

<p>Reference: 19/00617/FUL</p>	<p>Site: Thurrock Council Civic Offices New Road Grays Essex RM17 6SL</p>
<p>Ward: Grays Riverside</p>	<p>Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and external wall on the corner of High Street and New Road and refurbishment and extension of Council offices comprising a 3 storey building with raised parapet to the west of existing building (CO2), to provide 147 sq m (GIA) of Class B1 (a) office space on the ground floor as a registry office and 2,163 sq m of Sui Generis floor space on part of the ground floor providing new public service points, meeting rooms and an ancillary cafe and on the upper floors providing a Council Chamber, Committee Rooms and Members Services, together with cycle parking, roof plant and plant enclosure, hard and soft landscaping, seating areas and benches, infrastructure and associated works.</p>

Plan Number(s):		
Reference	Name	Received
18124-LSI-A1-01-DR-A-1201 Rev B	Existing Site Layout	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-01-DR-A-1301 Rev A	Proposed Plans	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-02-DR-A-1202 Rev B	Existing Site Layout	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-02-DR-A-1302 Rev A	Proposed Floor Plans	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-B1-DR-A-1179 Rev B	Existing Floor Plans	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-B1-DR-A-1180 Rev B	Proposed Floor Plans	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-B1-DR-A-1199 Rev B	Existing Site Layout	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-GF-DR-A-1200 Rev B	Existing Site Layout	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-GF-DR-A-1300 Rev A	Proposed Floor Plans	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-R2-DR-A-1316 Rev A	Proposed Plans	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-RF-DR-A-1315 Rev A	Proposed Plans	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1170 Rev B	Location Plan	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1175 Rev B	Existing Site Layout	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1176 Rev B	Proposed Site Layout	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1177	Site Layout	3rd May 2019

18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1250 Rev A	Existing Elevations	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1350 Rev A	Proposed Elevations	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1355 Rev A	Proposed Elevations	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1356 Rev A	Proposed Elevations	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1357	Proposed Elevations	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1358	Proposed Elevations	3rd May 2019
18124-LS1-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1370 Rev A	Sections	3rd May 2019
18124-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1371 Rev A	Sections	3rd May 2019
19007_BT3	Landscaping	3rd May 2019
ASU-THU-LA-L100	Landscaping	3rd May 2019
2018/4416/001	Proposed Plans	19th June 2019

The application is also accompanied by:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Acoustic report
- Arboricultural Assessment and Method Statement
- Daylight and Sunlight Report
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Energy Report
- Geo-environmental Site Investigation Report
- Heritage Statement
- Landscape Design Strategy and Landscaping Plan
- Manual for Managing Trees on Development Sites
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Sustainability Report and BREEAM Assessment
- SUDs Statement and Addendum
- Transport Statement and Addendum
- Travel Plan

Applicant:

Thurrock Council

Validated:

3 May 2019

Date of expiry:

25 September 2019 [Time Extended]

Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 This planning application was considered by the Planning Committee on 15 August 2019 where Members were minded to refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

- *Excessive built form that did not complement the church as a grade II listed building, or the surrounding area;*
- *That the building that was bulky in design; and*
- *Concerns that a loss of daylight would affect the residents of Pullman Court who would have not envisaged this building proposal.*

1.2 In accordance with Part 3(b) – Planning Committee Procedures and in particular Paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3 of the Constitution, the Committee agreed that the item should be deferred to enable a further report outlining the implications of making a decision contrary to the Planning Officer's recommendation. This report assesses the reasons formulated by the Committee.

1.3 The 15 August 2019 Planning Committee report is appended to this report as Appendix 1.

2.0 CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATIONS

2.1 Following the Committee's deferral the following additional consultation has taken place to assess Members reasons of refusal.

2.2 DESIGN COUNCIL:

Recognise that the proposed development responds to the High Street and Town Centre, which is considered to comprise of a series of civic "set pieces", including the Old Courthouse, the State Cinema and the Church and this response would contribute as a marker of its own at the southern end of the High Street.

2.3 LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVISOR:

The proposed scheme would result in 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the listed church.

2.4 URBAN DESIGN OFFICER:

No objections.as the proposed built form of the proposed development would not compete with or upstage the church as the massing is lower than the existing Civic Offices, Pullman Court and the College. The proposed colonnades on the ground floor would help break up the bulk of the building and atrium would split the building into three parts allowing clear views of the church from within the building. The architectures would be of high quality.

3.0 ASSESSMENT

DESIGN, LAYOUT, IMPACT UPON THE AREA AND HERITAGE IMPACT

- 3.1 Policies CSTP22 and CSTP23 both seek to secure high quality design, character and distinctiveness for new developments and policy PMD2 requires proposals to respond to the sensitivity of the site and its surroundings. In terms of heritage, policy PMD4 seeks to ensure that the fabric and setting of heritage assets are appropriately protected and enhanced in accordance with their significance. Through chapter 16 of the NPPF guidance is provided to ensure the significance of heritage assets are sustained and enhanced, and that proposed development makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 3.2 Members were minded to refuse planning permission for the following design reasons:
- Excessive built form that did not complement the church as a grade II listed building, or the surrounding area;
 - That the building that was bulky in design;
- 3.3 Since the August Planning Committee and in response to the Member's reasons for deferral further consultation has taken place with the Design Council and the Council's Urban Design Officers.
- 3.4 The Design Council advise that they raise no objections to the proposed built form, bulk or height with regard to the streetscene and the grade II listed church building. They recognise that the proposed development responds to the High Street and Town Centre, which is considered to *'comprise of a series of civic "set pieces", including the Old Courthouse, the State Cinema and the Church'* and this site would contribute as *'a marker of its own at the southern end of the High Street'*.
- 3.5 The Council's Urban Design Officers advise as follows:

