

Item 4

Application No. IP/17/00936/FPC

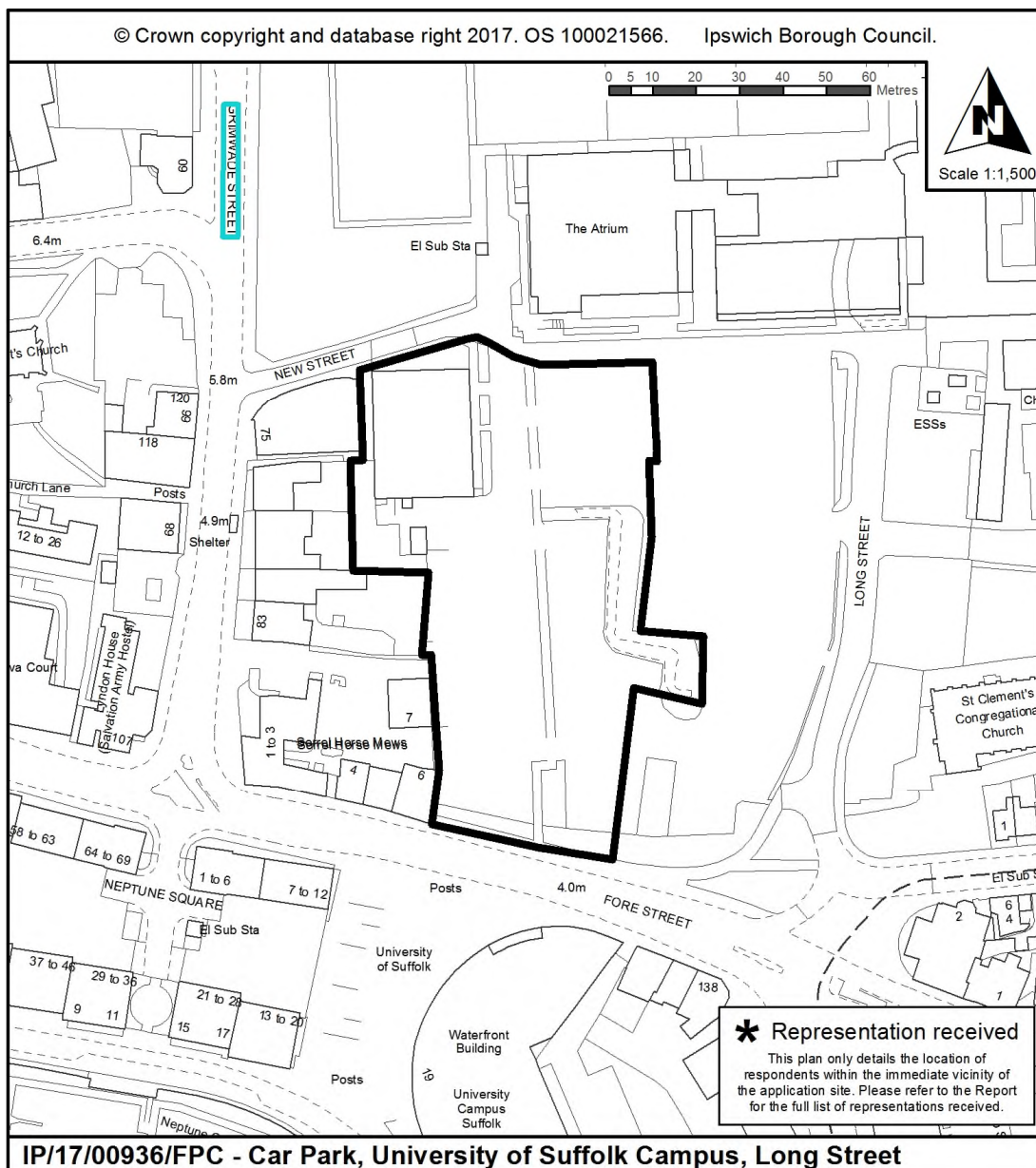
Ward: ALEXANDRA

Proposal: Application by Suffolk County Council for construction of a mostly single-storey building for Suffolk Record Offices with a double height search room and two-storey administration building. The proposals also include an education annexe with lecture hall, seminar rooms and learning centre; ancillary cafe, retail and exhibition space and landscaping. Existing university facility building on site to be demolished.

