

## COMMITTEE REPORT

**Committee:** Planning Committee      **Ward:** Heslington  
**Date:** 31 May 2007      **Parish:** Heslington Parish Council

**Reference:** 06/02705/FULM  
**Application at:** Language Centre University Road To Central Hall York  
**For:** (Following demolition of language centre) Erection of humanities education and research centre with associated cycle parking and landscaping  
**By:** University Of York  
**Application Type:** Major Full Application (13 weeks)  
**Target Date:** 9 March 2007

### 1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 The proposal is for the demolition of the existing language centre building and replace it with a new 3 / 4 storey high Humanities and Education Research Centre. Existing language centre staff will be relocated within the campus, predominantly into Vanburgh College.

1.2 The building is predominately three storeys in height; however the slope of the site has been exploited to provide a further lower ground level in the southern half of the building and this space is to be used to provide self contained and separately accessed accommodation for the campus IT hub.

1.3 The building will provide occupancy space for a maximum of 500 people. In terms of its operation, the building will accommodate approximately 160 full time staff and postgraduate students. Lecture and seminar rooms provide further capacity to accommodate approximately 360 students and other visitors to the building who may be based on campus and elsewhere.

1.4 The site lies to the south of the Campus Central car park, adjacent to the eastern elevation of Vanburgh College and the southern elevation of the Careers and Counselling Centre. An established area of woodland known as Spring Wood lies to the east of the site. The site has views across the lake and the important Central Hall building stands approx. 30 metres to the south east of the proposed building.

1.5 The site slopes gently from north to south towards the University Lake. Several mature trees are located on the site, at the fringe of Spring Wood, and along the west side of the Language Centre. Of particular note, is a large mature Tulip Tree which occupies a central and highly prominent position along the eastern elevation of the Language Centre. A Buddha statue is situated adjacent to Tulip Tree. The site and its immediate environs are a mixture of mature woodland and attractive parkland.

1.6 There is a vehicular access road running along the western side of the site which provides servicing access to Central Hall and Vanburgh College. The site is

open to pedestrian access from the central campus to the north and west, and Central Hall and Spring Wood to the south and east. Spring Lane, a footpath which runs north to south through Spring Wood, is a public right of way. This PROW is not threatened by the proposal and will remain in the same place as it is currently. A covered pedestrian route through the campus runs east to west along the southern flank of the site.

1.7 According to the supporting statement accompanying the application the new building 'will engender collaboration between several key departments'. Departments to be represented within the proposed building will include History, History of Art, Languages and Educational Studies.

## **2.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

City Boundary York City Boundary 0001

DC Area Teams East Area (1) 0003

2.2 Policies:

CYED6  
University of York Heslington Campus

CYGB1  
Development within the Green Belt

CYGP1  
Design

CYGP4A  
Sustainability

CYNE1  
Trees, woodlands, hedgerows

CYNE6  
Species protected by law

## **3.0 CONSULTATIONS**

3.1 INTERNAL.

### 3.2 Highway Network Management

Site lies within an existing network of pedestrian and cycle routes which cross the campus and also provide links to other routes serving the City Centre and outlying residential areas. Good public transport is available close by with 10 minute frequency services linking the campus to the City Centre. The development includes the provision of 42 covered secure cycle parking spaces to accommodate the needs of staff, together with a further 36 covered spaces for student visitors.

Servicing arrangements for the new building will continue in the same manner as for the existing language centre building. There are to be no additional car parking spaces introduced, in line with the agreed policy which caps the total number of spaces on campus at 1520.

The University has a well developed Green Travel Plan already in place and information on sustainable modes of transport is provided to prospective students and visitors. There are no objections subject to 3 recommended conditions.

### 3.3 Landscape Officer.

Considers it paramount that the tree protection fencing can be erected before any works start on site, and can remain intact for the entire duration of the demolition, construction and external works. Requested a more thorough tree protection method statement; ideally before a decision is made to ensure that it is all feasible.

The method statement should include the following additional information

- a construction detail of protective fencing, phasing of works, location of site cabin, parking arrangements for site vehicles, locations for stored materials; construction details and existing and proposed levels where a change in surface material and/or levels are proposed within the canopy spread and likely root zone of a tree.

