

<b>Item No.</b> <b>8</b>	<b>Classification</b> OPEN	<b>Decision Level</b> PLANNING COMMITTEE	<b>Date</b> 5 May 2004
<b>From</b> Interim Development and Building Control Manager		<b>Title of Report</b> DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
<b>Proposal</b> (04-AP-0167 )  Alterations including erection of a roof extension at 3rd floor level to the front of the building and erection of a 3-storey rear extension with glazed screen above to the rear (Union St frontage), including helical wind turbine and photovoltaic roof arrays on main roof, and use of the building as a training and community facility with ancillary cafe (mixed Class B1/Class D1 use).		<b>Address</b> 56 Southwark Bridge Road SE1  <b>Ward</b> Cathedrals	

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the above application. The proposal requires committee consideration due to it being a Council's own application which has generated some objections.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Grant conditional permission pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The application site is a prominent building on the corner of Southwark Bridge Road and Union Street. It comprises part basement, ground and two upper floors at the front of the building, with a large open area at the rear above ground level that opens onto the Union Street frontage. Originally built as a library in the late nineteenth century it was last used as a community centre but has been vacant for several years. It is an attractive historical building, within the Union Street Conservation Area, but having been vacant and boarded up for several years is now rather dilapidated looking.
- 3.2 This application has been submitted on behalf of the Elephant Links Regeneration Partnership, which is part of Southwark Council and therefore the application is for Council's Own Development. The Partnership has a remit of carrying out regeneration projects in the area. The proposal seeks to establish a mix of uses within the building to include training, commercial (small scale and start-up businesses) and community uses. The core use is planned to be an "access to employment", providing high quality customised training to local residents specialising in the creative industries. Community groups will make use of the space outside training hours as well as having access to designated community space within the building. The building will be run by a charitable management body to be established by the Council which

will also be responsible for managing the commercial letting elements and for co-ordinating the use of the community space. Practical completion is scheduled for November 2005.

- 3.3 A key part of the proposal is to extend the building to maximise the space, and the proposed roof and rear extensions will increase the floorspace from 880 sq.m. to 1,586 sq.m. The rear extension, which is of very contemporary design, includes media space, which is related to the emphasis of the training and commercial elements on the creative industries. The main ground floor library space will be used as a dividable, multipurpose space for use by trainees, community groups and for letting out, and can be used for exhibitions, conferences or meetings. The rear of the ground floor (and a new mezzanine above) will be used as a small cafe which is ancillary to the main use of the building. The basement will house a suite of media studios, as well as plant and refuse space, with the upper floors providing office/training accommodation at the front of the building and media/meeting/workshops spaces within the new extension that fronts Union Street. The ground floor corner will be altered to create a semi-open "loggia" with a ramp to improve access into the building.

#### **4. FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION**

##### **4.1 Main Issues**

The main issues in this case are the use of the building, the impact of the use and the extensions on the amenity of the occupiers of adjoining buildings, and the design and appearance of the proposed extensions and alterations.

##### **4.2 Planning Policy**

###### **Southwark Unitary Development Plan 1995 [UDP]:**

(Site is within the Bankside Regeneration Area and the Borough/Bermondsey/Riverside Archaeological Priority Zone.)

Policy R.2.1 'Regeneration Areas' - complies, providing a use that will help generate employment and brings a vacant building back into beneficial use.

Policy E.2.2 'Heights of Buildings' - complies, as the proposed extensions are appropriate to this building and are compatible with other buildings in the area.

Policy E.2.3 'Aesthetic Control' - complies, as the proposed alterations and extensions complement the design and appearance of the building.

Policy E.2.4 'Access and Facilities for People with Disabilities' - complies, with the proposals including a new ramp improving access into the building for people with disabilities.

Policy E.3.1 'Protection of Amenity' - complies, as the proposals will not involve nuisance or loss of amenity to adjacent users, residents and occupiers or the surrounding area, subject to safeguarding conditions.

Policy E.3.5 'Vacant Sites and Buildings' - complies, as the proposals will bring back into use a prominent building that has been vacant for several years.

Policy E.4.3 'Proposals Affecting Conservation Areas' - [*alterations or new development*] complies, will not harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Policy E.5.1 'Sites of Archaeological Importance' - complies, subject to a

condition addressing the need for archaeological investigation.

