

COMMITTEE REPORT

Date: 25 August 2011 **Ward:** Huntington/New Earswick
Team: Major and **Parish:** Huntington Parish Council
 Commercial Team

Reference: 11/01468/OUTM
Application at: Arabesque House Monks Cross Drive Huntington York
For: Outline application for erection of a retail warehouse following
 demolition of existing office building (resubmission)
By: Smith And Ball LLP
Application Type: Major Outline Application (13 weeks)
Target Date: 8 September 2011
Recommendation: Refuse

1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 This is an outline application for the demolition of an existing office building and replacement with new two storey retail warehouse unit on 1.35 ha of land at Arabesque House, Monks Cross Drive, York. The outline application includes the consideration of means of access, layout and scale leaving appearance and landscaping to reserved matters stage.

1.2 Arabesque House is located to the north west of the Monks Cross Shopping Park. It fronts on to Monks Cross Drive and contains 2,850 square metres net internal floor area of office space on two floors. The floor space is arranged around a central courtyard, with car parking located around the perimeter of the site. The buildings were originally constructed in the early 1990's. Access to Arabesque House is from the roundabout on Monks Cross Drive. The same access also serves Triune Court an adjacent office complex. The site is screened to the west from the adjacent Portakabin works by a low mound with tree planting on top. To the north is the Triune office complex and to the south lies the Argos and TK Maxx retail units and Sainsburys food store. To the east the site is separated from Monks Cross Drive by mounding and tree planting with a central access through the mound to facilitate pedestrian movements.

1.3 The proposal is to demolish Arabesque House and replace the office space with a new structure which will provide retail warehouse accommodation over two levels. The new building is located on the south western side of the site with a servicing area to the north west and the provision of car parking facilities to the front and around the north side of the building. The details of the scheme have been amended since the first submission so that the application is for a two storey structure providing 5576 square metres of accommodation and 238 space car park with associated service area and cycle parking.

Site History

Application Reference Number: 11/01468/OUTM

Item No: 4b

1.4 An application relating to a similar development was withdrawn earlier this year in order for the applicant to provide additional supporting information.

1.5 Planning permission was granted on an area of the former estate office which is located on the southern boundary of the site for the erection of office development in 2007. Planning reference 07/00364/FUL

1.6 In 2009 planning permission was granted on the same area to the south of the application site for the construction of three hot food take away (A5) units. Planning reference 09/00635/FUL

1.7 There have been a number of other small scale proposals within the application site which are related to the existing office use and are not considered to be directly relevant to the consideration of this application.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

City Boundary GMS Constraints: York City Boundary 0001

DC Area Teams GMS Constraints: East Area (2) 0005

2.2 Policies:

CYE3B
Existing and Proposed Employment Sites

CYSP7A
The sequential approach to development

CYGP1
Design

CYGP4A
Sustainability

CYNE1
Trees, woodlands, hedgerows

CYS2
Out of centre retail warehouse criteria

3.0 CONSULTATIONS

INTERNAL

3.1 Highway Network Management - It is considered that there will be an impact on the highway network as a result of the development but that this impact will be acceptable. With measures proposed to minimise the impact of the car parking the level of parking spaces proposed is supportable. A contribution towards the Monks Cross masterplan has been negotiated consisting of a contribution of £5555 together with the upgrading of the existing footway on the Western side of Monks Cross Drive between the roundabout access to the site and the bus stop adjacent to Sainsbury's. Concerned that the main entrance is orientated towards the car park and not towards other retail units on the adjacent site and that this will tend to discourage linked trips. As the application is in outline this will need to be considered as part of the detailed proposals.

3.2 Landscape Architect - The existing kerb line to the rear of the building is now adhered to, thereby protecting existing trees, provided that the building could be constructed without any operations encroaching into the tree belt or tree canopies. The development would result in the loss of the existing wide shrub bed and nine trees alongside the site entrance. The proposals now show adequate replacement with nine new trees within a 6m wide bed, albeit with three access breaks within it.

