

## COMMITTEE REPORT

**Committee:** Planning Committee      **Ward:** Micklegate  
**Date:** 24 July 2008      **Parish:** Micklegate Planning Panel

**Reference:** 08/01067/FULM  
**Application at:** Prudential House 28 - 40 Blossom Street York YO24 1AJ  
**For:** Change of use to 86 bedroom hotel with ground floor restaurant and construction of flat roof third floor and plant room. Alterations to elevations infilling of ground floor colonnade  
**By:** Whitbread And The Blossom Street Venture  
**Application Type:** Major Full Application (13 weeks)  
**Target Date:** 20 August 2008

### 1.0 PROPOSAL

#### Application site

1.1 The host building is of 1960's origin, located between the former Odeon cinema and the working men's club at 22-26 Blossom Street, both of which are Grade II listed buildings. The site is in the Central Historic Core Conservation Area.

1.2 The building has a frontage of approximately 48 metres to Blossom Street and is 3-storeys high at the front elevation (as is the adjacent wmc), it has a recessed ground floor level, concrete clad bay windows which project over the street and a flat roof. The building is generally acknowledged to be of poor materials and construction. It has a car park/service area behind, between itself and the recently built, red brick, 5-storey Meridian House office building.

#### Proposed development

1.3 A change of use to hotel is proposed at the building, which has been vacant since 2007 when the offices were last occupied. The hotel would be occupied by Premier Inn whom wish to add to their premises at 20 Blossom Street. The application site would provide a further 86 bedrooms, of which 65 would provide family accommodation. We are advised that the existing hotel on Blossom Street (which has recently extended, adding 18 bedrooms) attracts high demand and frequently has to turn away potential customers.

1.4 The proposed change of use also involves refurbishment of the front elevation and the insertion of an additional storey on the flat roof, which would be recessed from the front and side building lines and constructed in steel/aluminium windows. The extension would be of similar design to the top floor of Meridian House, the office behind the application site. Refurbishment of the front elevation of the building was approved in 2006 as part of a scheme to upgrade the office accommodation, although the building works are yet to be implemented and a second entrance is now proposed on the front elevation.

1.5 At the rear of the building it is proposed to remove the external fire escape. The hotel would be serviced from the rear, with vehicles accessing the site from The Crescent.

### Relevant planning history

1.6 Planning permission for refurbishment works to the host building were secured at the second attempt in October 2005. The approval was to bring the ground floor level flush with the rest of the building and remove the bay windows. The materials used would be stone coloured render at the base of the building and red brick. Vertical emphasis would be given to the building by changing the window shapes and breaking up the frontage by adding a glazed wall above the entrance and breaking up the brick/stone coloured render with an area of render the full height of the building.

1.7 The unsuccessful application proposed a contemporary finish of terracotta tile cladding across the frontage and retaining windows with a horizontal emphasis. This proposal was rejected by committee in April 2005 as it was considered to be overly intrusive and harmful to the appearance of the conservation area.

## **2.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

Areas of Archaeological Interest City Centre Area 0006  
Conservation Area Central Historic Core 0038  
City Boundary York City Boundary 0001  
DC Area Teams Central Area 0002  
Listed Buildings Grade 2; 22-26 Blossom Street York YO2 2AJ 0412

2.2 Policies:

CYHE2	Development in historic locations
CYHE3	Conservation Areas
CYE3B	Existing and Proposed Employment Sites
CYV3	Criteria for hotels and guest houses
CYT4	Cycle parking standards

## **3.0 CONSULTATIONS**

Internal

### Design, Conservation and Sustainable Development

3.1 Confirm that in terms of the physical changes proposed, the scheme is almost identical to that approved under 05/02212/FUL. The only visible change appears to be the substitution of doors to the ground floor in place of a window to create an addition entrance. The revised drawing received 23 June 2008 also shows the creation of a fascia above the original entrance doors within the glass tower. Neither change is felt to be substantially different from the approved scheme and will therefore preserve the character of the conservation area.

3.2 The materials have been specified and in principle appear to be acceptable. If the application is approved it is asked that samples should be conditioned as per 05/02212/FUL (details of where different materials meet on the building and integrate).