Policy C.1.1 'Premises for Community Facilities' – complies, as the proposal is intended to include facilities for community use.

Policy C.2.2 'Health, Social and Educational Facilities' - complies as the proposal will provide training facilities.

Policy B.2.3 'Class B1 Business Proposals' and Policy B.2.4 'Small Scale Industry and Offices' - complies, as the proposed use will encourage and enable starter businesses to be created.

Policy B.3.1 'Access for People with Disabilities' - complies, with a new access ramp being provided.

Policy T.1.2 'Location of Development in Relation to the Transport Network' - complies, the building being easily accessible to public transport.

Policy T.1.3 'Design of Development and Conformity with Council Standards and Controls' - complies, with adequate refuse storage and recycling space provided.

### **Draft Southwark Plan [agreed for Deposit November 2002]:**

(Bankside and The Borough Action Area)

1.2 Local Policy Areas - complies, providing community and employment generating activities.

1.6 Small Business Units - complies, the proposal making provision for small and start-up businesses.

2.2 Provision of new Community Facilities - complies

2.4 Provision of new Educational Establishments - complies, through the provision of training facilities.

3.2 Protection of Amenity - subject to conditions, will comply.

3.3 Sustainability Appraisal, 3.4 Energy Efficiency and 3.5 Renewable Energy - complies, the proposal incorporating a number of features to promote sustainability.

3.7 Waste Reduction - complies, providing adequate space for refuse storage and recycling.

3.11 Quality in Design and 3.16 Development in Conservation Areas - complies, as the proposed alterations and extensions are considered to be acceptable.

3.19 Archaeology - complies, subject to a safeguarding condition.

5.1 Locating Development - complies

## **4.3 Consultations**

Site Notice: 2.3.04 (expired 23.3.04)    Press Notice:4.3.04 (expired 25.3.04)

Consultees: 15.3.04 (expired 5.4.04)

Ward Councillors; Conservation Areas Advisory Group

Pollution Group; Traffic Group; Crime Prevention Officer; Archaeological Officer;

Cathedral Area Residents Association, c/o 13 Park Street, SE1

Bankside Residents Forum, c/o Sue Page, 185 Page Street, SE1

52, 54, 58, 60, 62A, 62-66, 64, 85A, 91-95 Southwark Bridge Road, SE1

Southwark Playhouse, 62 Southwark Bridge Road, SE1

Units 1-9 (inclusive), Playhouse Court, Southwark Bridge Road, SE1

70-72, 74, 76, 83-87, 103 Union Street SE1

Flats 1-7 (inclus), Ciba Apartments, 101 Union Street, SE1

Flats 1-7 (inclus), Henley Apartments, 33 Great Guildford Street, SE1

Fenner Brockway House, 37-39 Great Guildford Street, SE1

### **Replies from:**

Conservation Areas Advisory Group - comment that general roof extension is acceptable. Reservations about glass light box - cube lacks imagination and should perhaps reflect original structure [subsequently removed from proposals]; media space structure is alien, unsympathetic and does not enhance the existing building - needs considerable rethinking, too dominant and too solid an element; query if helical shape of the wind turbine has been approved by mechanical engineers.

Pollution Group - advise that the operation of the wind turbine will need to be in such a manner that the ambient noise is not increased at any frequency, which will need to be verified by an independent acoustic consultant's report. Also need additional information on the wood boiler flue.

Traffic Group - no objection to the proposed use but concerned that it could also be used as a place of worship [which may generate significant car trips and parking requirements] - request that the permission is either made personal or that the permission excludes use as a place of worship. No objection to the cafe use, providing it remains ancillary to the community use and hot-food take-aways and deliveries are banned on any permission. Request conditions on refuse and cycle storage.

Crime Prevention Officer - no real issues with layout, except that the external fire escape door in the recess may need an additional shutter on the building line. Otherwise encourage the applicant to consult with him on building security.

Archaeological Officer - the site lies within the Borough/Bermondsey/Riverside Archaeological Priority Zone. A watching brief during the excavation of the engineer's test pits in the south west corner of the site revealed *in situ* Roman and post-medieval deposits. As the proposal includes extending the basement into the south west corner in order to accommodate the lift and toilet facilities which may reveal archaeological remains, recommends standard condition requiring a programme of archaeological work to be implemented.

