

Vail Williams Comment on Consultation Responses

Market Parade, Havant

Application Ref No.: APP/14/01225

Report date: 18 December 2015



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Prepared for: Havant Borough Council on behalf of Gary Sheath

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Vail Williams LLP have submitted an outline planning application, with all matters reserved, to Havant Borough Council on behalf of Gary Sheath. The application is for 130 apartments and 1,126 sq m of ground floor commercial/retail space (Use Classes A1 to A5 and B1(A)) with associated service access and parking, and an indicative height of between 5 and 13 storeys. As an outline application, the consideration should be confined to an assessment of the capacity of the site to absorb 130 apartments, above a commercial ground floor. The assessment of appearance, means of access, landscape, layout and scale should accompany a second application for reserved matters, once an outline application is approved.
- 1.2. A number of consultation responses have been received during the consultation period and this document is Vail Williams' own response to those consultation replies. This response is provided in order to assist the Planning Officer, Steve Weaver, in making his recommendation on the planning application.
- 1.3. Havant Borough Council indicated in a meeting on 1st December that further reassurance is required to ensure the site can absorb 130 units in an acceptable manner whilst understanding that the matters of appearance, layout and scale are 'reserved' for a future application. Although there is no requirement for a response on such detailed matters, we are happy to provide further reassurance. The Council has also indicated that further reassurance is required to ensure that the proposals would not prejudice the implementation of a wider comprehensive development, planned for Havant Town Centre.
- 1.4. This document is divided into the following sections in order to clearly address the consultation responses in turn:
 - The responses in support of the application
 - Objection responses and additional queries:
 - o Southern Water response
 - o Housing team response
 - o Design response
 - o Conservation response
 - o Highways response
 - o Waste response
 - o Havant Civic Society response
 - o Landscape response
 - Neighbour responses
 - Conclusion

2 RESPONSES IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION

- 2.1. Havant Borough Council Project Engineer, Steve Mountain, has not objected to the scheme but has raised matters to be addressed by Southern Water, the Environment Agency and the Local Lead Flood Authority. Reference has also been made to the basement construction as a matter to be carefully considered should the scheme proceed to detailed design.
- 2.2. Natural England have commented on the planning application indicating that the site is in close proximity to the Chichester & Langstone Harbour's Special Protection Area /RAMSAR, Chichester Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest and other ecological designations, although they have no objection on this basis. They have recommended

that their 'Standing Advice' be taken into account with regard to any protected species found on site.

- 2.3. Hampshire Police have made comments regarding crime and the safety of the basement car park which they believe is subject to little natural surveillance. However the detailed design of the car park is a matter to be addressed through a Reserved Matters application and is not appropriate to consider at outline stage, although the comments are noted. A comment has also been made in respect of ensuring that the number of parking spaces is appropriate for the number of units. This point is discussed below in our comments on the consultation response received from Hampshire Highways and Havant traffic and parking section.
- 2.4. Highways England has no objection to the outline planning application.
- 2.5. Hampshire County Council's Archaeologist has raised no objection to the outline planning application, subject to the inclusion of conditions relating to archaeological investigations.
- 2.6. Hampshire Fire have provided comments, all of which can be addressed through the imposition of conditions or at the reserved matters stage when detailed design is considered. For the time being, the comments are noted.
- 2.7. The County Ecologist has no objection to the proposals subject to the imposition of a condition to ensure that the development is undertaken in accordance with the submitted ecological report.
- 2.8. The Local Lead Flood Authority have provided comments, all of which can be addressed through the reserved matters application or through the imposition of an appropriately worded planning condition.
- 2.9. Network Rail have no objection to the proposal on the basis that the development is situated further than 2 metres from Network Rail's land. This separation distance can be achieved without impinging on the application site and therefore is not a concern.
- 2.10. The Environment Agency has no objection to the proposed development, but provides an advisory note detailing that all precautions must be taken to avoid discharges and spills to the ground both during and after construction.
- 2.11. Havant Borough Council's development engineer has evaluated the practicality of basement parking and commented that further information must be submitted. Again, this information can be provided during the detailed design stage and accompany the reserved matters application.
- 2.12. The Economic Development Officer of Havant Borough Council supports the application; subject to a condition requiring an Employment and Skills Plan, or a financial contribution at the build phase. An observation was made in relation to the large number of doors between the street and bike storage which could discourage travel via cycles. Again, this can be addressed at the detailed design stage although the comments are noted.

