Peat House, 2 Cornwall Street, City Centre, Birmingham, B3 2DX,

Redevelopment comprising additional and extended floorspace, recladding and re-glazing of the existing facade, access alterations, alterations to undercroft car parking, landscaping, services and associated works.

Applicant: Bruntwood Cornwall Street Ltd
c/o Agent
Agent: Turley
9 Colmore Row, Birmingham, B3 2BJ

Recommendation
Approve Subject To Conditions

1. Proposal

1.1. This detailed planning application for refurbishment and extension of the existing office building comprises four main elements: creation of a new entrance off Cornwall Street; enhancement of the façade; various extensions; and, internal alterations to create more flexible floorspace.

1.2. The application is supported by a planning statement, design and access statement, heritage statement, environmental noise survey report and flue extraction statement.

New Entrance and Public Realm Works

1.3. The current entrance to the building is poor and the reception does not create the impression of a quality modern office building. The scheme therefore proposes:

- removing part of the structural floor slab and rebuilding a new floor slab at street level, allowing level access for all. The car parking provision is reduced by 6 space to 35 spaces as a result;
- relocating the car park access to Livery Street to provide a wider, double height reception area, and more activity at street level;
- creating a feature canopy to frame the new entrance on Cornwall Street;
- removing the oppressive storey height wall on the corner of Cornwall Street and Livery Street, creating a wider pavement.

1.4. It is also proposed to carry out public realm improvements along the Cornwall Street frontage around the corner to the new car park access on Livery Street. These improvements include upgrading the existing kerb and paving to match the materials used at the recently completed nearby Church Street Square. The existing corner wall would also be removed to enlarge the public realm. The surfacing materials
include Yorkstone paving slabs and setts, dark grey granite kerb stones and resin bound gravel tarmac.

Facade

1.5. The existing facade is a blue-brown brick with an aluminium curtain wall glazing system finished in blue with mirrored glass. The facade is detailed with triangle motifs and orange soldier brick course at street level.

1.6. To improve the appearance of the building it is proposed to retain the existing brick piers only, to emphasise the vertical lines. The brick infill panels at street level would be removed along with their dated detailing and substituted with a contrasting blue brick to provide a solid base to the building. The existing glazing system would be replaced in its entirety with a new dark grey metal framed system, including full height glazed projecting bays.

Extensions

1.7. Four extensions are proposed to provide additional floorspace and more flexible floorplates. Together these extensions would increase the gross internal area of the building by 2,149sqm to 14,088sqm. They comprise:-

- two interlinked rooftop extensions straddling the stepping up of the existing massing. Along Livery Street the extension would be 3 storey, whilst along the Cornwall Street frontage it would be 1 storey. The extension would be “L” shaped with maximum dimensions of 34m by 24m. It would be fully glazed with a dark metal frame and feature a roof top garden

- a single storey courtyard extension to the rear of the building 'in-filling' the centre of the ‘H’. The extension measures 14m by 11m and builds over the existing external courtyard. The amenity space would then be re-provided on the roof of the new extension

- infilling the centre of the “H” to the front of the building with a 5 storey glazed extension 11m wide by 3m.

Flexible Office Space

1.8. The existing toilet core location splits the floorplate in two nearly equal spaces, which individually are less desirable in size for potential tenants. It is therefore proposed to relocate the core to the west elevation, which:-

- creates a split with a bias towards Livery Street which is of higher value;
- makes use of an already partially blocked up facade against 45 Church Street, where views and natural light are relatively poor;
- enables services to stack vertically through the whole building; and,
- creates a tidier solution for roof top plant rooms.

1.9. Link to Documents

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1. The application site covers just over 0.2ha and is located on the southern side of the junction of Cornwall Street and Livery Street, in the commercial core of Birmingham
City Centre. The existing building dates from the 1980s and until recently was occupied by KPMG. It has an “H” shaped footprint formed of three wings rising from 5 to 9 storeys.

2.2. Immediately east on the opposite site of Livery Street, is Snow Hill Station with its car park above. On the opposite side of Cornwall Street are other office buildings; whilst immediately to the west is the recently completed 45 Church Street, an office building rising from 12 to 14 storeys. To the immediate south east of the site is a five storey building occupied by Unison and beyond that, on the corner of Livery Street and Edmond Street, is the Old Contemptible’s Public House. The site lies immediately adjacent to the Colmore Row and Environs Conservation Area.

Location Plan

Street View

3. Planning History

3.1. 16 January 2014. Application 2013/07859/PA. Outline planning consent granted for proposed demolition of existing office building and construction of replacement 13 storey office building. Consent subject to a S106 legal agreement to secure local employment and training, and £100,000 toward public realm and transport enhancements.

