

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 2 storey extension with basement level to the David Weatherall Building. The building is used for medical research and teaching purposes.

A total of 1047 square metres of new floor space is proposed.

The extension is needed to provide additional office space to accommodate around 80-90 extra staff members arising from a planned expansion of the existing medical research facility.

It is indicated by the applicant that an existing temporary 50 space car park to the north of the Stephenson building is to be made permanent as part of the proposals.

This part of the University campus lies within a Policy E8 area which is anticipated for academic, staff/student residences, business and employment opportunities linked to the University but is outside of any other specific landscape designation, although within the Rural Area, all as shown on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The site of the building lies outside of, but near to, the Grade II Registered Parkland whilst that of car park lies within the Registered parkland.

The 13 week period for the determination of this application expires on 5th October 2015.

RECOMMENDATION

PERMIT subject to conditions relating to the following:-

- 1. Time limit**
- 2. Approved drawings**
- 3. Materials**
- 4. Implementation of landscaping**
- 5. Car parking provision plus permeable areas**
- 6. Glazing transition details**

Reason for Recommendation

The extension is required to expand the existing medical research facilities offered by the University. The design of the extension is in keeping with the architecture of the existing building which occupies a very prominent position adjacent to the main entrance point of the University campus. Substantial landscaping is to be introduced around the periphery of the building. This will provide further enhancement and reduce the dominance of retaining walling needed on the roadside foreground due to significant level changes. The making of a remote but within reasonable walking distance existing "temporary" car park permanent, does not in practice add any additional parking to the campus, although it "secures" it.. However surveys have indicated some spare capacity at the 3 car parks in question and this alongside other campus parking availability is considered sufficient to accommodate additional staff without detriment to public safety.

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

Following on from pre-application negotiations 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 are considered necessary.

Key Issues

The application is for extension of the David Weatherall Building which is used for medical research. The building sits adjacent to the northernmost entrance to the University Campus off Keele Road (A525). An expansion of the research facility is required to accommodate, a further, 80-90 staff members. The extension proposed has a maximum height of 8.6 metres. The extension is to provide primarily open office areas with some support facilities such as a staff room and printing room.

The David Weatherall Building benefits from 153 parking spaces and that immediate parking area is not proposed to be increased. The application instead seeks approval to form a permanent car park located to the north east of the Stephenson Building elsewhere within the Campus to provide 50 parking spaces. The key issues to consider are:-

1. Is the design of the development and impact on the visual appearance of the landscape as a whole acceptable?
2. Is the impact to the local road network inclusive of the amount of additional car parking to be provided acceptable?

1. Is the design of the development and impact on the visual appearance of the landscape as a whole acceptable?

Paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) 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 Framework

The Council's Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document provides further detailed advice as to how design should be assessed in complement to Policy CSP1.

The David Weatherhall building has a curved and segmented footprint with a series of stepped sloping roofs, and partly cantilevered elements facing onto Keele Road on its northern side. The building occupies an extremely prominent location at the main entrance point to the University campus.

The proposed extension continues the curved footprint of the host building and is to have matching external facing materials comprising of reconstituted stone at ground floor level with smooth sliver cladding to the first floor elevations and roof. The roof of the proposed extension is flat rather than sloping – although the dominant roof form of the existing building is sloping there are already flat roofed elements on the opposite, southern side of the building. The window proportions and cladding have been designed to be in keeping with the existing building as has the integration of the new roof.

Independent Design Review comments (from Urban Vision) have been obtained by the applicant prior to submitting the planning application. The comments received toward the design approach proposed – which is to match the existing building – are largely favourable however there was some concern that a significant change in level is required to be maintained to the rear of the building supported by an approximate 3 metre high retaining wall. Due to the level difference and prominence of the retaining wall, Urban Vision have advised that soft landscaping around the proposed extension be carefully considered.

In response to this specific concern a landscaping scheme has been developed by the applicant. It includes climbing plants to be introduced on the gabion wall feature (curved to reflect the shape of the

building) as well as the removal of an existing exterior drainage ditch – replacing it with a landscaped swale/wetland channel adjacent to the internal campus road. The scheme also includes the planting of Cherry trees along the corner of the main entrance road facing the A525 roundabout to create an Avenue effect along with flower planting, the regrading of slopes surrounding the building, and a hedge on the southern side of the building.

With respect to other points raised at Design Review the applicant has also submitted details of how the proposed roof areas will successfully integrate together and the size of window proportions for the extension have been kept as large as possible alongside the specific configuration of internal floor space arrangements in order to maximise natural light levels received internally.