Three of the black pines are shown as retained but the full root protection area is not achieved for two of them. There would need to be some alterations to the parking and roadway, potentially with the loss of two to four parking spaces at the detailed stage of setting out to ensure that adequate protection is retained.

The application still results in an overall net loss of landscaped areas and trees, but the degree of loss in the context of the proposed layout is not so significant warrant a reason for refusal, provided protection of the black pines is adequately catered for.

3.3 Integrated Strategy - There is a presumption in favour of retaining existing employment sites, unless it can successfully be demonstrated that the site is not needed for employment use. This site is a longstanding employment site and forms part of the identified employment land supply in the emerging Core Strategy. Identifying whether the site is needed in quantitative or qualitative terms is therefore important. It is noted that the applicant has indicated that the impact is negligible it is important that this position is supported by colleagues in EDU.

3.4 Should the loss of employment land be acceptable we would support the principal of retail development in this location provided that conditions are included to prevent the proposals having a negative impact on vitality and viability of York City Centre including the restriction on subdivision and restriction on the goods sold to cover bulky goods, with only ancillary non bulky goods permitted.

3.5 York Consultancy - Insufficient information has been provided by the developer to determine the potential impact the proposals may have on the existing drainage systems.

3.6 Economic Development - Monks Cross is a good office location, having a wide range of amenities and sustainable travel, including park & ride and cycle routes, to and from the city centre. On completion, Arabesque House was fully let, and whilst it is acknowledged that there is currently empty space, York is no different from any other city in the UK in that office space in general is difficult to let in the short to medium term. In the long term, York needs to retain Arabesque House as an office development in order that, once the economy recovers, there are sufficient office buildings available in good locations, of which Arabesque House would be one.

3.7 Environmental Protection - No objections. An informative is recommended in relation to requirements of the environmental protection act during the construction of the scheme.

EXTERNAL

3.8 Huntington Parish Council - No objections

3.9 Environment Agency - The development is only acceptable if a planning condition is imposed requiring surface water drainage details to be submitted based on sustainable drainage principles.

3.10 One letter of objection has been received covering the following points:-

- There are fundamental policy grounds to object to this application which are:-

1. The local plan presumes against the redevelopment of existing employment sites (policy E3b)
2. York employment land review notes that Monks Cross is a desirable prestigious office location and is a main employment area. as such office use is paramount.
3. Retention of offices will maintain a mix diversity of uses which maximises sustainability through linked trips.
4. There are other opportunities capable of accommodating further retail development at Monks Cross.
5. The trip generation rates would result in a material impact on the highway, a site capacity highway assessment and off-site mitigation measures should be considered.
- 6 The level of parking proposed would undermine the overarching strategy in the Halcrow report as parking is one of the primary controls open to the local authority in controlling trips to the area.
7. The layout produces conflict between parking and HGV movements.
8. Pedestrian connectivity is poor.

9. A full travel plan should be provided not just heads of terms.

4.0 APPRAISAL

4.1 Key issues:-

- Policy Background
- Principle of the development including loss of employment land and retail impact assessment
- layout and scale
- Landscaping
- Highways, parking and access arrangements
- Sustainability
- open space
- drainage

Policy background

4.2 Government guidance in Planning Policy Statement 1 ("Delivering Sustainable Development") (PPS1) states that a number of key principles should be applied to ensure that decisions taken on planning applications contribute to the delivery of sustainable development. In particular, PPS1 promotes high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted. High quality and inclusive design should create well-mixed and integrated developments which avoid segregation and have well planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation.