#### Economic Development Unit

3.3 Concern over the loss of substantial office space close to the city centre. The reports state that 270 people could be employed in the building as office space, whereas the hotel would employ around 50 people directly, 25 indirectly.

3.4 The planning process, if minded to approve the application, must be confident that there is sufficient supply of employment land to meet the cities immediate and long-term land requirements in both quantitative terms and qualitative terms.

3.5 Also not convinced that another budget hotel is necessary in the city.

#### Highway Network Management

3.6 Advise that the site currently has 9 car spaces, which are proposed to remain unchanged as part of the development proposals. And on street parking in the area is controlled/protected by various Traffic Regulation Orders.

3.7 The site is located immediately adjacent to the city centre and is served by a number of frequent bus services from stops in the vicinity of the site. Walking distances to local facilities, public car parking and the train station are within guidance set out at a national level.

3.8 Cycle parking has been indicated however no details have been provided of the type of facility and the spaces do not appear to be covered as such a suitably worded condition is recommended to secure this detail.

3.9 Given the existing use of the site and the proximity to public car parking facilities and public transport the scheme is considered to have no material impact on the surrounding highway. No objections are raised but the following conditions are suggested if permission were to be granted

- A method of works statement identifying the programming and management of construction works shall be approved in writing by the LPA
- Requirement for a travel plan to be approved by the Local Planning Authority.

External

#### Planning Panel

3.10 No objection. Ask that the materials are sympathetic with the street, brick and artificial stone would be acceptable.

#### English Heritage

3.11 Do not wish to comment on the proposal.

### Safer York Partnership

3.12 Suggest that vehicle access to the hotel is controlled, for example through using a secure barrier, glazing (in particular around the entrance) should be of resilient, to prevent damage, and that barriers should be placed at the entrance, to stop children running onto the street.

### Visit York

3.13 Support the proposal as the hotel would be in a sustainable location near transport links; it would also provide accommodation for families and could potentially lead to the creation of around 75 jobs (considering the multiplier effect).

### Yorkshire Water

3.14 No observations/objections.

### Publicity

3.15 The application was publicised by site notice, press notice and letters of neighbour notification. The deadline for comments was 2.7.08. One letter of support has been received from Jarvis whom occupy the offices behind the application site.

## **4.0 APPRAISAL**

### Key issues

- The loss of office space
- Principle of the proposed use
- Visual impact, considering the character and appearance of the conservation area
- Sustainability
- Highway safety

### The loss of office space

4.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the Yorkshire and Humber 2008 (RSS) in policy E3 advises that plans/policies should direct development towards centres, by making use of appropriately located previously developed land and current locations. Sufficient land and premises in sustainable locations to meet the needs of a modern economy should be available. The amount of land required should take account of the projected growth, as set out in the RSS (see 4.2), be informed by local employment land reviews, which should monitor and review employment sites and provide a range and choice of employment land, sites and premises. The RSS recognises that uses such as tourism can also generate employment. Policy E5 advises that where considered necessary local policy should protect employment sites from falling into other uses when a review of employment land has been carried out and sites are deemed worthy of retention in employment use. This approach is required to provide local job opportunities and reduce people's need to travel to work.

4.2 The RSS sets out the potential annual job growth in the region from different land uses as of 2006. For York it advises that 480 jobs each year will be in B1 uses, i.e. offices/business whereas 450 jobs will be in retail and leisure.

4.3 Stage 1 of City of York Council's Employment Land Review (ELR) was released in 2007. Stage 1 reports the current situation and future economic prospects for York. The second part of the study will identify sites to meet the demand for employment land and may include a further land review. It is set to be completed by the end of 2008. The ELR advises there is demand for between 12,500 to 15,000 sq m of (mainly high quality) office space per year. This could rise if high quality sites were available within the city centre. The review advises there is a shortage of high quality space in the city, and in 2007 most of the completed developments, or those under construction were occupied. Supply in relation to demand is described as limited, and depends mainly upon the refurbishment of existing buildings. This may change in future when sites such as Terry's (Bishopthorpe Road), Holgate Park and York Central are developed, although York Central will not be available in the short term. Demand for secondary office space is described as "patchy".