Address: Car Park, University Of Suffolk Campus, Long Street

Applicant: Suffolk County Council

Agent: Mrs Annett Thompson



Recommendation

That the Planning and Development Operations Manager be authorised to write to Suffolk County Council conveying the following recommendations:-

1. The lack of a masterplan setting for the eastern elevation is where the proposed building is at its least communicative (blank, functional volumes), and does not provide a promising setting for future development of the campus. It is considered that this element should be rethought in the context of an overall masterplan.
2. In the interests of promoting sustainable development at least 15% of energy requirements should be from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources; with the option of a green/living roof being explored, unless demonstrated that this would neither be feasible nor viable. BREEAM Very Good Standard to be met.
3. Details of cycle parking, landscaping, tree protection measures and ecology/biodiversity measures should be subject of formal discharge by means of a planning condition.

1. Proposal

The application site currently comprises a car park and decommissioned printing building associated with the educational uses surrounding the site. The site is located within the town's IP-One Area and Central Car Parking Core, with the site also partly within an Area of Archaeological Importance and adjacent to the Central Conservation Area. There are also a number of listed buildings adjacent to the site, fronting Fore Street and Grimwade Street.

The application is by Suffolk County Council on land also within the ownership of the County Council. **The application will be determined by Suffolk County Council as the relevant Local Planning Authority. Ipswich Borough Council is a consultee only.**

The printing building would be demolished and a new building is to be erected comprising storage, public search room, administration, educational floorspace including education room, lecture hall, seminar rooms (x2) and an ancillary café, retail and exhibition space. The building would have a floorspace of 4600 sq.m and would employ 24 full time equivalent employees.

The use would provide a new archive storage facility for Suffolk County Council. The project is subject to lottery funding.

The building would be constructed using red brick in flemish bond with buff brick bands and a roof comprising standing seam zinc pitched roofing, membrane flat roofing with photo voltaic cells, roof lights and ventilation louvres.

The building would front onto Fore Street where the main entrance, reception area and ancillary café is to be located. The storage and educational floorspace would be located to the north of the site where there would be further access from New Street. A pedestrian route would be formed from Fore Street to New Street and the existing university campus to the north of the site.

To the east, the development would bound the existing car park and landscaping. To the west, the development would adjoin neighbouring properties fronting Fore Street and Grimwade Street.

2. Background

There are no relevant decisions relating to this application.

3. Consultations

IBC Conservation and Design Officer – The proposal is for an archive, educational and exhibition building on the west side of the University of Suffolk's campus. The building will have entrance frontages to north and south, overlooking Fore St and giving access to New Street. The entrances will be linked by a central corridor off which the main spaces will open. Much of the building volume is expressed in the form of low, horizontal (windowless) blocks to either side of the glazed corridor (which will have a distinct presence, expressed through the continuous glazing strip and the coloured glass at either end). The most prominent features will be two pitch-roofed volumes towards the rear of the site, with seamed roofs and brick gables rising to ventilation louvres.

The site is adjacent to the Central conservation area, and adjoins grade II listed C18th and C19th buildings fronting Fore St (the location is currently a blank walled transition from the historic scale of Fore St to the large carpark on the university site).

The location is, as the architects note, a damaged edge to the historic townscape. This building will replace a raw, unfinished edge with a more completed set of spaces and volumes, with a distinctive Fore St frontage and a north entrance opening to New Street. The lack of a UoS masterplan for the remainder of the site is an important omission, however, making the long blank eastern edge of the development difficult to judge. The focussing of active frontage on the north and

south leaves this long side elevation largely unarticulated and with little sense that it can address an improved central campus space.

The scale and setback of the main entrance frontage off Fore St is carefully handled and the canopy and coloured corridor glazing will signal the buildings presence (as well as the prominent lettering). The set back will allow the blank side elevation of the listed building to remain visible, but reduced significantly in depth and mitigated by existing tree planting and the forward projection of the entrance canopy. Generally speaking, this is a satisfactory solution to the problem of positioning a large building entrance alongside smaller historic frontages. It is not entirely clear from the drawing how the junction between new and old will be achieved – whether with a direct junction or a gap.

The larger part of the scheme could be criticised for a lack of strength in concept, given the ambitious brief, the change in level through the site and the potential in the waterfront site. This is a more modest proposal and allows for the use of horizontally banded brickwork, and vertically seamed pitched roof volumes, to form a small campus of structures.

The two larger volumes will be embedded within the wider townscape and, whilst rather stark in outline, their semi industrial form has a precedent in the area (as the DAS states), and their setback within the site should allow for their visual integration into the townscape. The long west elevation is set back from the boundaries of listed buildings along this side. It is a functional relationship and lacks any public realm benefit, but the variation in built form should allow the old and new to sit alongside each other. The pitched roof form of the two larger volumes will minimise overshadowing.

