display of advertisements.

PROPOSAL

The proposal of application notice (PoAN) is for the extension of the existing Union Square centre and its associated infrastructure. Potential uses include: retail, leisure, hotel, catering/restaurant facilities, and car parking. The PoAN does not detail any locational, scale, form/ height/ massing or design/ finish matters, or level of car parking proposed for any of the proposals, rather it simply shows the extent of the site.

CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations against which a planning application would be assessed are outlined as follows:

Local Development Plan

Policy C1: City Centre Development – Regional Centre. States that development within the City Centre must contribute towards the delivery of the vision for the city centre as a major regional centre, as expressed in the City Centre Development Framework. As such the city centre is the preferred location for retail, commercial and leisure development serving a city-wide or regional market.

Policy C2: City Centre Business Zone and Union Street. The site forms a small, if significant part of this allocation, which generally runs the length of Union Street, and beyond along Holburn Street to the south-west and north along George Street, and many of the streets surrounding and between. This policy confirms that within this large identified area, at the core of the city, is the preferred locations for major retail developments.

Policy I1: Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions. Seeks to ensure that sufficient infrastructure, services and facilities are available to meet the demands of proposed developments. Where development cannot be absorbed by existing levels of provision, the developer will require to meet or contribute to the cost of providing or improving such infrastructure or facilities. The precise requirements will be agreed with the Council, and other statutory agencies.

Policy T2: Managing the transport Impact of Development. All new developments must demonstrate that sufficient measures have been taken to minimise the traffic generated. In this case a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan will require to be submitted.

Policy D1: Architecture and Placemaking. Seeks high design standards and that consideration be taken of the surrounding context, such that a positive contribution to the setting is made. Landmark of high buildings will require to respect the height and scale of the surroundings, the urban topography, the City's skyline and aim to preserve or enhance important views.

Policy D2: Design and Amenity. Seeks to ensure appropriate levels of amenity, through a number of measures, including: that parking does not dominate spaces; safety should be designed in and crime designed out; any external

lighting should minimise light spillage and impacts on amenity; and, development deemed to have an influence on public realm in the City Centre will make an agreed contribution to art or other enhancement of the public realm.

Policy D3: Sustainable and Active Travel. New development shall be designed to minimise travel by private car, improve access and promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging active travel. Modes of transport will be priorities in the following order – walking, cycling, public transport, car and other motorised vehicles.

Policy BI4: Aberdeen Harbour. Due regard will require to be paid to the safety, amenity impacts on and efficiency of uses in the vicinity of the Harbour.

Policy RT1: Sequential Approach and Retail Impact. Indicates that the site, as falling with the wider identified 'Regional Centre' allocation, sits within a wider area at the apex of sequential priority for all retail, commercial, leisure and other development appropriate to town centres. Although even in such locations, proposals must not detract significantly from the vitality or viability of any first to fourth tier retail location listed in the Supplementary Guidance: Hierarchy of Retail Centres. These include the wider city centre. Given the location and scale of development proposed, in this case a Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) may be required to quantify such impacts.

Policy NE6: Flooding and Drainage. Development which would: increase the risk of flooding; be itself at risk of flooding; does not make adequate provision for maintenance access to waterbodies; require new levels of flood defence damaging to natural heritage interests associated to watercourses, will not be permitted. A Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) will be required, and demonstrate SuDS principles and that flooding and pollution will be avoided both during and after construction.

Policy NE9: Access and Informal Recreation. Where appropriate, developments should include new or improved provision for public access, permeability and/ or links to green space for recreation and active travel.

Policy NE10: Air Quality. Development which has the potential to have a detrimental impact on air quality will not be permitted unless measures to mitigate the impact of air pollutants are proposed and agreed. Supporting information in relation to Air Quality, as per the relevant Supplementary Guidance will be required.

Policy R2: Degraded or Contaminated Land. Confirmation that the proposed works will not result in any risks, particularly during the construction phase may be required.