- The impact would not be 'harmful' and would have neutral impact upon the setting of St Peters & St Pauls grade II listed church;
- The proposed building would open up views to the church from New Road as it is set back from the building line;
- The setting is within a town centre which is under-going development, as such the setting changes nature over time. In this case the development is sensitive to its historic setting;
- The architecture would be of high quality and has consideration to massing and articulation. The entranceway atrium, for example, gives views from inside the building toward the church;
- The massing is lower than the existing civic offices C02 (5 storeys), consented number 76 High Street (5 storeys) and college building (3.5 including rooftop plant);
- A colonnade is proposed on the ground floor which would help to break up the bulk of the building and an atrium which splits the building into three parts. The architecture would not lead to a bulky or large building overall;
- Overall it does not compete with or upstage the church.

3.6 In addition to the consultation responses, the applicant's agent has provided further information explaining the design approach to the proposed development. The agent advises that *'the scheme design acts as a transition to the lower scale of the High Street at the Pullman Tavern to the much larger scale of the council building C02, South Essex College and the consented 5 storey scheme at 76 High Street'*. In terms of height *'the massing of the building is based on a response to the existing street pattern of development. Emphasis is on the block closest to the church to act as the high point, or 'tower' of the arrangement of the masses, a relationship seen in many civic buildings'*. With regard to the benefits to the streetscene and the listed church building *'the alignment of the building on High Street has also been stepped back by 1.5m to provide a clear line of vision of the Church looking west of New Road, giving prominence to the Church'*.

3.7 Turning to the heritage impact, as stated in the original committee report [Appendix 1] paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires any harm arising to heritage assets to be balanced in the decision making process. The applicant's agent advises that *'it is considered that the development would cause a minor impact to the setting of the Church, and therefore 'less than substantial' harm to its significance'*. The Council's Listed Buildings and Conservation Advisor agrees the proposed development would result in 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the listed church.

3.8 In applying the 'less than substantial harm' test the decision maker should weigh in the balance, any public benefits that might arise from the scheme. In this case, the development would achieve:

- Improved vistas of the church;
- High architectural quality;
- Improved access to the High Street for all visitors and staff;
- Improved community facilities arising from the development including:
 - meeting spaces,
 - areas for events and ceremonies,
 - new Registry Office, and
 - a new café with a south facing public seating area; and
- An energy efficient building achieving BREEAM 'Outstanding' status.

3.9 In applying this balancing exercise it is considered that the significant public benefits from the proposal would outweigh the less than substantial harm.

3.10 In summary, it is considered that the proposed development would be acceptable and subject to conditions controlling the use of high quality finishing materials, it is considered the proposal would serve to create a high quality, distinctive landmark civic building in Grays. The proposed development is considered acceptable with regard to policies CSTP22, CSTP23, PMD2 and PMD4 and the NPPF.

EFFECT ON NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

3.11 Policy PMD1 seeks to minimise impacts upon amenity from new development. The nearest buildings to the site is the dentist surgery directly to the north and the nearest residential properties are the flats at Pullman Court to the north and north east of the site. The distance between the proposed building and Pullman Court would be approximately 16m, to the dentist to the north approximately 10m, and to the church approximately 35m, which all raise no objection regarding building to building distances in terms of physical proximity.

3.12 With regard to the impact upon the neighbouring properties Members were minded to refuse planning permission for the following reason:

- Concerns that a loss of daylight would affect the residents of Pullman Court who would have not envisaged this building proposal.

3.13 The Pullman Court development is located in a town centre location and the majority of the flats on the southern side of the building face the Council's

existing office building, with a communal amenity space in between. The application includes a Daylight and Sunlight assessment based on the relevant Building Research Establishment [BRE] guidelines and its objective is to assess the impact of the proposed development upon all surrounding properties.

- 3.14 The Daylight and Sunlight assessment advises that a total of 84 windows from Pullman Court were analysed as part of the report (all of the properties in the Pullman Court building). The assessment concludes *'it was found that all of the residential properties analysed met the BRE Guidelines' target values for daylight in terms of Vertical Sky Component (VSC) and for sunlight in terms of Annual Probable Sunlight Hours (APSH). All habitable rooms meet the BRE Guidelines' target values for daylight distribution'*. Therefore the development would meet the guidelines for daylight and sunlight.
- 3.15 There would be a slight reduction in sunlight to the Pullman Court communal amenity space as a result of the proposed development but it should be noted that this communal amenity space does not presently meet the BRE guidelines. To the north of the site there are no other residential properties that would be affected in terms of the Daylight and Sunlight assessment.
- 3.16 Accordingly the proposal would not lead to adverse harm upon the residential amenities of the occupiers of the flats in Pullman Court in regard to policy PMD1.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR APPROVAL

- 4.1 Officers have considered Member's views but consider the proposal would serve to create a high quality, distinctive landmark civic building in Grays. It is considered that the building would sensitively respond to the surrounding development, particularly the grade II listed church. The loss of existing buildings and uses is considered, on balance, to be acceptable, given the public benefits that would result from the development. There would be no harm arising to the amenities of nearby occupiers. The proposal represents a key regeneration project for Grays and the development is supported by the Grays Town Centre Framework. The proposal is therefore in accordance with national and local policies and guidance.
- 4.2 The matters of concern raised by the Committee have been carefully considered, however as detailed above, there are not considered any viable objections to the scheme that would support a refusal.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Approve, subject to the conditions as set out in the previous committee report attached as Appendix 1.