

**Item 6
(LATE REPRESENTATIONS)**

Planning and Highways 11 February 2010
Committee

**Plans List
No.**

Application Number 091751/FO/2009/C2
091752/CC/2009/C2

**Main Agenda 6
No.**

Ward CITY
CENTRE

Description and Address

Redevelopment to create a 14 storey plus basement building incorporating Class B1 offices on upper floors, ground floor café, restaurant and bar use (Class A3 and A4) and basement car parking with related highways, access, servicing and landscaping works, following demolition of the existing building.

Elisabeth house, 2 – 14 St. Peter's Square. Manchester, M2 3DE.

1. **The Public/Local Opinions**

An objection to the proposal has been received making the following points;

- there is no objection to the demolition of the existing building
- the proposal is too high for the location which should 'hold or contain' the space of St Peter's Sq; the height of the proposal is similar to the scheme approved for the adjacent Odeon Cinema site and this is out of character with the lower height seen in nearby existing buildings around St Peter's Sq
- the scale of the proposal, using the device of linking two floors within an outer frame, is inappropriate and over bearing when seen in the context of adjacent and nearby buildings, including the Midland hotel, Central Library and Town Hall Extension.
- The proposed elevations have a 'tri partite' subdivision of a base, middle and top, but the dimensions of these are so large as to be incompatible with the proportions of existing buildings nearby in the Square
- The proposed massing will be unlike any other development in the Square; when seen with the development on the adjacent Odeon Cinema site this will further increase the inappropriate architectural massing.
- The simple form of the elevations is lost where two of the lower level columns are removed on the St Peter's Sq elevation resulting in an uncomfortable structural appearance
- given the propose 'international' style of the development, coupled with the concerns of height, scale, proportions and architectural massing it is hard to understand that the building has been designed for this site and its unique context

- with the importance of the site as part of a civic square, within a conservation area, and facing other important civic buildings then it is appropriate that natural stone is used in the development.

2. **Officers/Outside Bodies**

English Heritage (EH) has commented on the 'key heritage issues' of, the importance of the existing building, the impact of the proposed replacement building, and the proposal's relationship with the adjacent landmark building group, by making the following points.

EH is of the opinion that Elisabeth House, as existing, does not make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and therefore agree that the demolition and re-development of the building is justifiable in terms of the criteria set out in PPG15-3.19(i-ii).

EH has previously commented on the emerging design proposals and generally supported the architectural approach, subject to confirmation of details of the elevation treatment.

The location demands a building of some architectural quality, to contribute to the enclosure and potential of St. Peter's Square and EH supports the objective to present a contemporary interpretation of architectural characteristics of the Central Library and the Town Hall Extension.

Scale and mass

With specific regard to the proposed design EH support the clear expression of the elevations, as a division into distinctive 'top', 'middle' and 'bottom' sections and support the approach to the set-back top section, which results in the strong articulation of the stone 'structural-grid', thereby diminishing the apparent weight of the upper section and the building's vertical thrust. This design concept visually anchors the proposed building within the streetscape. Consequently, we are of the opinion that the actual increase in height of the proposed building, above that of the Town Hall Extension, should not diminish the pre-eminence of the civic complex from key views along Oxford Street or within St. Peter's Square.

The set-back roof-top section moderates the apparent scale and mass of the building, and its consequent impact on St. Peter's Square and also reflects a design characteristic which is evident around St. Peter's Square. The design approach in this instance reduces the monumental impact of the proposed block.

However EH emphasise that the scale of this proposed development should not necessarily be regarded as setting a precedent for the future enclosure of St. Peter's Square.

Materials and services.

The success of the proposed design will be reliant upon the strength of expression of the colonnade and the balcony parapet as elevation features, as well as the treatment of the underside of the projecting roof; and the uncluttered roofscape. The quality of the materials (in particular the stonework grid-frame and the fenestration) will, therefore, be essential to the success of the proposed development. It is recommended that the materials are conditioned for subsequent detailed scrutiny.

Relationship to the public realm.

Support is given to the proposed 'flow' of the public realm through the colonnade, to create a strong street-level focus on St. Peter's Square. We look forward to consideration of the detailed proposals for the edge of the public space, and, in particular, the relationship with the war memorial.

The approach to the introduction of vitality to Dickinson Street is welcomed, and EH look forward to consideration of the details of the treatment of this important part of the public realm.

With regard to George St EH expect the re-development of Elisabeth House to contribute to enhancing the use and vitality of this street, in anticipation of other key developments along its length. In particular, it is considered important to generate an active use on the Oxford Street corner, extending along George Street.

Conclusion and recommendation.

English Heritage support the form of the proposed re-development of Elisabeth House, on the basis that the existing building has a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area. However, it is essential that the proposed building demonstrates its potential to enhance St. Peter's Square by exhibiting excellence in the use of high quality materials. We are, therefore, content with the proposed scale and form of the proposed development, subject to confirmation of the detailed elevation materials and public realm treatment.