4.4 Of the Draft Local Plan policy E3b states that any sites or premises either currently or previously in employment use, will be retained within their current use class. Planning permission for other uses will only be given where there is a sufficient supply of employment land to meet both immediate and longer-term requirements over the plan period in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In addition either unacceptable environmental problems should exist, or the development of the site for other appropriate uses will lead to significant benefits to the local economy, or the use is ancillary to an employment use.

4.5 When the application site was vacated in December 2007 it was deemed to be unfit for occupation. The preferred option for the future of the site was to refurbish and create 3,623 sq m prime office space. This could accommodate around 270 staff. Planning permission was granted for the alterations however the building is yet to be redeveloped. We are advised it would cost some 3.5 million to upgrade the building, which is not financially viable to the owners, without a significant amount of space being pre-let. A pre-let has not been secured although the site has apparently been marketed/advertised since 2005. It would be cheaper to refurbish the offices to a secondary standard, although this would not be financially viable and demand for such space is limited. The application arises as Premier Inn have made an offer to occupy the building, this would allow its refurbishment to commence, and would lead to full occupation.

4.6 To support the application King Sturge have compiled an assessment of the office market in York. It concludes that considering vacant space at present and that which will emerge through proposed developments within the next 12 months, there is some 20,937 sq m available in and around the city centre in offices of comparable size to the application site. It also advises demand has fallen recently due to the national economy. The available offices are as follows -

#### City centre sites

- Albion Wharf Skeldergate,
- West Offices Station Rise,
- Ryedale Building Piccadilly
- Hudson House Toft Green
- Grays Wharf Navigation Road

- Quartz Point Stonebow
- York Northwest

Edge of centre sites (within 300m of city centre as defined in the local plan)

- Heworth Green
- Alliance House Holgate Road
- Holgate Villa
- The Edge Fulford Road

Out of centre (within the urban area)

- Terry's site
- Nestle site

4.7 Based upon the findings of the ELR, reports from the applicants and data from York England (inward investment board for York and North Yorkshire) there is a lack of high quality office space presently available within the city centre (of a size comparable to that at the application site) as none of the city centre sites currently available offer such space. The status of the sites within the city centre are as follows -

<b>Site</b>	<b>Space available (sq m)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Hudson House*	up to 4,000?	To be refurbished
Quartz Point	up to 1,054	Construction about to commence
Grays Wharf	4,000	Under construction
Hungate	1,800	Yet to be built
York Northwest	(around) 970,000	Yet to be built
Albion Wharf		Occupied
West offices	Not high quality space	
Ryedale building	Future uncertain due to Castle Piccadilly redevelopment.	

\* York England advise much of Hudson House is mostly occupied, only around 500 sq m is available.

4.8 Within the city centre the sites that potentially could provide high quality office space are either yet to be built (Quartz Point and Grays Wharf) or require upgrading (Hudson House). It is uncertain when the other sites will be available.

4.9 Of the current office supply in the wider urban area (ie edge of centre) there is only Heworth Green (which is already part occupied as only 2 of the 6 units are available) and The Edge in Fulford that are completed and offer high quality office space.

4.10 The application site has planning permission to be redeveloped and potentially offers a significant amount of office space in a prime location (considering accessibility, being in a desirable area - within city centre and Central Historic Core Conservation Area). As such the site is one which would preferably be retained for office/employment use, as the ELR identifies a strong requirement for, and limited availability of such land. To allow the proposed change of use would be contrary to the RSS which advises that employment land supply should be based upon on a

local evidence base and policy E3b of the local plan which seeks to retain employment sites in that use when there are not adequate alternative sites, in terms of quality and quantity.

#### Principle of the proposed use

4.11 The Draft Local Plan seeks to "maximise the economic and other benefits brought about by visitors, whilst minimising any adverse impact", this includes businesses in the city. Policy V3 states planning permission will be granted for hotels provided the proposal is compatible with its surroundings in terms of siting, scale and design and -

- Would not result in the loss of residential accommodation which when originally built had less than four bedrooms;
- Would not have an adverse effect on the residential character of the area;
- Is well related in terms of walking, cycling and access to public transport in relation to York City Centre or other visitor attractions

4.12 The proposal to refurbish the building's front elevation has already been granted planning permission, considering the alterations would enhance the appearance of the conservation area, and (despite the additional storey) the building would be of appropriate scale, design and materials. The surrounding area is predominantly commercial and is located within walking distance of public transport links and the city centre. As such this proposed development and location are fully in accordance with the criteria of Local Plan policy V3, although the objective of this chapter of the local plan does include the caveat that the impact on business in the city should be considered.