Owner/occupiers, 1 Ciba Apartments, 101 Union Street - as their flat abuts the media spaces and cafe have concerns about noise disturbance; concerned about noise levels from the wind turbine and question if this is actually necessary; concerned about ventilation extracts in the rear elevation near their flat [architects have subsequently clarified that there are no vents in this location]; concerned about the proposed extensions causing a reduction in light to the courtyard at the rear of their building.

Owner 2 Ciba Apartments, 101 Union Street - wishes to register his say/objection to the proposals (but no comments on the nature of the scheme itself.)

Owner/occupier, 5 Ciba Apartments, 101 Union Street - echoes the concerns expressed by the occupier of 7 Ciba Apartments; in particular is concerned about the potential for noise (from its use as a community facility, the ventilation shafts and the wind turbine), smells originating from the cafe and lack of security (increased height making access to his building easier).

Owner/occupiers, 7 Ciba apartments, 101 Union Street - raise concerns about noise (from the ventilation/air conditioning at the rear of the building [although there is no air conditioning equipment], from the wind turbine and from the centre itself); loss of light to their flat (including terraces at the front of the building); smells from the cafe vents; loss of privacy to the bedrooms and terraces; the height of the proposed building; security implications; disruption during building works.

Occupier, 8 Playhouse Court, 62 Southwark Bridge Road - supports the return of the building to community use but objects to the demolition of the existing mansard roof as being detrimental to the appearance of the building/conservation area.

Member of the 56 Southwark Bridge Road Steering Committee - supports the proposal for bringing the building back into community use.

## **5 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Land Use Issues**

- 5.1 Restoration of the building to a community-related use is to be welcomed and the proposed mix of training, commercial and community uses is considered to be acceptable in principle. There have been concerns from the residents in the adjoining building (Ciba Apartments, 101 Union Street) that the use will create noise problems. However, the architects have stated that the building (including the new extension) will be insulated. The absolute maximum capacity of the building is estimated to be 325 people (based on Building Regulations and fire escape criteria). Whilst any large groups of people leaving the building would exit onto Southwark Bride Road itself, it is considered appropriate to restrict the latest opening time for the building until 11pm (to minimise potential noise and disturbance from groups of people leaving the building late in the evening) and use of the roof terrace on the Union Street frontage (and immediately next to the flats) until 9pm. Subject to these conditions the objections are considered to have been overcome.
- 5.2 Physical restrictions on the site mean that there is no capacity for off-street parking. However, it is well connected with the public transport system and traffic generation and parking is not considered to be an issue. Given the small size of the cafe and the fact it is ancillary to the main use of the building, it is not expected to generate any significant amount of servicing requirements. As a safeguard it is proposed to restrict the cafe so that it cannot be used for hot-

food take-aways or deliveries, which would generate traffic. It is also proposed to restrict the use of the building to that which has been applied for, as the community use falls within Class D1 of the Use Classes Order and means that it could be used as a place of worship (which can also generate significant levels of traffic) without the need for planning permission. However, there is no capacity for cycle storage within the building, although the two frontages of the building could be used on a temporary basis for parking cycles.

### **Impact on amenity of adjoining buildings**

5.3 The most sensitive building in amenity terms is the adjacent block of flats, Ciba Apartments, 101 Union Street. (Although there is another block of flats at 33 Great Guildford Street the rear of this building which faces the application site only has some obscure glazed windows that appear to serve a communal staircase.) There are seven flats in Ciba Apartments, two on each of the first to third floors with open plan living rooms-kitchens to the front and bedrooms at the rear, and a single apartment on the fourth floor with double aspect living room, bedrooms at the front and rear, a projecting balcony at the rear and two small roof terraces at the front.

5.4 The occupiers of some of these flats have expressed several concerns about the impact of the proposals on their flats. In addition to the issue of noise from the building itself (see above) they are concerned about noise from the wind turbine. The architects have stated that although there is no measured noise data yet available for the proposed turbine, the vertical axis wind turbine that is proposed is generally quieter than the more common horizontal axis turbines: noise is usually by gearboxes and bearings, but the proposed turbine is gearless, resulting in significantly reduced noise levels compared to geared generators. Noise from bearings is very uncommon with modern high quality bearing units, which will be used in the proposed design. Regular maintenance of the bearing and generator are integral to the efficient operation of the turbine and will ensure that when functioning normally, there will be little mechanical noise from the installation. Aerodynamic noise generated by turbulent air in the wakes of the turbine blades has been minimised by the aerodynamic design of modern blades. Although some noise may be generated in high wind speeds, the noise levels are low compared with increases in the background noise produced by the wind itself.