The internal layout is logical and clearly organised around the central corridor. The northern entrance, inset behind a garden area, is architecturally weaker than the southern entrance, but the creation of the garden removes some of the internal redundancy noted in earlier versions of the design, and creates a welcome green space within the campus.

Materials choice is restrained and makes use of materials such as banded brickwork and metal cladding, relieved in places by timber eg the slatted screen and columns on the fore st elevation. The mix effectively underlines the industrial theme whilst avoiding the overuse of cladding. The use of glazing to the corridor, included coloured glass, is not the dramatic statement it could be but successfully highlights the entrances and the route through the building. The bold entrance lettering partly compensates for the reticence in the buildings themselves.

The lack of a masterplan setting for the eastern elevation is a serious flaw – this is where the building is at its least communicative (blank, functional volumes), and does not provide a promising setting for future development of the campus. Trees along Fore Street screen much of its negative impact from the road but its impact within the campus will be largely unmitigated.

The design is generally well handled in relation to townscape setting, however, and the Fore Steet frontage in particular is a promising addition to the streetscape, and makes a contribution to creating a more defined campus edge.

Ipswich Conservation and Design Panel –

Links to Surroundings: The design of the central ‘nave’ as a publicly accessible route through the building was welcomed (it will be closed outside of building operation hours). Some members were critical of the ramp feature, from an aesthetic and accessibility point of view, preferring access at a single level. The problems this might create with a 4 m change of level across the site were pointed out, however. Other members welcomed the design.

The garden design on the north side was well received, and members were keen that the green wall shown alongside the garden be carried out (it is not shown in all visualisations)

Building Form: A number of points were raised where it was felt the design could be improved. Panel members were critical of the eastern portion of the building, which has a blank elevation towards the university campus. The auditorium on this side is not sufficiently expressed. As a significant volume it deserves to be treated as such. Panel members were interested to hear that a sawtooth factory roof design had been considered at an earlier stage in the design process. This or other options (including cladding in a different material) should be considered, to give the auditorium more prominence and articulation.

The underuse of the large flat roof surfaces on this side of the development was also criticized – apart from the enhanced expression of the auditorium, the roof surfaces could be used for Photovoltaic cells, a sedum roof or publicly accessible terraces.

The rationale behind the horizontally banded brickwork was accepted on the lower portions of the building, but its use was criticized on the north and south facing gables of the two large blocks. One of the visualisations, from the north, emphasizes the overbearing effect of the banding in this position – members suggested blank walling would work better.

Panel members also asked that the brick specification be given careful consideration, and that a sample panel would be useful to assess the visual impact. Members would be willing to carry out a site visit to view a display panel, if necessary.

As suggested above in relation to the auditorium, greater variety of facing materials, especially along the eastern side of the development, could be worth considering.

Signage: There was concern that 'The Hold' might not communicate to visitors unfamiliar with the building's use. It was also suggested that the lettering could be used to animate the eastern elevation, criticised earlier for its blankness.

The need for secondary directional signage was highlighted. This level of detail is not shown in the application, but should be given consideration at this stage to avoid clutter or missed opportunities. The use of totem pole signage was suggested as an attractive and efficient way of signposting visitors.

Other suggestions included the possible need for bollards or other measures to prevent unauthorized parking on the grassy area in front of the main entrance. The north entrance garden was proposed as a location for public art. It was also suggested that murals from the demolished civic centre and electricity board buildings could be reused within the 'nave'.

The panel welcomed the design, which was felt to be an original and exciting addition to the townscape. Concerns mostly related to the eastern portion of the site which was felt to be poorly articulated, especially the auditorium, and underexploited as a resource, eg for PV power generation. The use of banded brickwork, whilst acceptable in principle, should be modified either with blank brickwork on the tall volume gables, or mixed with other materials. Signage design needs careful consideration.

Ipswich Society – Object

The Ipswich Society wholeheartedly support the concept of a new Records Office and Learning centre in Ipswich and agree that a location on the University campus is a suitable site.

Members are divided on the chosen name, some suggesting that 'The Hold' does not convey purpose, function or location. It is but ephemeral jargon which needs an explanation each time it is used.

The fact that the Society supports the idea of a new Records Office makes criticism of the proposed plans somewhat difficult but this is to be a major public building, one which is likely to attract more casual visitors than Endeavour House or district council offices. Thus it is imperative that the detail is right - from the beginning!

An ideal location has been selected, on a key site close to the Historic Waterfront, merely yards from where Ipswich began, probably where Anglo Saxon was first spoken and where the town's fortunes were made.