4.3 Planning Policy Statement 4 entitled "Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth" defines economic development as including development within the "B" Use Classes (Business and General Industrial), public and community uses and main town centre uses. The policies also apply to other development which achieves any one of three objectives: i.e. provides employment opportunities, generates wealth or produces or generates an economic output or product. Furthermore the policies within PPS4 referring to main town centre uses shall apply to retail, leisure, office, art, culture and tourism development. The PPS says that the Governments' objectives for prosperous economies are sustainable economic growth which should be achieved through building prosperous communities, reducing the gap in economic growth rates between regions, deliver more sustainable patterns of development, reduce the need to travel, especially by car and respond to climate change, promote the vitality and viability of town and other centres as important places for communities and raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas.

4.4 Policy EC8 of PPS4 requires that locally set maximum parking standards should be put in place through Local Development Frameworks based on the principles of sustainable travel.

4.5 Policy EC10 states that local planning authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development. Planning applications that secure sustainable economic growth should be treated favourably setting out the impact considerations that economic development should be considered against; limiting carbon emissions, accessibility through a choice of transport modes, high quality inclusive design, impact on economic and physical regeneration of an area, impact on local employment.

4.6 Policy EC 14 requires that main town centre uses (including leisure uses) which are not located within a centre should be supported by a sequential test where the development provides for more than 200 square metres of floor space. EC15 to 17 sets out the requirements of a sequential assessment and impact assessments

4.7 Policy EC18 says that local parking standards shall be applied unless the applicant has shown why a higher level of parking is required and shown measures proposed to be taken (for instance in the design, location and operation of the scheme) to minimise the need for parking. In the absence of local standards, the standards set out in annex D of PPG13 shall be applied.

4.8 Planning Policy Statement 13 'Transport' states that in developing and implementing policies for parking, it is important to ensure that, as part of a package of planning and transport measures, levels of parking provided in association with development will promote sustainable transport choices

4.9 An important consideration is the ministerial statement issued on the 23rd March 2011, which states that planning has a key role to play in ensuring that the sustainable development needed to support economic growth is able to proceed as easily as possible. The statement says that appropriate weight should be given to the need to support economic recovery and that applications that secure sustainable growth are treated favourably (consistent with policy in PPS4).

Relevant policies in the Draft local plan are:-

4.10 Policy SP7a says that to ensure that development outside the York city centre is highly accessible by non-car modes of transport, a sequential approach will be taken in assessing planning applications for new retail, commercial, leisure and office development. A hierarchy for the location of such development is within the policy; first York City centre then edge of city centre Acomb and Haxby district centres and then other out of centre locations genuinely accessible by a wide choice of means of transport. Individual retail units in out of centre locations will not be

permitted to have a net sales floor area of less than 1,000 square metres. Major shopping developments, including retail warehousing outside the central shopping area will require evidence of retail impact to show that the vitality and viability of York city centre will not be undermined.

4.11 Policy E3b says that 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 sufficient supply of employment land to meet both immediate and longer term requirements over the plan period in both quantitative and qualitative terms and unacceptable environmental problems 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.

4.12 Policy GP1 'Design' includes the expectation that development proposals will, inter alia; respect or enhance the local environment; be of a density, layout, scale, mass and design that is compatible with neighbouring buildings and spaces, ensure residents living nearby are not unduly affected by noise, disturbance, overlooking, overshadowing or dominated by overbearing structures, use materials appropriate to the area; avoid the loss of open spaces or other features that contribute to the landscape; incorporate appropriate landscaping and retain, enhance or create urban spaces, public views, skyline, landmarks and other features that make a significant contribution to the character of the area.

4.13 Policy GP4a 'Sustainability' of the City of York Council Development Control Local Plan (2005) states that proposals for all development should have regard to the principles of sustainable development and sets out those issues to consider as part of a sustainably designed development. The interim planning statement on Sustainable Design and Construction supports Policy GP4a in setting out ways to achieve sustainability furthermore the document requires that 10% onsite renewables are achieved.

4.14 Policy GP9 requires, where appropriate, developments to incorporate a suitable landscaping scheme

4.15 Policy NE1 requires that trees woodlands and hedgerows which are of landscape, amenity, nature conservation or historical value will be protected.

