

**BRUNEL HOUSE 42 THE HARD PORTSMOUTH PO1 3DS**

**EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO INCLUDE REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING WINDOWS/PANELS ON FRONT/REAR ELEVATIONS WITH NEW FULL HEIGHT WINDOWS/COLOURED INFILL PANELS; NEW WINDOWS TO SIDE WALL (NORTH ELEVATION); AND INSTALLATION OF NEW GLAZED DOORS AND INFILL GLAZING TO GROUND FLOOR LEVEL BELOW EXISTING CANOPY**

**Application Submitted By:**

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**On behalf of:**

Makepeace Investments Ltd  
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**RDD:** 6th July 2017

**LDD:** 18th September 2017

**SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES**

## SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are the principle of the development and whether the proposed external alterations are acceptable in terms of their design, including whether they would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of 'HM Naval Base and St George's Square' Conservation Area and preserve the setting of other nearby heritage assets.

## Site and surroundings

A 12-storey building occupies the site fronting The Hard and positioned between Victory Road to the south and College Street to the north. The building was last used as offices but is currently vacant. Brunel House is positioned opposite the recently redeveloped Hard Interchange and the northern pedestrian entrance to Gunwharf Quays.

The site lies within 'HM Naval Base and St George's Square' Conservation Area and close to, and thereby affects the setting of, 'Gunwharf' Conservation Area and 'Portsea' Conservation Area. There are a number of other designated and non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the site, including Grade II buildings at Nos 16 and 17 The Hard and 50 Havant Street, to the north of the site, the locally listed former Portsmouth Harbour Signal Box near to the entrance to Gunwharf Quays to the west of the site, and the locally listed Ordnance Row to the south.

The site is also located within The Hard area of the city centre as defined by Policy PCS4 of the Portsmouth Plan.

## Proposal

Planning permission is sought for external alterations of Brunel House comprising of:

- o Replacement of existing windows on the front elevation and rear elevations with new full height windows/coloured infill panels;
- o Installation of new windows in a side wall (north elevation);
- o Installation of new glazed doors and infill glazing panels to the front elevation, at ground floor level, beneath the existing entrance canopy (glazing to align with canopy overhang);
- o Installation of insulated render to existing canopy; and,

- o Reduction in height of lift enclosure to roof.

This application has been the subject of amendment. The proposed introduction of insulated render on the side elevations of Brunel House has since been deleted. The originally suggested use of UPVc for the proposed fenestration was also not considered a suitable quality material for such a visually prominent building and has since been amended to powder-coated aluminium.

#### Planning history

There are two further applications currently under consideration at Brunel House. These are as follows:

- o 17/00006/PACOU - Application for Prior Approval for the change of use of the building from B1 offices to 153 residential dwellings (Use Class C3)
- o 17/01180/FUL - Application for change of use of the ground floor of the building to retail (Class A1) and gymnasium (Class D2)

Previous applications relating to Brunel House include the following:

- o 16/00003/PACOU - Application for Prior Approval for change of use to 242 dwellings - Prior Approval not required, 15 April 2016.
- o 14/00402/FUL - Construction of a forty storey tower to include a Halls of Residence (Class C1) for students comprising 454 study/bedrooms; 313 residential flats; 877 sqm of commercial floorspace for use as Class A1 shop or A2 financial/professional services or A3 café/restaurant or A4 drinking establishment or A5 hot food takeaway and 70 sqm for use as Class B1 office or taxi office; and construction of a part 7/part 6 multi storey car park on Havant Street car park and former Ambulance station sites, after demolition of Brunel House, Victory Public House, 'City Wide Taxi's' building and former Ambulance Station.

This application was refused on 24 June 2016, for reasons relating to the design, scale and massing, impact on heritage assets and impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents.

- o A\*24391/AA - Construction of two additional floors, 2-storey front extension, 3 lift/stair enclosures and balconies including cladding/ window alterations to all elevations; use of ground/first floors for A1/A2/A3/B1, taxi office, health and fitness centre and dentist uses, and conversion of floors above to 54 flats and 3 maisonettes - Conditional permission, 8 July 2002.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

The relevant policies within the Portsmouth Plan would include:  
PCS4 (Portsmouth city centre), PCS23 (Design and Conservation),

The aims and objectives of national planning policy in the NPPF would also be material to determination of the application.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Environmental Health**

The application appears to only relate to alterations to the external façade of the building. The application form does not indicate any potential change of use to residential, therefore based on the assumption that the office use is to be retained we have no comments or recommendations.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

One representation received has been received raising objection on the grounds of: (a) poor design; (b) existing building is unsafe; and, (c) something better needs to be planned for the site.

One representation of comment has also been received from The Portsmouth Society (note that these comments relate generally to the three applications under consideration): (i) welcome the reuse of the building; (ii) soft landscaping to the frontage would be an improvement; (iii) support the inclusion of a lift; and, (iv) concern that some of the flats are too small.

## COMMENT

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are the principle of the development and whether the proposed external alterations are acceptable in terms of their design, including whether they would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of 'HM Naval Base and St George's Square' Conservation Area and preserve the setting of other nearby heritage assets.

### Principle of the proposal

Policy PCS4 of the Portsmouth Plan sets out the objective for The Hard area of the city centre to be 'shaped into a vibrant waterfront destination, building on its function as a key city gateway and its reputation as a unique area of historic character and charm'. Brunel House occupies a prominent position in the southern part of The Hard, and is recognised as an opportunity site for development within The Hard SPD. The Hard SPD sets out a number of objectives for all new development proposals in the area. This includes: '...realising the important role that the area could play in the city's economy by identifying opportunities that make best use of vacant sites and buildings, particularly those with little architectural or historic merit, and by promoting a mix of uses that bring 'life' to the area during the day and into the evening'; and 'ensuring that the design of new buildings and spaces is distinctive and of a high quality, and that it is sensitive to, and enhances, the historic character of the area'. In specific reference to the Brunel House site, the SPD notes that this forms part of an important gateway site and that there is a significant opportunity for a mixed use development incorporating a landmark building that positively contributes to the skyline of the city and that addresses both The Hard frontage and the interchange area to the west. The SPD goes on to state that whilst a redevelopment would be desirable, proposals for the reuse of existing buildings may also be considered.