3 OBJECTION RESPONSES AND QUERIES

Southern Water

- 3.1. Southern Water did not object to the outline planning application but did raise foul sewer capacity as a concern explaining that a financial contribution would be required towards its upgrade. Southern Water were concerned that this might not have been allowed for within the Viability Assessment.
- 3.2. Viability is to be discussed confidentially at a separate meeting with Havant Council.

Housing Service

- 3.3. The Housing Service response re-affirms the value and need for affordable housing in this location. The comment notes that the Viability Report explains that there is no surplus to fund any affordable housing provision or Section 106 contributions.
- 3.4. The Council considers this a departure from Policy CS9 of the Local Plan, which requires affordable housing to be provided within new residential developments. However, within the Housing Supplementary Planning Document produced by Havant Borough Council, and the paragraph titled 'The Practical Application of the Policy if Non Viability is demonstrated', it is accepted that there will be some instances where viability is an issue. These paragraphs detail that where abnormal development costs occur this will affect the provision of affordable housing. These paragraphs further explain that a Viability Appraisal should be produced and submitted with any planning application if this is the case, in order to demonstrate the genuine financial constraints that limit or preclude the provision of affordable housing. A Viability Appraisal has been submitted to Havant Borough Council that details the costs associated with the delivery of this scheme and the reasons why affordable housing cannot be provided.

The development is shown in the viability assessment to produce a small profit deficit at present day figures. However this is not unusual in relation to complex Brownfield sites of this nature. However Hampshire and Regional intend to pursue this development, understanding the growth potential of the area, supported by the progressive and long term view of the Council and by positive market influences anticipated over the development period.

- 3.5. The housing service response also advised that the viability argument should be regarded as premature at this stage and a policy combined scheme should be put forward in the first instance. A meeting has been proposed by the client and Hampshire and Regional to discuss viability in order to provide comfort to the Council both in regard to the viability methodology and confirmation that the development cannot support affordable housing.

Design

- 3.6. Below is a précis of the design response including positive and negative comments. It is always important to remember that the application has been made in outline and that detailed design is not for consideration at this stage. However, our response to the negative comments is made in red.

Positives	Negatives
+ Central town centre location in walking distance of a wide range of facilities.	- 25 one-bed units are located on the inside of the block. The majority of these flats are single-aspect only, with views out onto a small shaded courtyard, and without balconies. These could make dark and uncomfortable places to live. - The viability assessment suggests insufficient value to bring the scheme forward if affordable housing is provided.
	It is not inappropriate or unusual for smaller units of accommodation to be single aspect. Balconies are not required as Havant Park is in close proximity and provides sufficient amenity space. Sunlight is not a requirement for habitable accommodation but daylight is provided through the courtyard.

	Value is based upon the site increasing in value as a result of Havant's visionary town centre regeneration plans. A meeting to discuss viability in detail is to be arranged.
+ Located adjacent the railway station and a short walk from the bus station.	- Notwithstanding the above, a stronger reference to context would help the integration of the building in Havant's townscape. The proposed scheme and design rational doesn't demonstrate an appreciation and response to the diverse character of streets and buildings along its edges. - Establishment of a new image of the town from the rail station by means of a large monolithic building is a risky strategy relying upon the quality of the building and subject to 'fashion' in architecture.
	75% of the building's mass is contained within the first 5 floors. The site is indicated as an island site within the masterplan for the area and as such, the illustrative comprehensive design is an appropriate response to the site, rather than an eclectic mix of facades that relates more to a confused character of old Havant rather than a confident new vernacular. No outstanding buildings are in evidence to use as a design influence for a high density scheme, including the railway station as this is also likely to require redevelopment to service an increased number of commuters. Some examples are attached of other successful tall building and towers within smaller market towns, eg Norwich, Winchester, Chichester.
+ A high density scheme delivering 130 new homes to Havant. Although it includes one and two bedroom properties only, it would allow for existing Havant residents to downsize and free up some larger properties in the town. + Views between the town centre and the station will be promoted and are desirable.	- The building is monolithic. All elevations are similar in style and design, varying only in height. This is strong contrast to the fine-grained character of the market town. - The route through the centre of Market Parade area could compromise future development of the area to the west of the application site.
	As above, this development is the first building to look to the new rather than the old, which creates a natural difficulty in assessment. However the design parameter offered by the illustrative plans is an appropriate response to the regeneration plans in this area. Although the building needs

