

The Application seeks full planning permission for the construction of a building for use as a treatment, assessment and research facility for children with autism with associated car parking and landscaping.

The site is part of that allocated on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map for employment/higher education-led development (Local Plan Proposal E8) and it also lies within an Area of Landscape Maintenance. The site is close to the Grade II Registered Parkland and Garden of Special Historic Interest at Keele Hall.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Permit, subject to conditions relating to the following: -

- 1. Time Limit**
- 2. Approved drawings**
- 3. Prior approval of all facing and surfacing materials (including the boundary wall and timber cladding of the cycle store, bin store, staff break out area etc), and implementation of approved details.**
- 4. Prior approval of the external appearance of the smoking shelters and implementation of the approved details.**
- 5. Prior approval of landscaping and implementation of approved details.**
- 6. Prior approval and implementation of methods to protect existing vegetation to the eastern and southern boundaries during the construction phase.**
- 7. Prior approval of any external lighting and implementation of approved details.**
- 8. Prior approval and implementation of methods to prevent mud and debris being deposited on the highway during construction.**
- 9. Contaminated land conditions.**
- 10. Provision of parking, servicing and turning areas prior to occupation.**
- 11. Prior approval and implementation of cycle parking facilities.**
- 12. Prior approval and provision of bird and bat boxes in accordance with the recommendation of the Ecological Assessment.**

2) That the Committee resolve that, for the avoidance of any doubt, it would not consider it expedient to take any enforcement action with respect to any breach of the obligation of the 1997 Section 106 agreement which this particular development might represent, without prejudice to its position should Caudwells Charity subsequently vacate the premises.

Reason for Recommendation

The principle of the development on this site is acceptable and is supported by local and national policy. The design and appearance of the proposal is of high quality and should be fully supported. Subject to conditions, the development does not raise any highway safety concerns and includes adequate parking provision.

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

Full planning permission is sought for the construction of a building on plot 9 of the University Science and Innovation Park. The proposed building is up to three storeys in height and is designed as two intersecting sections each with an internal courtyard in a 'butterfly' (or figure of 8) shape. The building is to be used as a Children Centre of Excellence involving treatment, assessment and research facility for children with autism.

An Ecological Appraisal has been submitted in support of the application which indicates that there is very limited ecological interest identified on the site.

It is considered that the main issues to address are as follows:

- The principle of the proposed development on this site.
- The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and the associated landscaping.
- Parking and highway safety.

Principle of the development

Saved policy E8 of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (NLP) states that development will be permitted on this site and land adjoining so long as it is limited to one or more of the following uses:

- i) Academic functions
- ii) Staff and student residences
- iii) Employment uses directly related to or complementary to the University's core activities including conference, training, retail and leisure for use of students, staff, conference delegates and their visitors and in the case of leisure facilities the wider community.
- iv) Class B1 uses directly related to the university's functional activities but excluding manufacturing or storage of large tonnages or mass production of goods.

Policy SP1 of the Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) indicates that one of the spatial principles of targeted regeneration is that Keele University and Science Park will continue to be the focus for high value business growth in a range of knowledge based industries. Policy SP2 of the CSS indicates that one of the spatial principles of economic development is harnessing the creative and knowledge assets of North Staffordshire to develop high value business growth, in particular investment in Keele University and Keele Science Park. Such policies are considered to be consistent with the NPPF and therefore should be afforded considerable weight.

The proposed treatment, assessment and research facility falls either within Class Class D1 (non-residential institutions) or perhaps more appropriately should be considered a 'hybrid' use. The development is for the Caudwell Charity and will provide a purpose built facility to support children and young people with Special Education Needs by providing accessible school buildings, and occupation, speech and language, and complimentary therapies together with access to medical specialists. The facilities will also enable research into autism and other disabilities and will incorporate technology and an IT infrastructure that will enable therapists to reach families through remote or online access. The full extent of the uses proposed on the site does not fully align with the uses identified in NLP policy E8. In addition it is not a business/economic development as encouraged by CSS policies SP1 and SP2. The proposed use would, however, complement the Medical School with its research into autism and related children's disorder and provide an opportunity for collaborative work with the University. As such it is considered that the proposal does have a close relationship with the research activities of the University which was the reasoned justification for policy E8 of the NLP.