5.5 The architects are confident that the proposed wind turbine will not create a significant impact on levels of background noise perceived by residents in the adjoining flats. However, they accept that they need to demonstrate this and that measured acoustic performance data will be required. They have therefore agreed with the Council's Environmental Health officers that the installation of the turbine can be conditional on providing satisfactory test results when the data is available. The planning permission is therefore conditional upon this, as well as a restriction on the noise levels that may be generated by this equipment.

5.6 Objections to loss of sunlight and daylight are not considered to be sustainable. Although the infilling of the space at the rear of the site and the additional floor will reduce the amount of light to the rear of the flats, this reduction is considered to be minimal. The rear windows of the flats, which are

only bedrooms on the lower floors and benefit from a south-facing aspect, are at right angles to the proposed extension and 3.5m away from it. The top flat, which includes the double-aspect open plan living room-kitchen, also benefits from an open south-facing aspect enhanced by being at fourth floor level. The loss of daylight and sunlight to this accommodation is considered to be negligible. Similarly the loss of light to the north-facing terraces of this flat will be negligible.

5.7 Concerns about cooking smells are no longer considered to be valid as the architects have confirmed that there are no vents proposed in the rear wall of the proposed extension and that there will be a high level discharge for the kitchen extract from the cafe. Given the small size of the cafe it is not anticipated that there will be a significant amount of cooking on the premises. Objections on grounds of disturbance during building works is not a valid planning consideration. However, as this is a Council's Own development it is anticipated that it will comply with the Council's Considerate Builder's Code.

5.8 Concerns about security arise from the proximity of the terrace on the Union Street frontage to the flats and the possibility of access being gained from within the building via this terrace. In reality the opportunity for this is considered to be minimal. However, the applicants are advised to discuss this matter, and all other security issues, with the Crime Prevention Officer.

### **Design and Townscape Considerations**

5.9 The application building is a former library which is unlisted and located within the Union Street Conservation Area. This ornate English Renaissance style building was built to the designs of John Johnson in 1893 using white Suffolk bricks and beer stone dressings and is a prominent landmark building on the corner of Southwark Bridge Road and Union Street. The current submission follows pre-application discussions with Architype and Elephant Links.

5.10 The principal elevations to Southwark Bridge Road and Union Street remain relatively unaltered. The new roof extension at third floor level is of a sympathetic design and is adequately set back to minimise its impact on the established character of the main elevations. The loss of the existing pitched roof is accepted and the objection on this ground is not considered to be sustainable. The proposed solar panels fitted on the roof of the new extension will not be readily visible in views from street level and are, therefore, accepted.

5.11 The new infill extension along Union Street between first and third floor level is of a contemporary design which sits well in the context of the existing building given the detailed design and facing materials proposed. This addition has been set back behind the existing building line to reduce its prominence and provide an architectural contrast to this part of the streetscape. On this basis the objection to this extension from the Conservation Areas Advisory Group are not considered to be sustainable. Samples of the timber cladding should be reserved by condition. Immediately behind the street facing extension to Union Street a glazed lift shaft and natural ventilation stack is proposed. This aspect of the proposal is considered acceptable. Although the helical wind turbine projects well above the roof line it is discreetly located to minimise its

visual impact.

5.12 The removal of the glazing to the two corner window frames to Southwark Bridge Road and Union Street to facilitate a ramped access behind and open up the building to the street corner is accepted. All new windows will match the original glazing pattern but a detailed drawing including section showing a typical window is reserved by condition. A detailed drawing showing the new security gate to the main (Southwark Bridge Road) elevation should also be provided.

## **6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The proposal includes a new ramp to improve access into the building for the disabled, provides training facilities for the young and unemployed and will provide community facilities for local residents.

## **7. LOCAL AGENDA 21 [Sustainable Development] IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The proposal incorporates a number of features to promote sustainability and reduce energy consumption, including the wind turbine and photovoltaic panels on the roof.

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