	to maximize the site to be viable, strong base, horizontal and vertical articulation has been provided and the building has been illustrated with colour and texture to break up its mass. Shutter style shading to windows has been illustrated in addition to large contemporary bays. The area to the west of the site is not within the ownership of the applicant. Much background work has been carried out and provided by the architect prior to this application to provide reassurance that this site would not be prejudicial to a more comprehensive development. This seems to have been ignored in the design response. If the Council insist on these two sites coming forward together, this approach may well limit anything coming forward at all. This proposal allows regeneration to be 'kick started'. As the pre-application work demonstrated, any redevelopment of the block to the west could fairly easily respond to masterplan requirements together with a tall building on this site. Flexibility is always the key to an implementable plan.
+ The aspiration to create a landmark development is appropriate to its location adjacent the railway station and in line with ideas set out in the Havant Urban Development Framework. It is accepted that departing from the scale of development currently prevailing in Havant is one option to achieve this.	- Where reference has been made to the existing development this has been to the "sweeping curves" of the 60s Market Parade scheme. Considering the inherent weaknesses of this development, its commercial and physical failure, and the council's aspirations to demolish and redevelop the area, it seems that there may be little to be gained by referring to this particular aspect of Havant's townscape. - Building does not take account of the levels and the missed opportunity for the ground floor commercial units to address the railway station forecourt directly.
	It is not the intention to replicate anything that currently exists in the town centre. In terms of the railway station forecourt, this is an area used predominantly by vehicles with pedestrian access funneled safely to either end of the forecourt area. The levels do not allow for direct level access between the railway forecourt and the site and it is appropriate to respond to existing pedestrian access point with commercial units that have level access at either end of the unit.

+ Development would “mark” the location of the railway line from various locations in the town.	- The eastern façade and the south-east corner in particular, will enclose the view up North Street. The monolithic nature and bland styling will be inappropriate to the intricate, fine-grained and varied nature of North Street. - Possible wind turbulence
	The current view up North Street is of a bicycle store, a hoarding and the railway bridge. The remaining area is a cluttered mass of charity shops. It is not a view of value unlike that of a new tall building which has the potential to provide a beacon statement of future investment and regeneration in the town centre. The illustrative plans indicate a design that is not considered monolithic (as referred to in the above responses). Indeed the footprint area does not allow for a viable development with a suggested ‘stepping back of the building at low level’. Wind turbulence can be addressed with ground level planting or features.
+ Shops and restaurants at ground floor level, together with entrances to apartments, will help to animate the Plaza.	- The proposed 5 to 13 storey development on the south side of the forecourt will overshadow the space throughout the day, affecting the micro climate of this meeting / greeting / waiting space. - Plaza could catch sunlight into the evening if building is of a low height.
	In terms of the plaza, evening entertainment would not be affected by overshadowing. However the background work provided at pre-application stage indicated a covered plaza which could be enclosed at any height to provide more realistic all year round use.
+ Building addresses and encloses street on all sides.	- The sheer “wall-like” appearance of development would be overbearing on the relatively narrow space. There is no stepping back of upper floors to soften impact. - 0.45 spaces per dwelling is below HCC standards and will need management
	As referred to in the previous response above, the footprint area does not allow for a viable development with a suggested ‘stepping back of the building at low level’. A separate response is provided in terms of parking levels. However it is important to note that this is one of the most sustainable sites in