4. Consultation/PP Responses

4.1. Adjoining occupiers, residents associations, Colmore Business Improvement District and local ward Councillors notified. Site and press noticed displayed.

4.2. Letter of objection from adjoining occupier commenting that –

- although in the new proposals the applicant has sought to reduce the height of the building proposed in the previous application, it is still proposed to add three storeys to the top of the lowest wing along Livery Street and one storey along the Cornwall Street frontage. There would therefore be a substantial increase in floor space and the potential number of people who would work at or visit the building.

- there would be between 25 – 35 car parking spaces, which seems low for a building capable of accommodating 2,000 staff. This would add to the pressure on the existing nearby public car parks and generate further traffic in this already congested area of the City.

- concerned about the interference that the construction of the development would have on the surrounding streets and possibly on the car parking area at the rear of their building.

- if minded to grant planning permission conditions should be attached to control the timing of work and noise levels etc. in order to minimise disruption to nearby businesses.

4.3. BCC Transportation Development - no objections subject to conditions to secure: a construction management plan; a package of off-site highway works; covered cycle storage; and the occupiers affiliate to Travelwise.
4.4. Regulatory Services – no objections subject to conditions to control noise from plant and machinery and to secure details of fume extraction equipment.

4.5. English Heritage – no objections, consider proposal would have less of an impact on the Conservation Area than the previous approved development.

4.6. Network Rail - there may be potential for the works on site to impact upon Snow Hill station opposite and the operational railway. Therefore, the developer should contact Network Rail Asset Protection Team prior to works commencing. They also recommend conditions to secure details of drainage, any vibro-impact works, earthworks and excavations.

4.7. West Midlands Police – it is noted that outside of operating hours the building would be completely secured around the perimeter, an electronic roller shutter would be provided at the entrance to the car park to control vehicular and pedestrian access, and the building would be covered by CCTV. These are supported as they would reduce the potential for the site to be targeted for crime or anti-social behaviour.

4.8. West Midlands Fire Service – no objections.

4.9. Conservation Heritage Panel – welcomed re-use and extensive refurbishment of the existing building and raised no objections to the extensions. However, queried whether it would be possible for a more active ground floor use and for the better articulation of the staircore adjacent to the Unison building.

5. Policy Context

5.1. Birmingham Unitary Development Plan 2005; Draft Birmingham Development Plan; Places for All SPG; Colmore Row and Environs Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Supplementary Planning Policies SPG; National Planning Policy Framework.

5.2. Site lies adjacent to the boundary with Colmore Row and Environs Conservation Area. No. 158 Edmund Street and the Old Royal Public House both Grade II listed buildings, are close to the site.

6. Planning Considerations

Policy Context and Principle of Development

6.1. The UDP supports and welcomes office activity and growth. To realise this growth potential it seeks to ensure a portfolio of development opportunities is maintained capable of satisfying a range of office user requirements. It adds that offices are one of the core activities that make up the city centre and the future prosperity of the centre is dependent on the continued growth of office and service sector employment. It then goes on to state that the core of Birmingham’s office centre is characterised by a concentration of higher order financial services and that these have considerable scope for expansion which must be accommodated.

6.2. The Big City Plan also envisages growth in the provision of high quality office space within and adjacent to the Colmore Row Central Business District. Moreover, the emerging Birmingham Development Plan indicates that the Council will plan for the development of a minimum of 590,000sqm of office floorspace in the city centre. In principle I therefore welcome refurbishment of the existing outdated office building.
6.3. The proposed building reaches 8 storeys, which is similar in height to other nearby building such as Interchange Place on the corner of Edmund Street and Cornwall Street. It would however be lower than the adjacent office building at 45 Church Street and the 13 storey office building that was granted planning permission on the current application site in 2014. In principle, I therefore have no objections to an 8 storey building in this location subject to its design and impact on the adjacent conservation area and nearby listed buildings.

Design and Impact on the Conservation Area and Nearby Listed Buildings.

6.4. The Colmore Row and Environs Conservation Area boundary is immediately to the south of the application site. Therefore whilst the application site falls outside the conservation area, the Unison Building and Old Contemptibles Public House fall within it. The nearest listed buildings are on Church Street, including the Old Royal Oak PH.

6.5. The Colmore Row and Environs Conservation Area Appraisal and Supplementary Planning Policies (December 2006) provides guidance for development. It states that new development in the setting of the conservation area must respect and preserve characteristic views within, from and into the area. The Council will not permit new buildings or additions to existing buildings beyond the conservation area boundary to intrude on or block key views or important sightlines.