Policy R6: Waste Management Requirements for New Development. Recycling facilities may be required to serve the needs of the development. Otherwise details of storage facilities and means by which waste shall be collected must be included in support of any planning application.

Policy R7: Low and Zero Carbon Buildings. Proposals for new buildings will require to demonstrate, through the submission of a low carbon development statement, that low and zero-carbon generating technology has been utilised in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to the required level – as set out in the related Supplementary Guidance.

Other Material Considerations

City Centre Development Framework (DF): The 'Vision' seeks to "ensure that the right projects will be developed in the right places and in appropriate ways to ensure the social, economic and environmental futures of the City Centre will thrive. The Framework will ensure that the City Centre becomes a successful place that encourages liveliness, diversity and activity to leave a positive legacy of the first half of the 21st Century". The DF also seeks to: "complement and enhance Aberdeen's unique identity.....ensure future development understands the existing context.....complement the wealth of urban design.....celebrate the architectural quality present in the city centre; and ensure a co-ordinated and integrated approach to future development."

City Centre Master Plan (CCMP). The CCMP Community Strategy, under the heading of 'Improving the retail Environment' identifies Union Square as "Project CM12 Union Square: It is recognised that there exists scope to expand the shopping centre but that this should respond positively to its wider urban context and promote stronger linkages between the river Dee and city centre core." In addition, within the narrative relating to the 'North Dee' Intervention Area the importance of linkages between this area through an expanded Union Square is noted. The Transport Improvements section states "a transformational alteration in travel behaviour away from the private car towards walking, cycling and public transport, along with improvements to make these transport modes more attractive, is necessary." Delivery of the Union Square project is noted as being within the first 5 years. The total Retail and Leisure across all 49 projects identified in the CCMP is noted as being 66,960m², the percentage of this total associated to this project is presently unspecified but will require to be considered in this context.

Draft Aberdeen Local Development Plan. The Proposed ALDP was approved at the meeting of the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee of 28 October 2014. It constitutes the Council's settled view as to what should be the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, along with the adopted ALDP. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the Proposed ALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on whether:

- these matters have been subject to public consultation through the Main Issues Report; and
- the level of objection raised in relation these matters as part of the Main Issues Report; and
- the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration.

The foregoing can only be assessed on a case by case basis. In relation to this particular pre-application submission, the policies in the main reiterate those within the extant local development, as there are no substantive material changes between the two plans.

Summary of Considerations

Given the limited information within the PoAN submission it is difficult to be specific, however, taking account of the above the following themes are identified:

Alignment with vision for the city centre as a major regional centre, as given context within the narrative of both the City Centre Development framework, the City Centre master Plan and the Development Plan policies.

Capacity of Existing Infrastructure and need for any enhancements.
Transportation Impacts, particularly car trip generation.
Potential for Air Quality Impacts.

Design Quality (including sustainable design measures) and Amenity considerations, including relationship with surrounding existing development, such as the harbour, rail and bus stations, and wider city centre.
Impact of the retail patterns and function of the wider City Centre.
Drainage, Contamination and Waste Management issues.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The proposal of application notice details the level of consultation which was to be undertaken, and supplementation of this was requested by the Planning Authority. Overall the consultation comprised:

An invitee only stakeholder preview meeting on the evening of Thursday 10th September 2015;

A public exhibition within the Union Square main atrium on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th September (c.10hrs in duration), this event was to be extensively promoted;

Briefings were to be held with both the Castlehill and Pitoddrie and neighbouring Ferryhill and Ruthrieston Community Councils.

A dedicated web and freepost address was to be set up to inform and allow comments to be gathered on the project.

Copies of the PoAN were issued to both: Ward 12 (Torry/ Ferryhill) and the adjacent Ward 8 (George Street/ Harbour) councillors, as well as the Lord Provost, Leader and Depute Leader of the Council.

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.