Brunel House has been vacant for a number of years and has a run down appearance. Given its prominent location, there is a significant opportunity to enhance the site through redevelopment or appropriate reuse and alteration of the building, as identified within the SPD. This application relates solely to the proposed external alterations, but is linked to two separate applications for a change of use of the building to form residential development on the upper floors and a mix of retail and gymnasium on the ground floor. The application for change of use to residential was submitted as a Prior Approval application in accordance with Part O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. This means that the principle of the change of use is acceptable and the Local Authority is only able to assess the application on matters relating to highway impact, flood risk and contaminated land. These matters were considered and the application was determined to be acceptable. The change of use of the ground floor has also been granted permission.

Whilst it may be desirable to fully redevelop the Brunel House site, as envisaged within the SPD, the local authority is required to assess all planning applications as received, on their own merits. The proposal to carry out external alterations to the building in conjunction with a change of use is considered acceptable in principle. The determining issue is whether the proposed alterations are of a high enough quality having regard to the prominent and historic location and the policy objectives for the site.

### Design and appearance

Whilst Brunel House is not considered to be of specific architectural or historic interest, it nevertheless has some architectural features of merit including the grid pattern of the front and rear facades, which are characteristic of tower blocks built in the 1960s and 70s. The proposed alterations seek to retain the original grid frame of the building and enhance its appearance through the installation of new full height windows and coloured glazed panels.

The proposed alterations have been subject to discussion with officers throughout the course of the application process. A summary of the key elements of the proposal and the amendments that have been made as a result of the discussions is set out below.

#### Front elevation

On the front elevation, the proposal is to retain the original frame of the building, remove the existing infill panels beneath the windows and install new full height windows and glazed panels.

The original plans were for the installation of panels in a variety of colours to the front elevation, but this has since been amended to a tonal variation of green, which is considered to represent a more subtle and visually attractive way of introducing colour to the building.

The original plans also indicated the use of UPVc windows throughout the whole building. Following concerns raised by officers in relation to the appearance of UPVc for such a large amount of windows on a tall building, the applicants have agreed to the use of powder-coated aluminium framed windows. This is considered to be a more appropriate material choice having regard to the historic setting of the site and would ensure that a more elegant window profile is achieved.

#### Rear elevation

A similar approach for a tonal variation in green and use of powder-coated aluminium framed windows is proposed to the rear of Brunel House but the concrete grid frame is less pronounced compared with the front of the building.

#### Side elevations

The use of insulated render has been deleted from the scheme and now proposes a vertical ribbon of windows of the north side wall only.

#### Impact on heritage assets

When determining planning applications the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must consider what impact the proposal would have on both designated and non-designated heritage assets. Section 66 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 (as amended) places a duty on the LPA to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Furthermore, Section 72 of the Act requires that LPAs pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. The site lies within 'HM Naval Base and St George's Square' Conservation Area, and is close to 'Gunwharf' Conservation Area and 'Portsea' Conservation Area. There are also other designated and non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the site, including Grade II listed buildings Nos 16 and 17 The Hard and 50 Havant Street, the locally listed former Portsmouth Harbour Signal Box near to the entrance to Gunwharf Quays, and the locally listed Ordnance Row to the south of the site.

Paragraphs 132-134 of the NPPF seeks to address the significance of any harm caused by a proposed development on heritage assets. The proposed external alterations would involve the provision of new glazing and coloured panels within the existing architectural frame of the building. The introduction of colour would inevitably result in an increased visual prominence of the building within its setting, but this is not considered inappropriate within a key city gateway location. Based on the amendments submitted during the course of the application, the alterations are now considered to be of a suitable quality to lift the visual appearance of the building and to preserve the character and appearance of 'HM Naval Base and St George's Square' Conservation Area and the setting of nearby heritage assets. It is therefore determined that the development would not cause harm to the setting of heritage assets and an assessment under paragraphs 132-134 of the NPPF is not considered necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

## **Conditional Permission**

### **Conditions**

1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this planning permission.

2) Unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the permission hereby granted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings - Drawing numbers:

Site Location Plan - 16.1119/001;

Proposed front elevation - 16.1119/066A;

Proposed rear elevation - 16.1119/067A;

Proposed side elevations - 16.1119/068A;

Street view - 16.1119/069;

Proposed Typical Floor Section - 16.1119/071A; and,

Proposed GF Typical Section - 16.1119/072A.

3) No development shall take place at the site until (a) detailed constructional drawings (at 1:10 or such other suitable scale as may be agreed) of the profile, appearance and finish of the powder-coated aluminium frames to replacement windows/doors on the building and (b) samples of the aluminium window frames and coloured infill panels shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority; and the external alterations shall only be carried out in accordance with approved details/samples.

### **The reasons for the conditions are:**

1) To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) To ensure the development is implemented in accordance with the permission granted.

3) To secure suitable quality external finishes to this visually prominent building and to preserve the setting of an array of heritage assets including the character and appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with policy PCS23 of the Portsmouth Plan and the aims and objectives of the NPPF.

### **1) PRO-ACTIVITY STATEMENT**

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework the City Council has worked positively and pro-actively with the applicant through the application process, and with the submission of amendments an acceptable proposal has been achieved.