#### Visual impact, considering the character and appearance of the conservation area

4.13 HE2 states that within conservation areas, or locations which affect the setting of listed buildings development proposals must respect adjacent buildings, open spaces, landmarks and settings and have regards to local scale, proportions and materials. Proposals will be required to maintain or enhance existing urban spaces, views, landmarks and other townscape elements, which contribute to the character or appearance of the area. Policy HE3 states that within Conservation Areas, proposals will only be permitted where there is no adverse effect on the character or appearance of the area.

4.14 As stated in paragraph 4.5 the majority of the alterations to the building have previously been supported and granted planning permission. There are some minor alterations in this scheme, the additional door on the front elevation to separate access into the restaurant/bar area and the guest rooms, the slight lowering of the entrance canopy to accommodate signage (which would be subject to a separate application), and the removal of the external fire escape and a further door, both on the rear elevation. Conditions are suggested to ensure conservation/design officers are satisfied with the detailed finish of the building and overall it is considered the building would be of reasonable scale, detailing and materials and will not harm the appearance of the Central Historic Core Conservation Area.

## Sustainability

4.15 The Council's adopted interim planning document on Sustainable Design & Construction asks that commercial developments such as this proposal achieve a BREEAM rating of very good.

4.16 The proposal advises it will operate in a sustainable manner through the following proposals:

- Local economy - use of local materials and labour. Materials to be from recycled sources where possible and a timber frame (a sustainable material) shall be incorporated into building.
- Energy use - incorporated into the building will be climate control (heating and cooling) and low energy lighting to avoid energy waste, A-rated refrigerated goods, dual flush toilets and controlled taps to restrict water use, and the promotion and provision of recycling onsite.

4.17 It could be a condition of approval that the proposal be developed in accordance with the submitted statement.

## Highway Safety

4.18 T4 seeks to promote cycling and states that all new development should provide storage for cycles in accordance with the standards in appendix E of the Local Plan. Therefore the development should accommodate at least 8/9 cycle spaces and a maximum of 22 car parking spaces and 1 coach space.

4.19 The site provides space for cycle parking and coaches although it would need to be a condition were the application approved that the cycle spaces be secure and covered. There is limited car parking spaces on site, this is not objected to as the site is located close to transport links, namely the train station, and if required there are public car parks which guests and staff could use. To deter car use and encourage alternative means of transport, which could also be promoted through a condition requiring a travel plan, is consistent with the thrust of the Local Plan and National Planning Policy.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

5.1 The application site provides a significant amount of employment land in a prime city centre location and could accommodate high quality office space. The 2007 employment land review reports that in the short to medium term, i.e. before the redevelopment of York Northwest, there are a lack of such sites available. As such to allow the proposed change of use would be contrary to the RSS which advises that employment land should be protected when there is local evidence to support its retention is desirable in terms of need and where sites are in sustainable locations. And also policy E3b of the Local Plan which seeks to safeguard employment land when there is not an adequate supply of employment sites which are of similar quality and quantity.



**6.0 RECOMMENDATION:** Refuse

1 The application site has planning permission to provide high quality office space in the city centre - which the City of York Council's Employment Land Review 2007 identifies a shortfall of. The proposed change of use would also lead to the loss of employment land of which there are not alternative sites available in terms of quality, quantity and location.

As such the development would be contrary to section 6 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the Yorkshire and Humber 2008 which seeks to provide office space in sustainable city centre locations and preserve sites for employment land when local evidence based data confirms there is demonstrable needs for such and also policy E3b of the City of York Draft Local Plan which states that any sites or premises either currently or previously in employment use, will be retained within their current use class. Planning permission for other uses will only be given where there is a sufficient supply of employment land to meet both immediate and longer-term requirements over the plan period in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

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