

DECISION DATE 24 May 2005	APPLICATION NO. 05/00428/FUL A23	PLANNING COMMITTEE: 27 June 2005
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF STORAGE UNIT AND GARAGES AND ERECTION OF NEW OFFICE BUILDING TO PROVIDE 4335SQM ACCOMMODATION		SITE ADDRESS LAND TO THE REAR OF 17 - 49 BULK ROAD, LANCASTER, LA1 1DN.
APPLICANT: LPN Ltd., 52 Chapel Street, Lancaster, LA2 0JR.		AGENT: Harrison Pitt Architects

REASON FOR DELAY

N/A.

PARISH NOTIFICATION

This is not an area within which there is a Parish Council.

LAND USE ALLOCATION/DEPARTURE

Lancaster District Local Plan - The site is unallocated and is largely previously developed land.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

County Highways - No major objections subject to a Section 106 Agreement covering public transport contribution and conditions covering off-site highway works and travel plans.

Chief Engineer - no objection in principle, proposed parking well below maximum set by current standards.

Property Services - no objection.

Environment Agency - no objection - various conditions regarding potential contamination and drainage.

United Utilities - no objection.

Environmental Health - no objection in principle subject to conditions regarding contamination, construction hours and noise, air quality and pile driving.

Economic Development Officer - fully supports the proposal in so far as it would contribute significantly to the economic development of the District.

Chamber of Commerce - supports the general principal of the proposal but is concerned about increased traffic congestion.

Fire Authority - no response received.

Building Surveyor - no objection from the structural point of view.

Real Planning for Lancaster - no response received.

Civic Society - no response received.

Any further views of consultees in respect of the revised proposals will be reported at Committee.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED

16 letters have been received objecting to the submitted proposal on the grounds of:-

Over development of the site, too tall and large and too close to the properties on Bulk Road; loss of day light, sun light, outlook, view and privacy; too close to rear garden boundaries creating an urban alleyway; detrimental to residential amenities; visually intrusive and unattractive; will generate too much traffic on an already congested road; will add to pollution and be noisy and disruptive, existing garages are a vital amenity to the area.

Any further observations in respect of the amended proposals will be reported at Committee.

REPORT

The Site and it's Surroundings

This application relates to what is at present a backland lock-up garage court site behind a terrace of two storey residential properties fronting Bulk Road and the overgrown, lightly wooded embankment dropping down to Back Caton Road. The combined site will therefore have its own road frontage to Back Caton Road from which vehicular and pedestrian access would be taken.

It is currently occupied by two rows of lock up garages and an extensive manoeuvring area which is accessed from the residential back streets but is separated from them by a line of metal bollards.

The Proposed Development

This proposal is a full application to clear the lock-up garages and excavate the majority of the site down to the level of Back Caton Road and then to erect an office development set into the embankment, fronting Back Caton Road and taking all access from it.

The original proposal was for a long, predominantly five storey building rising to six storeys in its centre section, of modern design with more pitched roofs but ashlar stone wall facings. This equated to a three to four storey development in relation to the Bulk Road properties at a separation distance varying between 9 and 17 metres.

Following the initial consultation process and subsequent negotiations, revised proposals have now been submitted which significantly reduce the height of the building while still accommodating five floors over the main length rising to six in the centre.

This proposal also moves the mass of the building above the rear ground floor level, significantly further away from the houses on Bulk Road at both ground and first floor levels. It contains the third floor within the revised ridge roof profile of the main element and drastically reduces the height and extent of the fourth floor, mono pitched roof centre section. To achieve this it cantilevers these floors further forward towards Back Caton Road.

In this revised form, therefore, the proposal comprises a contemporary building with a main longitudinal element fronting Back Caton Road with a low pitched slate grey steel roof with a central raised and mono pitched feature which also projects closer towards Back Caton Road. The walling will be ashlar stone throughout with glazed curtain walling the projecting areas of the front elevation with elements of opaque cladding and gloss black walls to the rear.

This revised design reflects the architectural vocabulary of Lancaster in a contemporary manner which will complement the Kingsway development and set the scene for the future redevelopment of the K Shoes site. It will also establish valuable pedestrian links across the site and along Back Caton Road.

The proposal also includes the provision of 32 car parking spaces, motor cycle and cycle spaces within the ground floor, all accessed from Back Caton Road and a pedestrian crossing to facilitate access.

Policies

Policy EC6 of the Lancaster District Local Plan supports new employment development which:-

makes satisfactory access and parking provision; is sustainably located in terms of pedestrian, cycle and public transport access; is appropriate to its surrounding in siting, scale, design and appearance; uses appropriate high quality materials and does not have a significant adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenities.

It is considered that it meets all of these requirements and will upgrade the environment of this locality.

With particular regard to the relationship with the houses on Bulk Road, the spacing distances have increased to between 13 and 18 metres and the main profile of the building reduced to an apparent tall, two storey height with the first floor set back a further 2.7 metres. Given the normal spacing between blocks in this part of the City, coupled with the fact that main living rooms to these houses face Bulk Road and all houses have substantial rear wings to which the quoted distances have been measures, it would be difficult to argue that the relationship is inappropriate. Added to this, the rear of the apparent first floor offices would be lit by opaque glass block walling rather than windows to prevent any loss of privacy.

A similar balance must be struck between loss of outlook, sun light and openness raised by objectors and the screening effect from traffic noise and fumes that the building would provide. Members have always been aware that views cannot be protected in planning terms but reasonable expectations about general amenity must be protected. It is concluded that on balance the reasonable amenities of the occupants of the neighbouring properties are protected by these amended proposals.

Access

It is understood that these proposals have been formulated and designed in full consultation with the County Highway Authority and it is anticipated that their views will be reported at Committee.

Conclusion

On balance it is considered that these proposals in their revised form are acceptable in terms of their impact on existing development and will make a major contribution to the character, appearance and vitality of this important entrance to the City centre, while complementing the Kingsway development and setting an appropriate and contemporary theme for the redevelopment of the long vacant K Shoes site, as well as contributing to the economic development of the District.

It is considered, therefore, that this proposal can now be supported.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

This application has to be considered in relation to the provisions of the Human Rights Act, in particular Article 8 (privacy/family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). Having regard to the principles of proportionality, it has been concluded that there are no issues arising from the proposal which appear to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with

RECOMMENDATIONS

That subject to the views of the County Highways Authority, PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to the following conditions:-

1. Standard five year permission.
2. Amended plans.
3. Development in accordance with approved plans.
4. Samples of all external materials to be agreed.
5. Details of stonework coursing, string courses and copings to be as indicated.
6. Details of windows, doorways and gloss black walling, including set backs and finishes to be agreed.
7. Details of external window clearing system/facilities to be agreed.
8. Details of external works and landscaping to be agreed.
9. Parking to be provided and retained.
10. Footpaths and pedestrian crossing to be provided as indicated.
11. Hours of construction.
12. Details of management arrangements for construction period including site access, storage and compound areas and controls over fires, dust etc.
13. Details of drainage system to be agreed.
14. Noise and air quality measures as required by Environmental Health Officer.
15. As requested by consultees.