The method statement should also address the following concerns:

- Ensure there is sufficient working area between the proposed building and the tree protection fencing along the eastern elevation especially adjacent to the silver birch.
- Will there be a need for vehicles/machinery to access the front of the eastern elevation?
- Can demolition and the creation of formation levels and foundations be carried out from the west and the 'inside' of the proposed building.
- A method statement should also be submitted for the implementation of the bound gravel seating area, such that it is of a no-dig construction.
- Tree 270 will also need protective fencing around its roots, despite the trunk being located outside of the construction site boundary.
- It should be noted that the protective fencing shall be supported on scaffold poles so that it can not be moved.
- The landscape masterplan suggests that the mounding will encroach into the root protection area of tree 299, therefore the mounding may need changing slightly.

Also note that ten trees are being removed and only nine put back. It would be possible to plant an additional tree between 280 and 277, or plant an additional tree on the mounding to overcome this.

The above is being addressed by the agents. A verbal update will be provided at the committee meeting.

#### 3.4 Ecology Officer

Having looked at the building, do not consider it to be particularly suitable for bats and do not consider that a bat survey is required. However, its location adjacent to the lake and the wooded grounds do make the new building potentially of interest. Recommend therefore that including some roost habitat into the new building be considered. Features suitable for incorporation for this group include the use of special tiles, bricks, soffit boards and bat boxes.

Since spoken to agents on this and agreed that the new design is incompatible with bats, being all glass and steel so has been agreed that bat boxes be placed in the adjacent woodland at suitable locations to provide new roosts in the area.

#### 3.5 Environmental Protection Unit.

No objections. In order to ensure that nearby student residents are not adversely affected by noise during any demolition, construction or refurbishment works and deliveries to / from the site recommend an hours of construction condition.

#### 3.6 City Development.

The site is recognised as ED6 (Existing University campus) allocation on the Draft Local Plan proposals map. The proposal is an overall net decrease in building footprint against the existing building.

#### 3.5 EXTERNAL.

#### 3.6 Heslington Parish Council.

The Parish Council wish to see the provision of commensurate student accommodation to meet the growth of students generated by this facility in line with the University commitments at the recent public inquiry. Accordingly the estimate of the additional number of students should be undertaken and provision made to accommodate these students on campus.

In light of the commitments made at the recent public inquiry, the Parish Council wish to be assured that provision of appropriate student accommodation is the principal basis or any future development on the existing campus.

This is in order to ameliorate the social impact of the University on the local housing stock and to curtail the considerable local effects of studentification. All parties at the Campus 3 Public Inquiry recognised that the ration of student accommodation has fallen comparative to the extensive development of other facilities on the present campus and that 25% of the present housing stock in Heslington is currently occupied by students. Parish Council therefore strongly wishes for this deterioration in on campus student accommodation to be halted so that there is no further pressure on conversion of houses to student occupation in Heslington.

### 3.7 Heslington Village Trust.

The Trust does not wish to comment on the architectural or planning issues of this application since it will have no impact on the village of Heslington.

However, it does give rise to a very important principle that does impact on the village, namely the relationship between development, increased number of students and on campus residential accommodation for them.

The development will provide 3420m<sup>2</sup> of floor space, accommodating 500 people (160 staff and approx. 360 students) but does not say what the net gain in students actually is.

The Trust therefore supports the Parish Council's view that any development on the existing campus that results in an increase in the number of students registered with the University must be accompanied by a commensurate increase in student accommodation on campus.

### 3.8 Foss Internal Drainage Board.

The site lies within the Board's District within an area that discharges into Low Moor drain.

The applicant suggests that the surface water is to be discharged into the existing pond. It is recommended that as this pond acts as a flow regulation system and as the discharge from the proposed development is to this existing controlled system it should be shown, to the satisfaction of the Local Authority and Internal Drainage Board, that the system can accept the additional discharge without increasing the resulting discharge rate to the receiving watercourse.

## 4.0 APPRAISAL

### 4.1 KEY ISSUES.

- Policy context.
- design and visual amenity.
- impact on trees and landscaping.
- Sustainability.

Policy Context.

4.2 In this case the Development Plan consists of the Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber to 2016 (December 2004). The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy "The Yorkshire and Humber Plan", the City of York Draft Local Plan (4th set of changes) and Development Brief for Future Expansion are also material considerations for this application although they are of varying weight.

4.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy highlights the importance of Education and educational infrastructure in promoting social inclusion, economic growth and regeneration. Considered in this context alone the HERC building will help to promote good quality educational infrastructure and given its central campus position the building will have benefits for the wider University in terms of the provision of high quality facilities for staff and students. In its draft form the emerging RSS also

promotes the growth of the York sub area economy through the further development and expansion York University although less weight can be attached to these draft policies.