4.16 The Stage 2 Employment Land Review develops a broad set of spatial principles to help guide the future provision of employment land in the City, and uses these to assess the existing larger employment areas and potential new supply. It presents shortlists of sites for the range of employment use classes that may be considered for allocation as part of the Local Development Framework process. Monks Cross is described within the review as being regarded by many as a desirable prestigious office location.

4.17 The Arup Employment Paper (September 2010) commissioned to explore employment land provision in the city validates the findings of the Employment Land Review. The report concludes that land provision should be made on the basis of annual job growth of about 1000 jobs per year.

Principle of the Development

Loss of Employment Land

4.18 This application is supported by two reports. The first is written by Dacres Commercial and examines the economic options for the future of the site. The report explores three options; these being redevelopment for office use, refurbishment for office use and redevelopment for retail use. The overall conclusion of the report is that retail development is the only option that will produce an adequate financial return on investments.

4.19 The second report looks at the employment land supply for 2010 to 2029 and sets out the current position in York in relation to the availability of office accommodation, the extent of available premises in the short to medium term, the emerging LDF requirements for job creation and allocation of employment land and the Council's policy for the allocation of employment land for the plan period. The reports' conclusions are that in the short term there is the equivalent of 3.78 years supply of office space comparable to Arabesque House and in the short to medium term there is a further 4.78 years supply of sites with office permission or of existing buildings with consent for refurbishment and over the plan period the core strategy submission draft identifies a B1(a) employment land requirement of 11.6Ha. Currently identified land in the Monks Cross area could provide for all this requirement, allocations to accommodate new office development are in addition to vacant office supply.

4.20 Integrated Strategy contends that the consideration of the application should be based on policy E3b. It is acknowledged that the site has been marketed for a period of six months but there are concerns that the proposal will reduce the amount of office space available, and unless it can be successfully demonstrated that the site is not needed for employment use in both quantitative and qualitative terms, Integrated Strategy states the site should be retained for employment purposes. The section further consider that it is important that the applicant's view that the loss of the site to employment use will have a negligible impact on employment land is supported by Economic Development Unit (EDU)

4.21 Economic development /York Enterprise have made the following comments in relation to the employment reports submitted with the application:-

- Dacres report says that there is currently an over supply of office space, York needs an oversupply in order to provide a diversity of sites.

- In terms of Monks Cross the loss of Arabesque house and the relocation of tenants from the building within the Monks Cross area could reduce available Office space to as low as 1165 square metres.
- York needs to have a choice of locations. The greater amount of office space available is at Clifton Moor, which is not very appealing to businesses because of traffic congestion. This is reflected in the low rental rates currently on offer.
- The current financial position in relation to Arabesque House explained within the submitted reports does not take into account the return on investment over the full life of the building. Whilst the current return annually is not what the investors would like, it is still returning a profit whilst providing potential for additional lets in the future, whether or not refurbishment takes place. Refurbishment does not have to be comprehensive, but can be as and when tenants are found. It is believed that the current occupiers have significantly invested in their accommodation. Speculative investments carry a risk but this is not a reason to change planning policy over the potential longer terms benefits of retaining an office use at Monks Cross.
- The Dacre report states that 'The Building is showing signs of its age in the design and specification and therefore its appeal to potential tenants is diminishing with the passage of time'. However in the marketing literature for Arabesque House, it states that the office space benefits from "a good quality specification throughout" and is termed "high quality office accommodation".
- In terms of refurbishing the existing building the agent says that refurbishment could not be carried out without pre-letting however it is proposed to redevelop for retail on a speculative basis. The building is also considered to have a fundamental design flaw which prevents it from letting, however given past occupancy rates Economic development consider that current occupancy is more likely to be due to the economic climate.
- Enquiries for Office use and retail uses are both low at the moment, the applicant is no more likely to get a pre-let for retail than office use.
- The argument that one small development does not take away from the total office allocation could be made for all individual buildings and the long term planning policy as provided by the Integrated Strategy team needs to be borne in mind.
- The Summary of Dacres report states that the proposal is 'a realistic and deliverable option for the site.' Without a pre-let this is a risky option with a reduction in potential employment numbers (300 down to 100), a reduction in choice of office locations for prospective tenants and potentially a catalyst for displacement of jobs and the weakening of the offer from other retail areas.