	Havant and zero parking would be acceptable in policy terms. Marketing would set expectations of parking for prospective purchasers, and the Council would need a policy which relates to parking permits.
+ Access to all apartments (stair cores) from the street.	- [The plaza] Space will be very “lob-sided” with 7-13 storey development on one side and just 3 on the other. This could be readdressed through future development of western block; however a taller block would cause significant overshadowing of the space.
	The future redevelopment of the block to the west would need to respond to the proposed development. How a development is experienced at street level is the more important consideration, hence the idea to cover the plaza.
+ Front doors to (stair cores accessing) all apartments access from street level. [makes the development easy to navigate]	- The 7-storey sheer facade will be out of proportion to the existing 3 storey block on the south side of the road. The 5 storey block is acceptable.
	An element of courage is required in order to assess a building that, necessarily, does not relate to what has gone before. 7 storeys in the heart of a town centre is not unusual. A viable quantum of development is required, especially as the first building in a regeneration scheme.
+ Commercial uses on all sides of the development creating potential for active and lively streets.	- The 5-8 storey development would be overbearing and overshadow development on the east side of North Street.
	As above
+ Residential access from main streets on three sides.	- Rounded corners on three out of four street corners. This reinforces the monolithic nature of the building, making it appear as a “single lump” formed by a continuous, wrap-around façade, rather than forming part of the existing townscape that extends existing streets.
	The masterplan scheme suggests a perimeter block. In our illustrative plans the corners are indicated as curved to reinforce the new, modern nature of this first building in the wider regeneration scheme. A tall building in

	this location can never 'form part of the existing townscape'. The illustrative design makes a confident new statement that, necessarily, does not relate to what has gone before.
+ Car parking in basement minimises negative impact on street level.	- Position of front doors / stair cores not articulated in elevation design.
	This is an outline application and detailed design of the interior layout is not for consideration at this stage.
+ Servicing at ground level wrapped round with commercial units, minimising negative impact on street level.	- Amenity space is very small. Due to the height of the buildings surrounding it, it is unlikely to catch much sun and could potentially be an unpleasant space.
	The space can provide daylighting to internal units. It is not required to provide a sunny space. There is more than sufficient sunny space in the park almost immediately adjacent to the site.
+ Secure cycle storage provided on ground floor service area as well as in the basement. No number specified.	- No secure storage facilities in basement (at least not apparent on available drawings). - Insufficient information to assess storage provision within apartments
	These are detailed design matters for consideration at detailed application stage.
+ Entrance to the basement car park from North Street is integrated in the design of the facade with relatively little negative impact on streetscape. This concept would need to be followed through in the detailed design phase – i.e. the North Street elevation would need to include an attractive garage “door” to screen views down the ramp into the basement.	
+ Shared amenity space in centre of the block is easily accessible from all four stair cores.	
+ Servicing areas clearly segregated from amenity and parking spaces.	
+ Most apartments have private balconies.	

Conservation/Historic England

- 3.7. Havant's conservation consultant agrees that this is a key site, the development of which will impact upon the future prosperity of the town. The point is made that the site lies partly within the St Faith's conservation area, although the element of conservation value attached to this part of the Conservation Area, a pub, has now been demolished.
- 3.8. The impact upon the Conservation Area and now, more sensibly, its setting is a statutory requirement placed upon Local Planning Authorities. The legislation states that development must preserve OR enhance Conservation Areas. **It is not required to do both.** In regeneration terms, the more important element of this requirement is to preserve the elements of value within a Conservation Area or its setting. The existing

setting of the Conservation Area is current degraded by the run-down 1960's mixed use block. The development proposes a modern tall building of its era which, by the juxtaposition of placing old next to high quality new buildings, will not only preserve the buildings within the conservation area (by having no impact on the fabric of the buildings themselves), but enhance their setting.

- 3.9. The conservation officer considers that the arguments for the non-inclusion of the block to the west are weak. On the contrary, land ownership is a key constraint to comprehensive development. Where the Council are not proposing the use of CPO powers, development is unlikely to come forward at all if a masterplan cannot respond flexibly to this constraint. We are also unsure whether the Conservation officer has been made aware of the pre-application background work carried out to assist in the reassurance that this development would not be prejudicial or insensitive to the overall aims of the masterplan.
- 3.10. Comments are made in relation to the overshadowing of the row of 19th century buildings to the east of the site. It is correct that a tall building will always overshadow nearby buildings to some extent. However this is not unusual in town centres or with regenerations schemes. Importantly, the designation of the conservation area did not relate to the amount of light received by any particular building within its boundaries. This assessment would be made under a general design assessment of the proposal.
- 3.11. The Conservation officer believes that the building would have a 'harmful impact' upon the Conservation Area. However this conclusion has not been justified in any other terms than the building is large and different to what has gone before. Whether or not the planning officer agrees with this conclusion, in the planning balance, the building improves on the existing situation where the setting of the Conservation Area is currently degraded.

