

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a part 2 storey, part 4 storey extension (in height) along with elevational alterations to the Huxley Building.

A total of approximately 1550 square metres of new floorspace is proposed

The alterations proposed to the existing building include new cladding and new windows.

The extension is needed to house additional teaching laboratory space due to anticipated student growth in scientific academic study.

The site lies outside of, but adjacent to, the Grade II Registered Parkland and Garden of Special Historic Interest at Keele Hall. This part of the University campus lies within the Rural Area and a Landscape Maintenance Area, but not within the Green Belt, all as indicated on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The 13 week period for the determination of this application expires on 22nd June 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Subject to no representations being received by the 2nd June which raise material planning objections to the development which have not already been addressed in this report and which cannot be addressed by appropriate conditions.**

PERMIT subject to conditions relating to the following:-

- 1. Time limit**
- 2. Approved drawings**
- 3. Materials**
- 4. Off-site replacement tree planting and on-site landscaping scheme**
- 5. Tree protection measures during construction inclusive of provision to retain tree T3**

- B. If such representations are received, that the application be referred back to a subsequent meeting of the Planning Committee for reconsideration**

Reason for Recommendations

The extra space proposed is required to meet an area of student growth identified by the University. The development will enhance the appearance of the existing building which is in need of rejuvenation. Trees of amenity value would be lost but as a consequence of the development but the loss is unavoidable if this building is to be extended, given this location is the only sensible option available to increase the size of the existing building. It is also the case that 'one for one' replacement tree planting is proposed elsewhere on the campus in order to mitigate the tree loss which whilst regrettable is not materially harmful to the prevailing character of the area. The last date for public comment on this application does fall after the date of the Committee, so an appropriate delegated authority does need to be obtained to ensure that the final decision of the Authority is made after the end of that period, and any further comments made by that date are taken into account.

Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with the planning application

The proposal is considered to be a sustainable form of development in compliance with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and no amendments were considered necessary.

Key Issues

The application is for extension and alteration of the Huxley Building. The building is currently used for Biology/ Life Science functions of the University. It sits on a site measuring approximately 0.5 of a hectare. The Faculty of Natural Sciences, of which Biology/ Life Sciences is part of is located in several buildings on the campus – known as the Colin Reaves, Huxley, Lennard Jones and William Smith buildings.

The extension proposed has a maximum height of 15.5 metres lowering to 8.5 metres due to sloping ground levels and the number of storeys proposed. The extension is needed to provide additional teaching spaces with associated office, storage and ancillary support facilities. It is to be situated on land which presently consists of trees and soft landscaping. Some tree removal is required in order to build the extension.

In terms of alterations to the existing building this entails new composite panel cladding. The cladding is to match the new extension and a main entrance feature point. Existing windows are also to be replaced with double glazed aluminium windows finished in grey.

The site lies outside of, but adjacent to, the Grade II Registered Parkland and Garden of Special Historic Interest at Keele Hall. It does however fall within the Landscape Maintenance Area defined on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The application does not include any provision for new areas of parking nor will it result in a reduction in existing parking levels. The University has stated there is sufficient parking elsewhere within the campus to accommodate the extension without any additional capacity required for this particular development. Those views are accepted by officers. The key issues therefore to consider are:-

1. Is the design of the development, including the impact on the special character of the nearby historic parkland and on the landscape as a whole, acceptable?
2. Is the tree loss proposed acceptable?

1. Is the design of the development, including the impact on the special character of the nearby historic parkland and on the landscape as a whole, acceptable?

Paragraph 56 of the NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 64 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

CSS Policy CSP1 states that new development should be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent's unique townscape and landscape and in particular, the built heritage, its historic environment, its rural setting and the settlement pattern created by the hierarchy of centres. It states that new development should protect important and longer distance views of historic landmarks and rural vistas and contribute positively to an area's identity and heritage (both natural and built) in terms of scale, density, layout, use of appropriate vernacular materials for buildings and surfaces and access. The policy is consistent with the NPPF.

The prevailing character of the area consists of existing campus buildings with mature trees in the background. The proposed extension together with the alterations have been designed to give a more modern appearance to the existing building façade. The elevations proposed mostly comprise of a mixture of green terracotta panels, and structural glazing, with a masonry plinth band below. Another key component of the design is that the new entrance has been emphasised to be the main focal point replacing the current low key entrance point serving the building. This is achieved by a narrow four storey element projecting out towards Central Drive. New soft landscaping is to be introduced around the edges of the development.

The appearance of the alterations involves enhancement – uplifting the existing tired appearance of the building. The architecture proposed incorporates a vertical and horizontal emphasis to the building to generate interest and a bespoke quality. It is not considered necessary to require further alterations to the glazing design as suggested by the Council's Conservation Officer. The position, scale and appearance of the extension itself does not impact harmfully on the Park and Garden the nearest part

of which is situated diagonally opposite across Keele Hall Road. Contextually the Historic Park and Garden incorporates many halls of residence and university buildings. There are however tree removal matters which also need to be borne in mind which are now considered.