4.4 The City of York Draft Local Plan (4th set of changes) and the adopted Development Brief for Future Expansion are material considerations of this application. Policy ED6 of the Draft Local Plan facilitates further development on the Heslington campus of the University providing that it is within one of three categories:

- a) small scale extensions to existing buildings; or
- b) redevelopment of existing buildings; or
- c) development on the specific sites highlighted in the development brief.

4.5 Whilst the proposal cannot be classed as a small scale extension to an existing building this proposal is considered to fall mostly within category ED6 (a) above as it represents redevelopment of an existing site in the Council's adopted Development Brief (1999).

4.6 The campus is within draft Green Belt, and PPG2 guidance states that education institutions are inappropriate development in Green Belt. However, the Draft Local Plan proposes the removal of the campus from the York Green Belt and as the proposed building is within the campus and its siting is considered to be of no more than local significance; officers are of the view that the proposals do not raise issues which require determination by the Secretary of State. The Sec. of State has ruled previously that applications of no more than local significance such as this need not be referred onto the Govt. Office.

4.7 The development brief also places a limit that the built footprint of the campus shall not exceed 20%. This development results in a net decrease in footprint and therefore is in line with this requirement.

Design and Visual amenity.

4.8 The proposed building will replace an existing single storey building, albeit on a reduced built footprint. The site is within the central area of the main campus north of the lake and the important and iconic Central Hall building. The proposed building will not be seen beyond the Heslington campus boundaries and therefore there will be no affect on properties adjoining the campus or on views from outside of the campus. Any design and appearance issues are all centred around views from within the campus.

4.9 In its local campus setting, one of the main issues is to ensure that there is limited impact on the important Central Hall building which stands projecting out into the lake. The proposed building will stand to the north of the Central Hall and will be clearly visible from the South through the gap between the Hall and the adjacent Vanburgh College. It is approx. the same height as the adjacent Vanburgh buildings, both of which will be lower than the Central Hall building. Whilst there is little doubt that it will alter the appearance of the campus at this point by the introduction of a larger, more dominant looking building, officers do not consider it will visually

dominate the Central Hall building. It is sufficiently set back from Central Hall for it to be viewed in its own context and setting and there is enough visual separation (approx.30 metres) for it to be seen and considered as a separate building. The new building also has a reasonable amount of good quality landscaping and tree cover (both existing and new) around it in order to soften this relationship. In line with one of the key requirements of the Development Brief, it will be below the height of the mature trees which predominantly stand to the north. Whilst views of these trees will be reduced from the lake and areas south of the Central Hall, these views are limited to within the campus and therefore officers do not consider this to be materially harmful. The building is of a good quality, contemporary design and is shown to utilise good quality modern materials and this compensates for the modest loss of openness within this part of the campus. As one walks down through the campus from north to south towards the Central Hall, the building will be set back from the pathways and some good quality landscaping is proposed at this point. Although the proposed building is higher than the existing language centre, its footprint will be further away from the pedestrian walkways to the west of the building which transport people down to the Central Hall. It will therefore still allow views through to the lake and the Central Hall building and consequently allow this to remain the dominant and iconic feature at this point. Officers, including the then Head of the Urban Design Team were involved in a pre-application consultation and no objections were raised at the time by them.

4.10 The site is situated west of an area of the open space related to the lake as defined with the campus Development Brief 1999. The development will not encroach into this area.

4.11 The design of the building is very contemporary and this is welcomed. External treatment to the building include zinc and timber cladding, pre cast concrete cladding and aluminium framed windows. Officers consider that this will result in an impressive looking building which will enhance the campus at this point and set a benchmark for future redevelopments in the central campus area. It is acknowledged that the building is quite large and officers have had some concerns about this in what is a relatively narrow site area but the building it is replacing is of no significant architectural merit and good quality modern architecture should be encouraged in this location where possible.

Impact on trees and landscaping.

4.12 The application site is in an attractively landscaped and treed part of the campus and a key issue is the impact the building will have on this. It is important that this remains as much as possible. The main group of trees known as Spring Wood stands to the north east of the proposed building and across the public right of way which runs adjacent to the site. None of the trees within Spring Wood are affected by the development. Six trees are shown to be lost as a result of the development and five of these are shown as replaced within the proposed landscaping scheme. It is hoped that all six can be replaced although the overall loss of one tree is not materially harmful to the setting of the building or the appearance of the site within the campus.