The development of the site as proposed would not prevent the development of the remaining plots of the Science and Innovation Park for purposes intended within the Development Plan and could, potentially, be a catalyst for further development on such plots.

Overall it is considered that the proposal accords with the spirit of Development Plan policy and should be supported in principle.

It should be noted that the site is bound by a S106 obligation entered into in 1997 which includes an obligation that the land is used exclusively for all or any of a number of identified purposes which are similar, but not identical to, the uses referred to in Policy E8. The purposes listed in the S106 include academic functions; employment uses directly related to the University and uses complementary to it, and uses within Class B1 including research and development activities. To some extent, therefore the proposed use does accord with this obligation, however it is debatable as to whether the medical services and the access to therapists aspect of the development accord with the obligation. Notwithstanding this it is considered that planning permission could be granted in principle without amendment of the S106. Enforcement of the requirements of the obligation would not be justified, in the public interest, in response to the development proposed.

Design of the proposed development and the associated landscaping

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.

Policy CSP1 of the CSS under the heading of 'Design Quality' advises new development should be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent's unique townscape.

The design provides two distinctive courtyard areas within an organic curved butterfly form. The proposed parabolic curved roofs overhang the elevations to provide shade to minimise solar gain. The lower plinth of the building will be faced with stone with elements of glazing, with the remainder of the elevations clad in timber and metal with glazed elements. In addition metal standing seam roofs are proposed. The proposed Statement building is considered to be of high quality and inclusive design which will set a high bar and will serve to encourage development of a similar high quality on the remaining plots.

The building and the two areas of parking and accesses are set within a hard and soft landscaped plot. Within the landscaped area there will be, amongst other things, a bike store, a staff seating area, and bin store, all shown to have a circular form and to be timber clad externally and will, subject to careful choice of materials, provide visual interest. Two smoking shelters are also proposed, one for staff and a smaller one for the public. These are shown to be sited in front of the elevations facing the two Science Park roads that the site adjoins. Concern has been expressed by Urban Vision about the prominence of the siting of these shelters but the applicant has justified them on the basis that they may not be used in other locations resulting in people smoking in places which are not ideal for that purpose. It is considered that if their design is carefully selected they should not be harmful to the overall appearance of the proposed development and the wider site context. The precise details of the external appearance of the smoking shelters can be agreed by condition.

A 600m high brick retaining wall, with landscaped mound to the rear, is proposed along the longest western boundary, and along approximately half of the length of the shorter northern boundary both adjoining Science Park roads. The long eastern boundary and the remainder of the northern boundary is to be bound by a 2.4m high weld mesh fence. The use of a weld mesh fence along the northern boundary has been questioned by Urban Vision who suggests that an alternative less visually intrusive boundary treatment is included. The comments of the applicant have been sought to this suggestion and further information will be provided on the acceptability or otherwise of this element of the boundary treatment in advance of the Committee meeting.

Overall it is considered that the development is of a high quality and should be supported in this location.

Parking and highway safety

Two points of access to the development are proposed along the western boundary providing one being an entrance only and the second being the point of exit from the site. A staff only parking area of 23 spaces, including 4 disability access spaces, is proposed to the north of the building and a

further parking area of 85 spaces, including 11 disability access spaces, is proposed to the south of the building. A drop of layby is proposed directly in front of the building.

In accordance with the maximum parking levels specified at Appendix 3 of the NLP, the maximum parking provision for this development is acknowledged by the applicant to be 70 spaces. The proposal therefore exceeds the maximum by 38 spaces. This is justified by the applicant on the basis of the need to provide a large number of disability access spaces, because of the need to accommodate additional family members and visitors who also frequent the centre during assessments, and finally to allow for future growth of the charity. Whilst the proposal significantly exceeds the maximum parking standards as set out in policy it is considered that there is no basis upon which to object to the applicant's case as to the operational parking needs of the development given its highly specialised nature even in a location which has a very good bus service. Furthermore members are reminded that the Secretary of State in March gave a statement on maximum parking standards indicating that the government is keen to ensure that there is adequate parking provision in new developments

Subject to conditions ensuring the provision of the parking, access, servicing and turning facilities it is considered that the development is acceptable in this regard.