The Society were therefore expecting an architecturally striking and modern building, not only fit for the twenty first century but a building that would again put the town on the architectural trail (As the Willis building did 40 years ago). Alas it is not to be, what we have is a camel, a building that tries to meet the needs of all users and thus

becomes a mish-mash of different styles, different roof lines and windowless walls that wrap around the disparate functions within.

This is an opportunity to provide a landmark, the site has space, elevation and history, it provides a clear canvas on which to develop something outstanding. The architect has chosen to accommodate the various functions within a single storey (which may have been part of the original brief) when clearly an elevated first floor could provide Waterfront views (the precedent has been set with the University's own Waterfront Building, with the Atrium Building and with the varied height of other Education Quarter buildings).

A golden rule of architecture is that the main entrance should be obvious and accessible, the pedestrian route into the building will become a desire line and external landscaping should reflect this. The Society considers that the southern entrance fails in this respect, the 'sign' above the doors is not above the entrance, but above the doors into the café, deviation from this line will take visitors through the tangle of tables and chairs on the terrace.

The Society notes that an attempt has been made to increase the presence and interest created by the building when glanced from Grimwade Street (it will probably not be visible from Star Lane, given the presence of trees in New Street). The Society feels this elevation could be improved, perhaps with signage or engraved brickwork.

The south elevation is a disappointment in that the southern rooms within the complex are lost behind the trees; the higher roofs of the archive store are located behind the Sorrell Horse Mews complex without apparent connection to the main entrance. In the Society's opinion the opportunity for a two storey building with public access rooms on the southern end of the first floor would have overcome this problem and given the building a presence in Fore Street.

The lack of fenestration on the eastern elevation is understandable but a disappointment. The view out may only be of the car park but the view from the car park of the building would benefit from some articulation.

Again the single storey part of the complex (south of grid lines 13 west / 30 east) fails to make the most of the building and fails to make a contribution to the street scene, additionally the views from within the University campus it would benefit from being two storey. It sits low in the car park and doesn't make its presence felt.

It is reiterated that the Society supports the development of a new building for this purpose, and that the University campus is an ideal location but that the Society is disappointed by the building presented to the Planning Committee.

4. Policy

National Planning Policy

- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (2014)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. It clearly states the Government's planning policy and is a material consideration when determining planning applications.

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development that recognises the importance of transport policies in facilitating sustainable development, and that planning decisions should have regard to local circumstances.

The Ipswich Local Plan adopted in February 2017 consists of the following two development plan documents (DPDs):

- Core Strategy and Policies DPD review; and
- Site Allocations and Policies (incorporating IP-One Area Action Plan) DPD.

Core Strategy and Policies DPD

- Policies CS15 (Education Provision), DM1 (Sustainable Design and Construction), DM2 (Decentralised Renewable or Low Carbon Energy), DM5 (Design and Character), DM8 (Heritage Assets and Conservation), DM10 (Protection of Trees and Hedgerows), DM17 (Transport and Access in New Developments), DM18 (Car & Cycle Parking), DM22 (Town Centre Uses Outside the Central Shopping Area), DM23 (Retail Proposals Outside Defined Centres), DM31 (The Natural Environment) and DM32 (Protection and Provision of Community Facilities).

Other guidance

- Cycling Strategy SPD (2016)

Legislation

Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides that, when a local planning authority considers whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting, it must have "special regard" to the desirability of preserving the building,

its setting and any special architectural or historic features; and special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

5. Comment

The main issues relate to the appropriateness of the use in this location, design and appearance, trip generation and associated impacts and tree impact.

The proposal involves additional educational floorspace on an appropriate and accessible site within the 'educational quarter' of the IP-One Area. The site is accessible by public transport and is within close proximity to the town centre. The proposal would be appropriate having regard to policy CS15 which states that the Council will continue to support the development of educational facilities at Suffolk New College and the University of Suffolk and policy DM32 which states that the Council will work with partners to ensure that a range of local community facilities is made available and retained to meet local needs, including educational facilities.

The accessible location of the site is also a significant factor when considering the impact of the proposal in terms of trip generation, parking and highway impact. In these regards, the Highway Authority would be a statutory consultee and the local planning authority, in this case Suffolk County Council will need to take into account any comments received as part of the decision making process.

Policy DM17 seeks to promote sustainable growth in Ipswich and to reduce the impact of traffic congestion. Policy DM18 states that minimum cycle parking standards will be required with maximum car parking standards given the location of the site within the Central Car Parking Core and IP-One Area.