4.22 On a more general level EDU states Monks Cross is a good office location, having a wide range of amenities and sustainable travel, including park & ride and cycle routes, to and from the city centre. On completion, Arabesque House was fully let, and whilst it is acknowledged that there is currently empty space, York is no different from any other city in the UK in that office space in general is difficult to let in the short to medium term. Planning permission has recently been granted at Monks Cross for a restaurant with an operator signed up, this will provide an additional benefit to current occupants and in attracting new business to this

commercial area. In the long term, officers consider that York needs to retain Arabesque House as an office development in order that, once the economy recovers, there are sufficient office buildings available in good locations, of which Arabesque House would be one.

4.23 The starting point for the consideration of this proposal is policy E3b which seeks to resist the loss of existing employment sites and retain them within their current use class. This remains the thrust of policy in the emerging submissions draft core strategy (policy CS16). The figures for employment growth (1,000 jobs per annum) are based on the findings of the employment land review, validated recently by the conclusions of the ARUP employment paper. The employment land review says that Monks Cross is regarded by many as a desirable prestigious office location. The Arup Paper says 'in assessing the implications for employment land it is important to consider margin of choice of employment land taking into account sectoral mix and requirements, churn in the existing stock, differing levels and contexts for development viability'

4.24 EDU considers that York needs to maintain a menu of office properties around different sites in the city, of varying sizes and quality. The application site is important in providing for the immediate and longer term employment requirements of York, particularly the Monks Cross area. The information submitted by the applicant regarding the availability of alternative office space does not change this view.

4.25 A recent planning permission has been granted on the site to the north of Arabesque House for a restaurant unit. This permission was granted with restrictions to a specific restaurant format which was promoted as an enabling development. Indications from the market being that the amenities for the business park were inadequate and forms part of the reason why businesses are not choosing to locate to the Monks Cross area at the moment. The addition of these facilities, the ready availability of accommodation at Arabesque house and the relatively small amount of existing space at Monks Cross if Arabesque House is lost lead officers to conclude that for the immediate and longer term employment requirements of the City, Arabesque House should be retained for office use. In officer's opinion there has been no information put forward by the applicant that would be sufficient to outweigh these considerations and the application is therefore considered to conflict with the requirements of existing and emerging policy with regard to retention of employment land for that use and the aims of PPS4 including the need to secure economic growth through prosperous diverse economies.

4.26 With regard to the recent ministerial statement which says that appropriate weight should be given to the need to support economic recovery, the current proposal is a speculative application which suggest the potential for a hundred jobs (it is not clear that these would all be new jobs as the employment paper by Dacres Commercial talks of the relocation of accommodation), Arabesque House currently

has at least 85 employed on site and the building has potential to have an employment density greater than that which would be created by a retail use. It is not clear therefore how the grant of consent for a speculative retail unit would support economic recovery as the loss of employment at the site both now and overtime could outweigh that which would be created.

Retail Impact

4.27 PPS4 and Policy SP7a require that a sequential approach be taken and that sites within the city centre are looked at first. A PPS4 Retail Statement has been submitted at Appendix 9 to the Planning Statement, providing an assessment of the available, suitable or viable sequentially preferable alternative sites and the impact of the proposed retail use.

4.28 The sequential test which has been undertaken by the applicant assesses 17 alternative potential sites in and around the City York, including Castle Piccadilly, Hungate, Stonebow House and BT Telephone Exchange (Hungate), Former Homebase Unit - (Foss Bank - now 'Go Outdoors') and York Central. These sites were identified in consultation with the Council. It concludes that none of the 17 sites satisfy all three tests of the PPS4 sequential assessment. Officers are satisfied that there are no sequentially preferable sites.

