



PLANNING COMMITTEE

- MEETING** : Tuesday, 1st March 2022
- PRESENT** : Cllrs. Taylor (Chair), Morgan (Vice-Chair), Bhaimia, D. Brown, J. Brown, Dee, Melvin, Toleman, Tracey and Sawyer

Officers in Attendance

Planning Development Manager
Principal Planning Officer
Locum Planning Solicitor, GS Legal Services Ltd
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Vice-Chancellor, University of Gloucestershire

- APOLOGIES** : Cllrs. Conder and Finnegan

59. MINUTES

RESOLVED that: - the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 February 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Melvin declared an interest in agenda item 5 - (30-44 Northgate Street (Former Debenhams), 21/01323/FUL).

61. LATE MATERIAL

Late material had been circulated in respect of agenda item 5 – (30-44 Northgate Street (Former Debenhams), 21/01323/FUL).

62. 30-44 NORTHGATE STREET (FORMER DEBENHAMS), GLOUCESTER - 21/01323/FUL

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The Principal Planning Officer presented the report detailing an application for refurbishment works to the exterior of the building and change of use to create circa 20,000sqm of use class F.1(a), (d) and (e) uses from use class E(a), and associated works of demolition, construction and landscaping.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Gloucestershire spoke in favour of the application.

He stated that the application should be granted on the following grounds:

- The project would be of huge benefit to Gloucester and the University;
- The granting of the application would provide space for the University to grow;
- The University of Gloucestershire wanted to be the communities university. The central location of the application would allow this ambition to be fulfilled;
- Discussions were well advanced with Gloucestershire County Council to provide a new public library on the ground floor of the proposed build;
- The granting of the application would benefit the development of Kings Square;
- The site would house nearly 4,000 students and 350 members of staff;
- The granting of the application would increase the supply of nurses to meet NHS demands;
- Approving the application would bring vibrancy and growth to the City;
- It was an environmentally sustainable project.
- They were happy to accept all the proposed conditions.

The Principal Planning Officer responded to members' questions concerning the replacement windows, whether trees on the Oxbode would be felled, what would happen to the architectural features inside the building with historical value, whether the café proposed would provide hot food, whether there would be green roofs across the entire rooftop, whether there would be a garden on the rooftop, queries about parking for users of the site and construction vehicles, whether the escalators inside the building would be retained and whether the public library proposed on the site would replace the library on Brunswick Road as follows:

- After a long and rigorous consultation, the University had designed the windows to be as close to the original look of the previous windows as possible, whilst providing a more thermally efficient window system. The architect stated that the proposed window design would preserve the look of the windows and that any differences would be minor, if noticeable at all, by non-experts. Furthermore, there was a condition that stipulated that development would only take place in accordance with details, specifications, and samples of window materials.
- There was nothing to indicate that trees would need to be felled on the Oxbode. The tree officer had indicated that there might need to be some minor pruning works but not felling.
- The building was unlisted but was in the conservation area. In practice, that meant the authority had no statutory control over the inside of the premises. The University, however, had conducted a thorough heritage appraisal.
- The applicant had no intention to cook hot food on the site, and the café would provide reheated hot food only. A condition was proposed to address the need for extraction equipment if hot food cooking was introduced later to protect amenity.

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- There would not be green roofs across the entire rooftop. However, the applicant had proposed one for parts of the roof. His view was that the proposals regarding environmental impact were acceptable in policy terms.
- There would not be a garden on the rooftop.
- Five accessible parking spaces for disabled persons would be provided in the service yard of St Aldates yard. Anyone else wishing to use the site would have to park off-site. The highways authority advised that there were no grounds on which to refuse the application due to its impact. Further, the site would be used as a teaching facility and was not a halls of residence, so there was a chance that students using the facility would park at their halls of residence and walk or take alternative transport methods to the campus.
- Construction vehicles would have to be carefully managed by the contractor. The service yard would be the logical first stop for construction vehicles to park.
- The escalators in the building would not be retained. There would be three lifts in the building.
- Whether the library on Brunswick Road would move into the site was not a planning consideration. The application before the Committee included a university library and separately a public library. The library on Brunswick Road was not part of the planning application.

Members' Debate

Councillor Tracey stated that she welcomed the application.

Councillor Bhaimia said that it was an excellent application, that was well located and easily accessible.

Councillor Morgan stated that he commended the University for their vision and for taking the steps to acquire the Debenhams building. He said that he was happy to see that the proposal had been put together quickly. He said that it was important for the City to look forwards, that the application was well thought through, welcomed by people in Gloucester and would provide huge benefits for the City and that he would support the officer's recommendation.

Councillor Toleman stated that he believed that it would have a positive impact on the City and that it would bring many potential customers into the City, which would benefit the retail industry immensely.

Councillor Dee noted that she believed that the refurbishment seemed to be sensitive to the history of the building and would complement the new forum.

Councillor Sawyer stated that when she first found out about the former Debenhams building being up for sale, that she wished that it would become a cultural venue. She added, however that the acquiring of it by the University and the proposal to turn it into a campus was a great second option. She said that she was pleased to see that it would have a café and library and that she liked the design of the build, but would have liked to have seen a green roof across the entire rooftop.

Councillor D.Brown stated that he echoed points made by members before him. He stated that he believed that the frontage onto Kings Square was excellent and that he congratulated all involved in bringing forward the application.

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Councillor Melvin stated that it was a gamechanger for the City of Gloucester. The Chair stated that the application would help to make the City Centre buzz with activity and that he would support the officer's recommendation.

The Chair moved and the Vice-Chair seconded the officer's recommendation to grant the application subject to the conditions outlined in the report as amended in the late material.

RESOLVED that: - planning permission is granted subject to the completion of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution to Travel Plan monitoring; and;
The conditions outlined in the report, as amended in the late material

63. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The schedule of applications determined under delegated powers during the months of December 2021 and January 2022 was noted.

RESOLVED that: - the schedule be noted.

64. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5th April, 2022.

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm

Time of conclusion: 6.54 pm

Chair