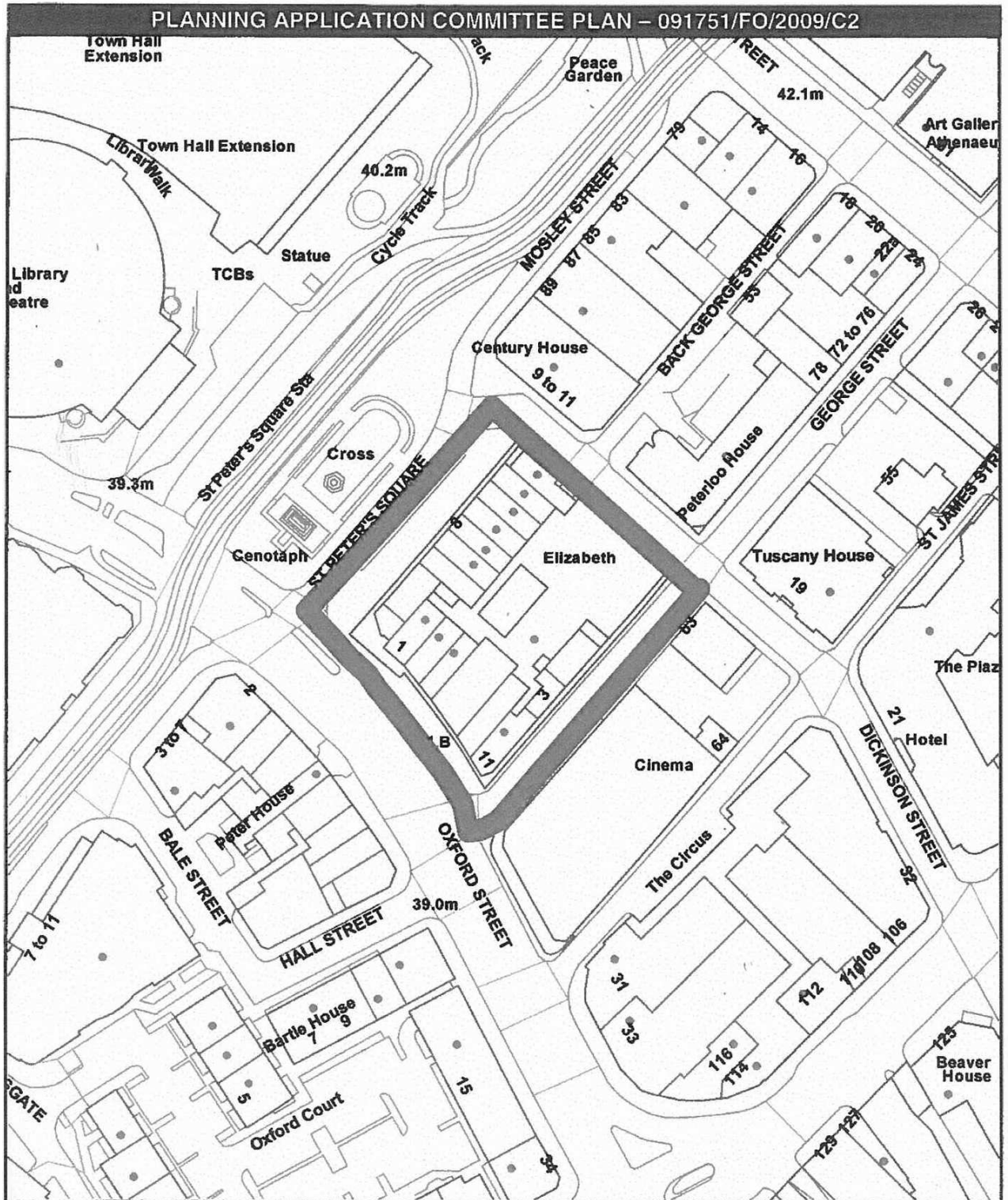
Consequently, English Heritage, support the proposed development and recommend that consent is granted, subject to appropriate planning conditions requiring further consideration of the detailed elevation materials.

3. **Applicant/Agent**

4. **Head of Planning - Further Observations/Modifications to Conditions/Reasons for Refusal**

Site plans for the two applications are attached to this note.

The points raised in the objection reported above are to do with the design and setting of the building which has already been dealt within the report. It should however be noted that in commenting on the scheme in the terms of the criteria outlined above CABE came to a more supportive view and also considered it important to see the scheme in the wider context of plans for the growth of the City and its role to provide accommodation to draw business into the Centre and help the City sustain its role as a commercial centre. English Heritage comments are reported above and again support the size and design of the proposed scheme.



Reference: 091751/FO/2009/C2
Location: Elisabeth House 2 - 14 St Peter's Square Manchester M2 3DE
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Date of Committee: 11/02/2010