Other matters

The Environmental Health Division has recommended a number of conditions. Whilst most of the conditions are considered reasonable, given the relatively remote location of the site to residential properties it is considered that restrictions on the hours of construction could not be justified in this case and as such this condition is not recommended.

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 SP1: Spatial Principles of Targeted Regeneration
Policy SP2: Spatial Principles of Economic Development
Policy SP3: Spatial Principles of Movement and Access
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 E8: Keele University and Keele Science Park
Policy T18: Development – Servicing Requirements
Policy T16: Development – General Parking Requirements
Policy N17: Landscape Character – General Considerations
Policy N19: Landscape Maintenance Areas

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

- 05/01146/OUT Outline planning permission for development for (a) academic functions; (b) staff and student residences; (c) employment uses directly related to or complementary to the University's core activities including conference, training, retail and leisure – for use of students, staff, conference delegates and their visitors and in the case of leisure facilities for the wider community; (d) Class B1 uses directly related to the University's functional activities but excluding manufacturing or storage of large tonnages or mass production of goods; and full planning permission for works including formation of development plateaux, roads, footpaths, cycleways and other infrastructure – Approved December 2006 following completion of Section 106 agreement.
- 10/00631/REM Approval of siting, design and external appearance of a conference, training and leisure hotel on plot 1a (outline permission for which was granted under reference 05/01146/OUT), the means of access to its site from the road network and the internal landscaping of its site – Refused in 2011 and subsequent appeal allowed later that year (permission now lapsed)
- 11/00058/FUL Full planning permission for the construction of three-storey business accommodation to be known as Innovation Centre 5 (IC5) with the provision of workshops on the ground floor and offices on the first and second floors, with associated parking and landscaping – Approved April 2011.
- 11/00655/FUL Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 11/00058/FUL for the construction of three-storey business accommodation to be known as Innovation Centre 5 (IC5) with the provision of workshops on the ground floor and offices on the first and second floors, with associated parking and landscaping so as to permit amendments to proposed elevations of Wing B and Wing C – Approved February 2012.
- 11/00058/NMA Application for a non-material amendment to provide additional floorspace and flues relating to planning permission 11/00058/FUL – Approved 2014.
- 15/00190/FUL Variation of Condition 2 of planning permission 11/00058/FUL for the construction of a three storey business accommodation (IC5) involving amended elevations to those previously approved – Approved 2015.

Views of Consultees

Keele Parish Council strongly welcomes this development design which they consider to be an iconic building.

The **Highway Authority** has no objections subject to conditions requiring the provision of the access, parking, servicing, turning areas prior to occupation; and prior approval and implementation of cycle parking facilities. They note that the level of parking provision exceeds that listed in the Local Plan, but they consider that acceptable.

The **Landscape Development Section** has no objection subject to provision of detailed landscaping proposals and protection of the existing vegetation to the eastern and southern boundaries during the construction phase.

The **Environmental Health Division** has no objections subject to conditions restricting construction hours; approval of external lighting, protection of the highway from mud and debris; and contaminated land.

The **Urban Vision Design Review Panel** was consulted by the applicant prior to the submission of the application. The Panel were supportive of the design concept and the use which the building is to be put. Given the innovative nature of the design they emphasised that efforts should be made to ensure that the construction is carefully detailed in order to enable the aspirations to be fully realised, and in this regard the budget should be carefully reviewed to ensure that compromise is not necessary at a later stage. The same detailed consideration is required for the landscaping as for the main building.

Issues of particular concern are the need to break up the extent of the black-top parking area and the replacement of the weld mesh fencing on the northern boundary with a treatment less visually intrusive, and to move the smoking shelter to a more discrete position.

No comments have been received from the **Lead Local Flood Authority** and the **Waste Management Section** by the due date and therefore it must be assumed that they have no observations to make upon the application.

Representations

A letter in support of the application has been received. The main comments are summarised as follows:

- Architecturally the proposed development is the most exciting since Keele Chapel and adds a significant building to the Keele estate.
- Its location is ideal and will complement the existing established woodland behind it.
- The Caudwell charity provides a valuable social service and by locating at the University there will be opportunities for collaborative research on autism and other disabilities.

Applicant's/Agent's submission

The application is supported by the following:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment
- Ecological Appraisal.

These documents are available for inspection at the Guildhall and on www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning/1500542FUL

Background papers

Planning files referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

2nd September 2015