4.13 All the most mature trees will remain and in the case of the imposing (and perhaps most important tree on the site) Tulip tree, the scheme has been designed around it. Two pod-like "tree houses" (applicant's description) project from the main wing off the rear elevation on either side of the Tulip tree and towards the established trees of Spring Wood. Whilst the separation distance between the building and this tree is perhaps slightly less than what one would normally expect, in this case it is a feature of the design and the interaction of the trees to the building is deliberate. The existing building is as close to the tulip tree as the proposed building, although the proposed new building is higher. However, officers consider that the design works well and the relationship of the trees to the building is an impressive aspect of the proposal. Providing adequate tree protection can be supplied which allows full and proper access to the building in order to construct it properly without damaging the trees in question, then officers fully support the proposal. However, there remains some issues regarding this tree protection and a further, more robust tree protection plan has been submitted to officers for their consideration. Members will be updated on this issue verbally at the committee meeting. Subject to this issue however, officers are satisfied that the overall landscaping proposals are acceptable.

Sustainability.

4.14 The University have committed themselves to sustainable forms of development and the key sustainable components of this building are as follows (copied from the supporting statement accompanying the application):

The geometry of the building (i.e. relatively narrow plan) will allow most spaces to be naturally ventilated and good day lighting to penetrate into the depths of the building. Both of these measures should substantially reduce energy consumption.

- Strong passive solar approach to reduce heating demand and manage unwanted heat gains through façade design. (e.g. provision of brise soleil and increase thermal properties of the envelope to 10-20% beyond statutory requirements).
- Task driven lighting philosophy (i.e. relatively low levels of general lighting supplemented with local task and point lighting where appropriate).
- Solar thermal hot water generation.
- Extensive use of laptops rather than PCs (PCs produce more heat).
- The designers are investigating methods of using the waste heat produced by the IT facility.
- The current intention is to use ground coupled cooling (a low energy system) for the IT facility.
- Heating to the building will be provided via the University's existing combined heat and power (CHP) plant.
- Smart Metering is proposed. This is the visual representation (e.g. via computer screens) of the carbon emissions and water consumption broken down in a manner that allows individuals to understand their own impact.
- Appropriate materials selection and waste management, to improve the ecological footprint of the building.
- It is proposed that the roof area will be used for rainwater harvesting, with captured water used for irrigation or toilet flushing. Surplus surface water will drain into the adjacent lake.



4.15 All of the above is expected to achieve a 'very good' rating under the BREEAM assessment. The full report is currently with the Council's sustainability officer for assessment and members will be updated on this at the committee meeting.

4.16 With regard to the comments of Heslington Parish Council and the Heslington Village Trust, the University has attempted to address these. They have indicated to officers that there are no undergraduates associated with the building in question and therefore the development will not result in an increase of undergraduate students on the campus and consequently there will be no additional undergraduate demand for housing. The University have stressed that any increase in post-graduate students will be extremely limited but any living demand can be met by accommodation provided at Bleachfield campus. Many of the people studying and working in the building will transfer from other departments on the campus as part of the purpose of the building is the amalgamation of departments.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

5.1 The proposal accords with local and regional planning policies with regard to the University campus. It also meets the aims, objectives and criteria of the University Development Brief.

5.2 The design of the building is contemporary and makes good use of modern, attractive materials. It will enhance the campus at this point. It integrates well with the extensive tree cover at this point and makes good use of the parkland setting which is symptomatic with much of the campus. It has been designed to interact with the mature trees on the site and officers consider that it does this successfully. Subject to the comments of the Landscape Officer on the amended tree protection details, officers have no objections to the proposal.

**6.0 RECOMMENDATION:** Approve

- 1 TIME2
- 2 PLANS1
- 3 VISQ8
- 4 HWAY18
- 5 HWAY31

- 6 Prior to the commencement of any works, details must be agreed with the Local Planning Authority of the means of access to the site and the route to be taken by vehicles transporting construction materials and equipment to and from the site, and the hours during which this will be permitted.

Reason To ensure that the works are carried out in a safe manner and with minimum disruption to users of the adjacent public highway.

- 7 ARCH2

- 8 Any contaminated material detected during site works shall be reported to the local planning authority. Any remediation for this contamination shall be agreed with the local planning authority and fully implemented prior to any further development of the site.

Reason: To protect human health and the wider environment.

- 9 Prior to the commencement of development the method of foul and surface water drainage including the expected discharge rate in any receiving watercourse shall be submitted and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason. So that the Local Planning Authority may be satisfied with these details for the proper drainage of the site.

## 7.0 INFORMATIVES:

### Contact details:

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