4.29 The impact that the proposed development will have on established shopping centres in York has been assessed by the applicant. The assessment presented is consistent with City of York Council's own evidence base (Retail Study 2008). As such Officers agree with the applicant's conclusions that the trade draw on the city centre (10% of the turnover drawn from the city centre) would not cause a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the city centre (at 0.25%).

4.30 It is stated by the applicant that the proposal is likely to draw most of its trade from other out of centre retailers (particularly Clifton Moor which has the strongest bulky goods market share (Retail Study 2008, para 9.3). This has been substantiated by an assessment of the proposals on existing bulky goods retailers in the city centre. This information, using GOAD survey report data, has explored bulky goods retailers in the city centre and concluded that the impact of the proposals would be minimal given the type and location of these types of retailers. Officers agree with these conclusions.

4.31 Whilst no calculations have been carried out we are satisfied that given the limited crossover in bulky goods retailing in the District Centres there would be limited impact from the proposals. The application should be restricted to bulky goods retail only through appropriate conditions.

Layout and Scale

4.32 Arabesque House, which has a gross lettable area (GLA) of 2,850 square metres, is to be demolished. The current building is to be replaced with a new two storey building with a GLA of 5,574 square metres. The footprint of the proposed building is to be 2,833 square metres. The building as proposed is located on the south western corner of the site. This application is in outline with layout and scale to be considered but with appearance being left for consideration at reserved matters stage.

4.33 The site is located between the Argos/TK Maxx building to the south and Triune office complex to the north. To the west is industrial development and to the east beyond Monks Cross Drive is the existing Monks Cross retail complex. The design and access statement says that the location of the building is largely determined by the desire to replicate the layout of adjacent retail development. Whilst the application is in outline form, an indication of the height of the development is required. The design and access statement indicates that the two storey structure will have an eaves height of 10.5 m. The indicative context elevation suggest a flat roof so that this would be the approximate max height of the building. The buildings to the south have a nominally pitched roof approximately 9 metres high and the office buildings to the north are approximately 11.5 metres high to pitched roofs. The proposed building at 10.5 metres to a flat roof will have a larger overall massing than the adjacent buildings, however in the context of the varying building designs within the locality the height of the structure is considered to be acceptable. Similarly, in a visual context, the siting of the building is considered to be compatible with the layout of adjacent sites and officers consider that the proposal will not detract from the area as a whole.

Landscaping.

4.34 A landscaping scheme has been reserved to a detailed scheme; however the existing site is well landscaped and the proposed layout has an impact on existing planting. To the west of the site between the site and the industrial development is a mounded area with mature tree planting on top, to the south is a line of trees which divides the site from the car parking and retail use. To the Monks Cross Drive frontage there is mounding and mature tree planting and there are a number of individual trees and small groups of trees within the site and along the northern boundary with the Triune Court access and parking area. The application is supported by a tree survey which assesses the varying quality of the individual trees within the site.

4.35 The proposal includes the retention of the majority of the trees to the frontage, western and northern boundaries as well as three of the more significant trees within the car park. The main area of tree loss relates to trees on the northern boundary of the site between the access road and proposed car park area. The proposal

includes the reconfiguration of the access road and car parking which will result in the replacement of these entrance trees with new planting. The alteration to the entrance will mean that trees on the Tribune Court side of the access will also be lost although full details of this have not been submitted in this application.

4.36 One of the defining features of the Monks Cross area is the quality of its landscaping. The amount and maturity of the landscaping sets it apart from other out of centre retail business schemes and adds to the attractiveness of the area as a destination for businesses and retail custom. This particular site is prominently located on the Monks Cross Drive entrance to the retail and business park areas. Clearly the retention of all the frontage trees and mounding is significant in retaining the visual quality of the site. However there are areas of the scheme that will mean that overall the value of the tree cover within the site will be diminished. The new location of the building on the south-western side of the site and the buildings proposed height will mean that any longer distance view of these trees will be lost and these trees will have less favourable conditions in which to grow.