Overall Officers agree that the right design approach had been adopted. The architecture and form of the extension fits appropriately with the existing building. In view of the complexity and constraints of the existing building due to its curvature and stepped roof, the proposal offers a good solution for the expansion required. The submitted landscaping details accompanying the scheme reflect the important gateway nature of the location and would provide visual enhancement.

2. Is the impact to the local highway network inclusive of the amount of additional car parking provided acceptable?

The most up to date policy advice which is contained within the Framework states that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

In terms of the local highway network impact, the Gallowstree Lane roundabout which links with Keele Road has in recent years been upgraded to support the expansion of the University campus. Taking into account that improvement the additional traffic resulting from extending the building is not considered detrimental to the function of the immediate public highway network. It is also the case that the internal roads within the campus do not form part of the public highway – these are maintained and managed by the University itself.

With respect to car parking matters, a development of this size would require a maximum of 35 car parking spaces. The David Weatherall Building car park has 153 parking spaces. The application does not seek to extend that car park but instead proposes the making of a remote, but within reasonable walking distance, existing “temporary” car park permanent. That does not in practice add any additional parking to the campus, although it “secures” it. Surveys have indicated some spare capacity at the 3 car parks in question and this alongside other campus parking availability is considered sufficient to accommodate additional staff without detriment to public safety. In terms

Subject to provision of the permanent car parking area applied for the Highway Authority have no objections.

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

Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (NLP) 2011

Policy N17: Landscape Character – General Considerations
Policy E8: Keele University and Keele Science Park

Other Material Considerations include:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014)

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke on Trent Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

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

Relevant Planning History

01/00874/FUL	Proposed medical school and primary care science research centre	Permitted 2001
12/00383/FUL	Single storey rear extension, two storey side extension and first floor side extension.	Permitted 2012
13/00634/FUL	First floor extension	Permitted 2013
14/00953/FUL	Erection of a single storey extension and new canopy over existing service yard	Permitted 2015

It is also relevant to point out that an extension to the existing car park to the rear of the Stephenson Building for a new day nursery was permitted under planning application 11/00272/FUL in 2011.

Views of Consultees

Keele Parish Council have not provided any comments by the due date, and so must be assumed to have no objections to the proposal.

Urban Vision Design Review Panel reviewed the scheme at pre-application stage. They commented that the proposed extension will maintain the height of the existing building, which is two storeys, but will take advantage of a fall in ground level towards the road by providing a basement at the corner. The Panel noted that there are two main design approaches to consider in extending an existing building – to continue the design themes provided by the current building and to blend in with the existing, or alternatively to provide a counterpoint to the existing design and to create a new identity for the development. In this case the uses involved are low key activities involving research desks, offices and storage, and the Panel agreed that the approach adopted of blending in with the existing building is more appropriate in the circumstances.

They recommend that careful attention should be paid to the re-design of the landscape setting of the building, in order to ensure that the change in levels is resolved satisfactorily and the proposed retaining wall is not a visually dominating feature at the main gateway to the University Campus. The proposed glazed transition panel between the existing building and the proposed extension should be carefully detailed to ensure clear vertical separation between the two parts of the building. Consideration should be given to re-ordering the internal layout of the building to provide a greater amount of shared window space, so as to provide improved levels of natural day lighting to the open plan offices.

Overall the Panel advised that the right design approach has been adopted, the envelope of the building is well considered, and the extension fits appropriately with the existing building. In view of the complexity and constraints of the existing building, the proposal offers a good solution. The report of the Panel is available to view as one of the documents submitted with the application.

Environmental Health Division have no objections.

The **Landscape Development Section** have been consulted but no comments have been received from them by the due date.

The **Coal Authority** have no objections.

The **County Council Flood Risk Team** have no objections but recommend that although the proposed increase in the size of the building is relatively small from a drainage management perspective the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be used where possible. The plans for the extension show a swale / wetland area which could be designed to accommodate roof water from the proposed extension. The extension to the car parking area could utilise permeable paving to provide treatment and attenuation for surface water run off.

The **Highway Authority** have indicated that they have no objections provided the development is not brought into use until the permanent car park has been provided, and it should thereafter be retained

Garden History Society have a been consulted but no comments have been received from them by the due date and so must be assumed to have no objections to the proposal.

Representations

None received by the due date.

Applicant's/Agent's submission

Application forms and indicative plans have been submitted along with a Design Review Panel Report, Design and Access Statement, Transport Assessment and Phase One Desk Study Contamination Report. The application documents are available for inspection at the Guildhall and via the following link www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning/1500583FUL

Background papers

Planning files referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

4 August 2015