

PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM

ABERDEEN, 16 March 2017 Minute of Meeting of the PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM.
Present:- Councillor Milne, Convener; Councillor Finlayson, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Boulton, Cooney, Corall, Donnelly, Greig, Hutchison, Jean Morrison MBE and Sandy Stuart.

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 8 DECEMBER 2016

2. The Forum had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 8 December 2016 for approval.

The Forum resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

LAND WEST OF RGU CAMPUS, GARTHDEE ROAD - 170054

3. The Forum had before it a report by the Interim Head of Planning and Sustainable Development on a submission of a Proposal of Application Notice (PoAN) by Manson Architects on behalf of their client, Garthdee Properties Ltd, for a proposed major development for approximately 500 accommodation units with associated uses at Land West of Robert Gordon University Campus, Garthdee Road, Aberdeen – 170054.

The report advised that the site extends to 1.48 hectares and is located within the Pitfodels Conservation Area. It is bound by Garthdee Road to the north, Norwood Hall Hotel and the associated grounds/woodland to the west and south, and the Robert Gordon University Garthdee Campus and Gray's School of Art to the east. It was noted that the proposed development could comprise 500 units of accommodation with associated uses and the red line boundary indicates that potential connections could be made to Garthdee Road to the north of the site, and to the east through the existing RGU campus. The report also highlighted that the site is zoned as Green Belt within the recently adopted Local Development Plan and the suitability of this edge of settlement site for a development of student accommodation, and its relationship with adjoining uses, would be examined.

The Forum heard from Mr Ross Manson (Manson Architects) and Steve Keenan (Garthdee Properties Ltd) in regards to the proposed application. Mr Keenan advised that he had previously attempted to buy the five acre site however for various reasons it had not been available. He explained that the site was adjacent to the RGU campus and although it sat on a Green Belt site, there were many positive aspects to the

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proposed application. Mr Keenan advised that (a) it would be an advantage to students to have accommodation on the campus of RGU, (b) they were aiming the accommodation at international students, (c) they wanted to make the accommodation demographically and economically attractive and (d) they were in early talks with RGU in regards to the application.

Mr Manson advised that in regards to the application, the site was selected in order to create a place beside the university that would be hugely beneficial, and enhance both the university and campus. Mr Manson highlighted that by having student accommodation in Garthdee, it would reduce the need for students living in HMO's and in family homes. He also advised that they contacted neighbouring properties who intimated that they would like to see a world renowned student accommodation provided. Mr Manson also showed various slides which highlighted other universities in various other countries, who offered a campus with student accommodation attached.

The Forum then heard from Paul Williamson, Case Officer, who addressed the Forum and provided details regarding the planning aspects of the application and responded to questions from members. Mr Williamson explained that the identified site is largely bound by trees and woodland, some of which is covered by a Tree Preservation Order, with the remaining area grassed. He also indicated that the pre application consultation event was scheduled for Wednesday 27 April between 12-8pm in Inchgarth Community Centre. In regards to the application, Mr Williamson highlighted the main issues associated with the proposed application, namely:-

- The principle of the development given its location within the Green Belt;
- The linkages with the former RGU Garthdee Development Framework;
- The design and layout of the proposal together with any necessary infrastructure such as drainage;
- The ultimate access solution, and any potential transportation impact; and
- Any potential impact on the Historic or Natural Environment;

Members then asked a number of questions in regards to the proposals and the following information was noted:-

- ❖ The accommodation could only be occupied by students and not for individuals after completing their studies;
- ❖ The design would be done as a modern design to compliment the futuristic buildings at RGU, to make it look like an extension of the campus;
- ❖ The applicant was investigating the possibility of having a student from the university to work alongside the team, for a secondment opportunity;
- ❖ 90% of the trees would remain;
- ❖ Amenities would include cinema rooms, a gym, a multi faith room and the use of high speed Wi-Fi;
- ❖ The development would be a zero car scheme, except for disabled parking spaces, a car club space and staff parking;

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- ❖ A lot of student accommodation within the city centre is no longer fit for purpose and this development would help with that;
- ❖ The development would consist of two connected blocks;
- ❖ A swept path analysis would be required to show the vehicles coming off of Garthdee Road and into the site;
- ❖ Cycle storage would be included, which would amount to one space for every three students.

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 request that the applicant look at the possibility of providing car spaces for students who may have to travel to a secondment/placement;
- (ii) to request that the applicant consider looking at a safe link to the old railway line for students to use; and
- (iii) to thank Mr Manson and Mr Keenan for their informative presentation.

- COUNCILLOR RAMSAY MILNE, Convener.

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