4.37 Trees on the northern side are proposed to be replaced. The tree survey classes these trees individually of low quality. However as a group together with the wide verge around them they make a pleasant group of trees which add to the overall visual quality of the area. The proposal includes replacement planting along the line of the new road position and the applicant has sought to replicate the wide verge and provide new tree cover. A slightly different configuration of the road and car park layout would allow for the existing trees to be retained and this would be. However the applicant is keen to retain the particular parking and access layout proposed and therefore the consideration is whether the loss of the trees is a sufficient reason to justify a refusal of planning permission. In this particular case given the amount of tree retention already within and around the site, the quality of the individual trees identified within the tree survey and the proposals for replacement tree planting, officers consider that there are insufficient grounds to recommend refusal on the basis of loss of trees.

Highways, parking and access arrangements.

4.38 Vehicular access to the proposed store will be from the existing site access which is onto Monks Cross Link via a 3 arm roundabout. This access also serves Tribune Court which is an adjacent B1 office development. The proposed application impacts on the car parking for Tribune Court and Officers have been informed that an application will be submitted to address the necessary reconfiguration of Tribune Courts car park.

4.39 In line with national guidance it is appropriate to net off the traffic that could be generated by a site without the need for further planning consents. In highway terms therefore the Council are considering the impact of the difference between the office use and the non-food bulky goods retail use.

4.40 The proposals will result in an increase in traffic, particularly during a Saturday peak period. This increase in traffic can be reduced as it is reasonable to assume that a proportion of traffic to the new retail unit will visit the site as part of a linked trip to an adjacent retail unit. Evidence gathered indicates that this figure is generally around the 40% level. Once the traffic flows have been reduced to take into account the previous use of the site and the potential for linked trips it is considered that the impact of the development on the adjacent highway network will be acceptable.

4.41 The level of car parking on site is being capped to 220 spaces, with a proportion of car parking (27 spaces) being surfaced in grasscrete to reduce their visual impact and to try to ensure that they are only used infrequently as an overspill provision during peak periods of demand. Covered cycle parking is provided on the southern boundary of the site

4.42 The site falls within the member approved Monks Cross Masterplan area and as such officers have negotiated a contribution towards the measures set out in the aforementioned masterplan of £5555, together with the upgrading of the existing footway on the Western side of Monks Cross Drive between the roundabout access to the site and the bus stop adjacent to Sainsbury's. This footway will be upgraded to a shared ped/cycle facility of minimum width of 3.1m and is in lieu of a larger financial contribution to the masterplan.

4.43 It is considered that the capping of the car parking on the site, implementation of a Travel Plan and provision of a shared ped/cycle route will increase the sustainable nature of the site. Officers do have some concerns over the location of the main entrance which is orientated to face the car park. The main entrance should be repositioned to face the adjacent retail units thus encouraging and increasing the potential for linked trips, especially by foot/cycle. This issue of detail would be raised as part of a reserved matters submission if outline consent were to be granted.

Sustainability.

4.44 The application includes a short sustainability statement within the design and access statement which shows a fairly clear understanding by the applicant of the materials of construction of the building. The statement indicates that a BREEAM very good will be achieved within the development and that solarwalling will be used to reduce energy costs thus indicating a commitment to renewable energy within the scheme. The achievement of the requirement of the Interim Planning Statement on sustainable design and construction (IPS) will be met if the ideas within the statement are taken through to design stage. Conditions could secure 10% renewables and BREEAM 'very good' in accordance with the requirements of the IPS.

