



Ref: A070056/TH/th
Date: 04 February 2019

FAO: Caroline Townley
Head of Planning Services
Planning Services
Gloucester City Council
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Dear Sir/Madam,

**PROPOSED EMPLOYMENT, DIY RETAIL WAREHOUSE, HOTEL, RESTAURANT/PUB,
AND DRIVE THRU RESTAURANT
FORMER INTERBREW SITE, EASTERN AVENUE, GLOUCESTER
APPLICATION REFERENCE: 18/01444/FUL**

Introduction

We write jointly on behalf of Peel Land & Property Investments Plc and Gloucester Quays LLP, with regard to the above proposals submitted on behalf of Paloma Capital at the former Interbrew site, Eastern Avenue Gloucester.

As officers will be aware, despite the economic climate, Peel and Gloucester Quays LLP continue to invest heavily in the city, delivering substantial job numbers and economic development to the area. Notwithstanding this significant investment there is still much more to be done in the Docks/Quays area and along the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Both Peel and Gloucester Quays LLP remain committed to ensuring that it meets its full potential, thereby maximising the number of visitors and shoppers attracted into Central Gloucester.

Planning permissions were granted in 2017 for the redevelopment of the former Cineworld cinema building and two A3 units at the Peel Centre to provide 9,518sq m gross Class A1 retail floorspace within four new Class A1 retail warehouse units. Phase 1, which has involved the demolition of the two A3 units and erection of a Next Home and Fashion store, is nearing completion with the new flagship store due to open in March this year. Phase 2 involves the conversion and extension of the former cinema building into A1 retail warehousing totalling 5,303sq m gross retail floorspace. Phase 2 and the completion of the development is subject to securing an occupier/s for the floorspace.

The Peel Centre also currently contains a significant vacant unit following the closure of the Toys R Us store (Unit 1 (4,944sq m gross)). Unit 4B (836sq m gross), previously occupied by Pine Warehouse, is also currently vacant. The existing vacant units, together with the Phase 2 cinema conversion/extension permitted retail floorspace, provide a total of 11,083sq m gross of retail floorspace. All the units/floorspace are currently being marketed by Peel and their commercial agents.

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Application of the Sequential Approach for Out-of-Centre Sites

Paragraphs 86 and 87 of The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are highly relevant in the determination of the planning application at Eastern Avenue. It requires Local Planning Authorities to apply the sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan, and in doing so, when considering out-of-centre sites, to give preference to out-of-centre sites that are well connected to the town centre.

The Paloma Capital proposals on the former Interbrew site include a 4,600sq m gross DIY store with 1,500sq m gross garden centre. The site is well out-of-centre, being some 1.7km (1.1miles) from the city centre's Primary Shopping Area (PSA), with no connections to the City Centre. It is unable to offer any prospect of linked walking trips or connection with the City Centre.

In contrast, the Peel Centre is located adjacent to the defined City Centre boundary and just circa 750 metres walking distance from the City Centre's defined primary shopping area. It is served by a choice of means of transport and even more importantly it benefits from an attractive, active, accessible, legible and well-trodden pedestrian link/route through the Historic Docks into the primary shopping area.

In accordance with paragraph 87 of the NPPF, the Peel Centre, is clearly well connected to the City Centre and is therefore a sequentially preferable out-of-centre retail location to the former Interbrew site on Eastern Avenue.

It is therefore not surprising to see that that both the Planning Policy Team Leader at the Council (Adam Gooch) and the Council's retail planning consultants (GVA/Avison Young), in considering other out-of-centre retail and leisure planning applications, recognise and agree that the Peel Centre is a sequentially preferable out-of-centre site in Gloucester. Accordingly, there is a requirement for vacant units and unimplemented planning permissions at the retail park to be duly considered as part of a supporting sequential approach assessment.

The supporting Retail Sequential Assessment (dated November 2018) prepared by JLL on behalf of Paloma Capital incorrectly states that the Interbrew application site is "*sequentially equal*" to the Peel Centre. This is clearly wrong - the Peel Centre is a sequentially preferable site.

The Peel Centre

Paragraph 86 of the NPPF identifies that a site/unit is considered to be available if it is either available or expected to become available within a reasonable period.

Unit 1 (former Toys R Us unit) and Unit 4B (former Pine Warehouse unit) are currently vacant and immediately available. Unit 1 measures 4,944sq m gross which is very similar in size to the proposed DIY store (4,600sq m gross). Planning permission could easily and quickly be sought for alterations to the unit to accommodate the garden centre and additional floorspace at mezzanine level.

Furthermore, Phase 2 of the cinema building retail conversion/extension (5,303sq m gross) also involves a similar level of floorspace to the proposed DIY store and garden centre. Phase 2 could accommodate any combination of retail (or leisure) unit sizes above 929sq m. Again, planning permission for a garden centre and required external elevation alterations could be obtained quickly and within a reasonable period.



The evidence is clear that a number of retail (or leisure) units at the sequentially preferable Peel Centre are suitable for the proposed development and are available or can be available within a reasonable period. Accordingly, the proposed development at the former Interbrew site fails the sequential approach retail policy test and; under paragraph 90 of the NPPF there is therefore a presumption of refusal.

Impact on Key City Gateway Site & Council's Policy Aspirations for Canal-side

As previously recognised by the Council, the Peel Centre is a considerable asset to the city and following the completion of St Ann Way bridge is a key city gateway site, with the existing cinema building being especially prominent from the bridge crossing and the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal itself. There is a real prospect that the cinema building will remain vacant for the foreseeable future, if it is not given preference to other out-of-centre retail/leisure parks which unlike the Peel Centre do not have connections with the City Centre. As a result, the remainder of the Peel Centre is likely to suffer and the established linked trips from the Peel Centre to the City Centre and associated knock on benefits will diminish.

Officers will recall that the approved proposals for conversion of the cinema to retail were considered to be key in improving this part of the public realm canal side corridor and helping to meet the Council's policy aspirations of enhancing access and the public realm along the length of the canal. If Phase 2 of the proposals cannot proceed due to lack of occupiers, which will be more likely if further retail and leisure proposals are approved at out-of-centre locations which are less sequentially preferable, then this in turn will have a significant harmful impact on the Council's policy aspirations for the canal-side.

Concluding Remarks

We trust you will consider the contents of this letter carefully. The proposals clearly do not comply with the sequential test under paragraph 86 of the NPPF and will prejudice the re-occupation of existing and proposed units/space at the sequentially preferable Peel Centre. There is therefore no sound basis on which to approve the planning application.

Yours faithfully



Director