Highways/Transport

- 3.12. Hampshire Highways have provided a very detailed response, many of the points relating to detailed matters that are not relevant to the consideration of an outline application. Our transport consultant has spoken at length to Hampshire Highways. Hampshire Highways have responded with a reduced number of remaining concerns. These are as follows
- Access
 - Sustainable modes access
 - Trip Generation
 - Junction assessments
 - Travel Plan
- 3.13. A response to these points is provided below:
- 3.14. In relation to the access point any access point may require the removal of on-road parking spaces. As this will require a Traffic Regulation Order, for which consultation is necessary, Havant Council have confirmed that they are happy to deal with this through a Grampian condition, which would defer this requirement until after the grant of planning permission.
- 3.15. As the most sustainable site in the borough, the development is much more likely to be used by cyclists and pedestrians rather than car users. However any contributions required under the Community Infrastructure Levy will no doubt be used towards improvements in sustainable access as part of the wider comprehensive redevelopment of the town centre.
- 3.16. In relation to trip rates, Hampshire Highways have now confirmed that they have no concerns with the proposed parking ratio. There was an initial concern that trip rates did not include those to the commercial units. However it has been pointed out that trips are

currently taking place in connection with the existing retail units and therefore there will be no change.

- 3.17. In relation to traffic impact, HCC requested that further work be undertaken in relation to percentage impact on nearby highway junctions. This has now been completed, with less than 1% impact on the majority of the junctions identified with the highest impact being just less than 5%.
- 3.18. HCC have requested a detailed travel plan. At outline stage it is more appropriate to provide a framework travel plan, which has been submitted. A condition can be added to the planning permission requiring a more detailed plan.

Waste

- 3.19. The waste response from the Operations Team Leader, Chris Haynes, advises on two areas of concern. Firstly the potential impact to traffic from waste vehicles servicing the site and the distance for manual bin collection. The Highways response provides detail on the servicing of the site, although in a town centre location, this is often carried out from the roadside. The distance for manual bin collection is a matter to be considered under the detailed design stage when appropriate adjustments can be made. The comments are noted for a future reserved matters application however.

Havant Civic Society

- 3.20. The Havant Civic Society objected the planning application on the grounds that they consider the scheme to be of no architectural merit, and that it is completely out of character and scale with the adjacent stretch of North Street. Furthermore the Society raises concerns over the shadowing effect created by the building and the small amount of car parking spaces provided. The comments also include an acknowledgement that a landmark building is required that provides additional housing. Whilst the design issues are addressed above, attention must again be drawn to the fact that this is an outline application with the appearance of the building a matter for consideration under a reserved matters application.
- 3.21. It is considered that architectural merit is not a planning consideration although high quality design is. Subjective views on architecture are to be avoided, as they are likely to conflict between consultee.
- 3.22. The proposal represents a step-change for the scale of buildings within Havant Town Centre in line with the Council's longer term intentions. However the height of a building is not a factor that should be determinative of quality.

Landscape

- 3.23. The landscape response raises concerns that are design and highway related, rather than landscape related, e.g. that 13 storeys considered disproportionate in scale, the tall building will create excessive overshadowing, connectivity with the station should be improved, usability of the basement car park etc. These concerns are either addressed in the design response or highways response above, or fall to be considered at the reserved matters application stage, not at this outline stage.

4 NEIGHBOUR RESPONSES

- 4.1. A total of 8 neighbour responses have been received. Each response objects to the application. The following grounds are cited:
 - Increased traffic
 - Poor quality design

- Overshadowing
- Insufficient parking provision

4.2. Each of the above grounds for objection have been addressed through the design and highways comments provided above.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1. The above response has been provided in order to assist the planning officer in his assessment of the proposal. We understand the concerns of consultees and neighbours and wish to continue to work cooperatively with Havant Borough Council. We also understand the difficulties in bringing a building forward that differs from anything that has gone before.
- 5.2. It is hoped that our comments provide reassurance that Havant Borough Council that the site can absorb 130 units in a landmark building of high quality design. Whether it is this design or something slightly different is a matter for consideration at reserved matters stage. All comments regarding design have been noted and will be addressed at this time. We have also provided our background work to the Council demonstrating that the scheme will not prejudice the delivery of a more comprehensive development. We would like confirmation that has now been shared with consultees.
- 5.3. Should Havant Borough Council have any queries on the above comments provided please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss.



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Making commercial sense of property

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