2. Is the tree loss proposed acceptable?

Saved Local Plan Policy N12 states that the Council will resist development that would involve the removal of any visually significant tree, shrub or hedge, unless the need for the development is sufficient to warrant the tree loss and the loss cannot be avoided by appropriate siting or design. Where exceptionally, permission can be given and trees are to be lost through development, replacement planting will be required on an appropriate scale and in accordance with a landscaping scheme. Where appropriate, developers will be expected to set out what measures will be taken during the development to protect trees from damage.

A total of 7 trees need to be removed to facilitate the built development. None of the trees concerned are subject to a Tree Preservation Order but they do have amenity value – with all being assessed as being of quality B. The Design and Access Statement indicates that several alternative options were considered, including extending other buildings of the same Faculty but for operational reasons the decision made was to propose an extension to the Huxley building. As some of the consultees acknowledge, the scale of the tree loss is less significant when compared with the total tree cover in the vicinity. ‘One for one’ tree replacements are proposed on sites adjacent to the David Weatherall Building elsewhere on the campus which is next to the main entrance to the University – that would not compensate for the loss but it should still be sought.

There is a recommendation from the Landscape Development Section that another tree (a mature oak of ‘A’ quality), opposite the entrance to the Lennard Jones building should be retained – the reason for its removal being a proposed realignment of the adjacent road. This is a particularly visually prominent tree that forms a focal point on Central Drive. The University’s planned changes to the kerb line of and lighting of Central Drive which is a main pedestrian thoroughfare for students apparently make that approach difficult and the preference of the University is to remove the tree. Whilst the loss of the other trees is justified by the need for the extension which is the subject of this application, such an argument does not apply to this other tree particularly given it’s ‘A’ quality.

Policies and proposals in the approved development plan relevant to this decision:-

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) 2006-2026

Policy ASP6: Rural Area Spatial Policy
Policy CSP1: Design Quality
Policy CSP2: Historic Environment
Policy CSP3: Sustainability and Climate Change
Policy CSP4: Natural Assets

Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (NLP) 2011

Policy N17: Landscape Character – General Considerations
Policy N19: Landscape Maintenance Areas
Policy N12: Development and the Protection of Trees

Other Material Considerations include:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014)

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Planning for Landscape Change – Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Structure Plan

Relevant Planning History

None relevant.

Views of Consultees

Keele Parish Council consider that the loss of trees is regrettable in this location and ask that a condition be included to ensure that trees are replanted elsewhere or landscaping provided to ensure that the strong green character of the campus is retained.

The **Conservation Area Working Party** felt that even though the scale of the new extension was considerable, it would not be a harmful impact of the Historic Park and Garden nearby.

Environmental Protection have no objections subject to:-

1. Internal noise levels being provided as proposed.
2. Construction hours being restricted

The Council's **Urban Design and Conservation Officer** comments that the mature trees on site to be removed is regrettable but the other trees in close proximity to the site will be retained and still provide the right setting for the new extension. Based on the information provided, the new extension and creation of landscaped spaces and seating around the building give it an uplift and enlivenment quality. The contemporary design proposed takes reference from the existing building and will not impact harmfully on the Park and Garden which is situated opposite the Drive.

The **Landscape Development Section** comment that it is disappointing that the proposal would mean the loss of so many significant mature trees. The small space in which the trees are growing is typical of the green spaces that are important to the character of this part of the university. Nevertheless the scale of tree loss is less significant when compared to the total tree cover in the vicinity and they would accept the loss of trees necessary for the building. However the reason for the proposed removal of the important category 'A' oak tree, is due to proposed realignment of the adjacent road (Central Drive) and the Section object to removal of that tree. This tree if retained would be visually prominent and a focal point. It is requested that more detailed information is provided in relation to how it is proposed to modify the road and that adjustments are made to enable the tree to be retained, including construction details and special engineering as necessary. The loss of other specified trees will reduce the screening and create a gap to Keele Hall Road through which the proposed building will be clearly visible. The proposal to replant elsewhere on the campus does not compensate the tree loss to the development site, however the Section would support this being done to balance total tree cover over the campus. Permission if granted should be subject to provision of tree protection measures for remaining trees in the vicinity of the works. Permission should also be subject to approval of a landscaping scheme, including replacement tree planting elsewhere.

The **Garden History Society** have also been consulted but no comments have been received from them by the due date.

Representations

None received

Applicant's/Agent's submission

Application forms and indicative plans have been submitted along with a Design and Access Statement, Noise Assessment, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Planning Statement. The application documents are available for inspection at the Guildhall and via the following link www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning/1500235FUL

Background papers

Planning files referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

14th May 2015