The Cycling Strategy SPD (2016) sets out how applicants should promote and facilitate cycling from the outset of planning a development. It also sets out the Council's vision for cycling in Ipswich and identifies strategic cycling routes which the Council would wish to see enhanced, placing on-site provision within the context of the Borough-wide network. The guidance reiterates the need for cycle parking having regard to the Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2015).

It is considered that the development would be appropriate in principle having regard to policy DM17 and DM18, subject to provision of cycle parking in accordance with the Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2015) and having regard to the Cycling Strategy SPD (2016).

There are a number of trees within the site that are protected by a formal tree preservation order. Policy DM10 requires a tree report where development would affect trees, including those with a preservation order. Such a report has been

carried out and the application involves the removal of 7 individual trees and 6 other landscape features of a low to moderate amenity value. Although the loss of these trees and their replacement with a new building would inevitably alter the character of the area, it is considered that the benefits of the development would outweigh the loss of the trees identified above provided new planting mitigates against the loss. Furthermore, the trees of highest amenity value on the sites Fore Street frontage are to be retained. On balance, and subject to a new landscaping scheme and measures to protect the trees to be retained, the proposal is considered acceptable having regard to policy DM10. It is recommended that any grant of planning permission be subject to conditions relating to new landscaping and tree protection.

Policy DM8 relates to heritage assets, including the adjacent Central Conservation Area, listed buildings and archaeology, with the principle aim of protecting these assets. Policy DM5 requires all new development to be well designed and sustainable, with policy DM1 encouraging non-residential development of more than 500 sq. m to achieve BREEAM Very Good and policy DM2 requiring non-residential development of 1000 sq. m to provide at least 15% of their energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources, unless demonstrated that this would neither be feasible nor viable.

It is recommended that any grant of planning permission be subject to a condition requiring 15% energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources in order to comply with policy DM2, with the applicant encouraged to achieve at least BREEAM Very Good having regard to policy DM1.

In terms of design and appearance, the views of the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer have been sought. The Officer recommends approval, but comments that the lack of a masterplan setting for the eastern elevation is a serious flaw. However, the design is generally well handled in relation to townscape setting and the Fore Street frontage in particular is a promising addition to the streetscape that makes a contribution to creating a more defined campus edge.

The application has also been considered by the Ipswich Conservation and Design Panel. They concluded that the design was an original and exciting addition to the townscape. However, concerns were also raised with regard to the eastern elevation, which was considered to be poorly articulated, especially the auditorium, and underexploited as a resource, eg for photo voltaic power generation.

Comments were also raised with regard to the use of banded brickwork which, whilst acceptable in principle, should be modified to either blank brickwork on the tall gables or mixed with other materials.

A further comment was also made that signage design would need careful consideration, although it should be noted that this would be subject to controls under the advertisement regulations.

Officers do feel that in the main the large expressed volumes of the document storage areas are well expressed and will provide a dynamic focus to the building. Whilst the large flat roofed area to the east of the building over the auditorium areas

is less well expressed it offers an opportunity for a green roof and it is considered that in the interests of air quality and sustainable building design this should be explored.

It is recommended that these comments are conveyed to the County Council so that they can be taken into account when they consider the impact of the development upon heritage assets in accordance with legislation and in general design and appearance terms having regard to policies DM5 and DM8.

It is recommended that the impact of the proposal is considered in consultation with Archaeological Officers at Suffolk County Council given the location of the site partly within an Area of Archaeological Importance.

The proposal does include some town centre uses, including small scale and ancillary retail and café uses. These are located outside of the Central Shopping Area, town centre and district centres and therefore it needs to be considered as to whether or not such floorspace would be appropriate in this location. However, the floorspace involved would be small scale and ancillary to the primary use within Class D1 'non-residential institution'. It would not be reasonable to require such floorspace to be located within an existing centre nor would the floorspace detract from existing centres given its limited scale and impact. The proposal would be appropriate having regard to policies DM22 and DM23.

Policy DM31 expects all developments to incorporate measures to enhance conditions for biodiversity within and around the development. It is recommended that any grant of planning permission be subject to a condition requiring such measures.

6. Conclusion

It is recommended that the Planning and Development Operations Manager be authorised to write to Suffolk County Council conveying the recommendations of the Conservation and Urban Design Officer and Ipswich Conservation and Design Panel.

Furthermore any permission should be subject conditions requiring at least 15% of energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources, including the potential for a green roof, unless demonstrated that this would neither be feasible nor viable and conditions requiring details of cycle parking, landscaping, tree protection and biodiversity measures. The applicant should also be encouraged to achieve at least BREEAM Very Good.