Drainage

4.45 York Consultancy would like additional information submitting with regard to drainage. The Environment Agency do not object to the application provided conditions are added to ensure that adequate surface water drainage is achieved including sustainable drainage principles. Given the existing structure on the site and the level of hardsurfacing that exists Officers consider that it is technically feasible to adequately drain the site and are therefore satisfied that the detailed drainage of the site can be achieved through appropriate conditions.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Monks Cross is a good office location, having a wide range of amenities and sustainable travel, including park & ride and cycle routes, to and from the city centre. The Economic Development Unit considers that York needs to maintain a menu of office properties around different sites in the city, of varying sizes and quality. The application site is important in providing for the immediate and longer term employment requirements of York, particularly the Monks Cross area. The proposed development is considered to conflict with policy E3b which seeks to resist the loss of existing employment sites and retain them within their current use class. With regard to the recent ministerial statement which says that appropriate weight should be given to the need to support economic recovery, the current proposal is a speculative application which only suggests the potential for a hundred jobs. It is not clear therefore how the grant of consent for a speculative retail unit would support economic recovery as the loss of employment at the site both now and overtime could outweigh that which would be created by this unit. Such an outcome would not be in accordance with this statement.

5.2 It is stated by the applicant that the proposal is likely to draw most of its trade from other out of centre retailers (particularly Clifton Moor which has the strongest bulky goods market share (Retail Study 2008, para 9.3). This has been substantiated by an assessment of the proposals on existing bulky goods retailers in the city centre. This information, using GOAD survey report data, has explored bulky goods retailers in the city centre and concluded that the impact of the proposals would be minimal given the type and location of these types of retailers. Officers agree with these conclusions.

5.3 In terms of the layout and scale of the proposal; the proposed building at 10.5 metres to a flat roof will have a larger overall massing than the adjacent buildings, however in the context of the varying building designs within the locality the height of the structure is considered to be acceptable. Similarly, in a visual context, the siting of the building is considered to be compatible with the layout of adjacent sites and the proposal will not detract from the area as a whole.

5.4 The existing site is well landscaped and much of this landscaping is retained. However the proposal includes replacement planting along the line of the new road position in preference to retaining the existing landscaping. A slightly different configuration of the road and car park layout would allow for the existing trees to be retained and this would be, in Officers' view, the most appropriate way forward. However the applicant is keen to retain the particular parking and access layout proposed and therefore the consideration is whether the loss of the trees is a sufficient reason to justify a reason to refuse planning permission. In this particular case given the amount of tree retention already within and around the site, the quality of the individual trees identified within the tree survey and the proposals for replacement tree planting, officers consider that there are not sufficient grounds to recommend refusal on the grounds of loss of trees.

5.5 It is considered that capping the car parking on the site, implementation of a Travel Plan and provision of a shared ped/cycle route will increase the sustainable nature of the site. Officers do have some concerns over the location of the main entrance which is orientated to face the car park. The main entrance should be repositioned to face the adjacent retail units thus encouraging and increasing the potential for linked trips, especially by foot/cycle. It is considered that this detail could be secured through condition or addressed during any subsequent reserved matters application, if outline consent were to be granted.

COMMITTEE TO VISIT

6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

1 In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority Monks Cross is a good office location, having a wide range of amenities and sustainable travel, including park & ride and cycle routes, to and from the city centre, the Local Planning Authority consider that it needs to maintain a menu of office properties around different sites in the city, of varying sizes and quality, the application site is important in providing for the immediate and longer term employment requirements of York, particularly the Monks Cross area. It is considered that the loss of Arabesque House will significantly diminish the availability of office space in the Monks Cross area to the detriment of employment Land supply and future employment growth, this is considered contrary to policy E3b of the City of York draft Local Plan (incorporating the 4th set of changes) Development Control Local Plan (April 2005), the evidence base to the emerging Local Development Framework; Employment Land Review Stage 1 and 2 (Entec 2007 and 2009) and Arup Employment Paper - Annex 4 to Item 13, LDF Working Group, 4 October 2010 and contrary to Planning Policy Statement 4 "Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth"

7.0 INFORMATIVES:

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