6.6. Since this policy was adopted the NPPF has been published. It advises that in determining applications it is necessary to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that maybe affected by a proposal. It adds that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Furthermore, LPA’s should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage asset to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

6.7. In this instance the key heritage issues are the impact on the setting of adjoining buildings within the conservation area together with views into and out of it as detailed below:-

- Livery Street – the south west frontage is of a mix of styles, but is lined almost entirely with large, modern office blocks that have been excluded from the conservation area. The exceptions to this are the Old Contemptibles PH and the Unison buildings. The proposed rooftop addition would therefore result in a building more in scale with other office developments along this street. Furthermore the fully glazed extension would give a lightweight appearance so as not to over dominate the adjacent Unison building. It would also be lower than the outline consented scheme, which granted permission for a 13 storey building.

- Cornwall Street – adjoining the application site is a new office development, 45 Church Street, whilst on the opposite side of the road are modern office developments. This part of Cornwall Street is not within the conservation area, which lies to the west toward the Council House. From the conservation area are limited views of the proposed building along Cornwall Street as it is behind the larger 45 Church Street office
building. The proposed front extension and single storey rooftop addition along this frontage would therefore not have a significant impact on the Conservation Area.

- Views into and out of the conservation area – the Conservation Area Character Appraisal notes that there are some good views both within and from the conservation area. Whilst the building would be visible up Livery Street and from St Chads on the approach toward the City, it would not block key views into the Conservation Area.

6.8. Overall, I consider that the existing building is architecturally uninteresting and contributes nothing to the character and appearance of the Colmore Row and Environs Conservation Area, which directly adjoins it. I therefore welcome these proposals to completely refurbish and extend the building. Whilst I note the comments raised by the Conservation Heritage Panel, the applicant has indicated that it is unviable to introduce more activity at ground floor level. They are however willing to incorporate additional detailing into the metal cladding system to break up the massing of the staircase and a condition to secure these details is attached.

6.9. Given that the scheme includes a new entrance on Cornwall Street and removal of the wall to back of pavement at the road junction, then I consider that the scheme would significantly improve the appearance. I therefore consider that the scheme would help preserve and enhance the character of the adjacent Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings.

Access and Parking

6.10. Whilst I note the concerns of the adjacent occupier about traffic generation and parking provision, BCC Transportation Development have raised no objections subject to conditions. Whereas the consented 2014 office development proposed a building with a gross floor space of 24,450sqm, the current application increases the amount of floorspace by 2,149sqm to 14,088sqm. The AM and PM two-way trip generation would therefore be reduced from 152 and 139 (based on the previous outline application) to 100 and 106 two-way trip generation.

6.11. There are 41 existing on-site car parking spaces but 6 car parking spaces would be lost and therefore, 35 spaces would be provided, of which, 2 would be designated disabled spaces, with 50 cycle parking provision. This level of parking meets BCC adopted guidelines and I therefore have no objections to the amount of parking proposed. Conditions are attached to secure cycle parking and for the occupiers to affiliate to Travelwise.

6.12. The existing vehicular crossing on Cornwall Street would become redundant with a new vehicular crossing located on Livery Street adjacent to Unison building. Due to the proposed vehicular crossing at Livery Street there would be a loss of an on-street pay and display parking bay. BCC Transportation Development have no objections to relocating the vehicular crossing but the developer would need to pay for the TROs works on the carriageways and costs for any on-street parking bays lost.

6.13. The current building sits close to back of pavement and pinches the footway width at the junction. I therefore welcome the proposal to remove the wall to back of pavement at the road junction to widen the pavement. I also support the proposed new surfacing of the footpath along the Cornwall and Livery Street frontages, which
would match the public realm works recently carried out along Church Street. To secure these works a condition is attached.

6.14. I note the concerns of Network Rail and the adjacent occupier and attach appropriate safeguarding conditions.

6.15. Whereas the previous consent secured £100,000 toward public transport and public realm improvements, the applicants are proposing to carry out footpath improvements around the site, which they have costed at approximately £90,000. Given that the currently proposed scheme delivers less floorspace than the previous consented scheme, then I do not consider it necessary to secure any additional S106 contributions.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The existing building is tired and outdated and I welcome these proposals to refurbish and extend it. The proposed development would provide much needed high quality office floorspace within the city centre core, in a very sustainable location, being easily accessible by public transport.

7.2. I consider that the proposed works would significantly improve the appearance of the rather ugly building and would help to preserve and enhance the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings.

7.3. Subject to safeguarding conditions, I consider that the application is acceptable and consistent with national and local planning policy.

8. Recommendation

8.1. Approve subject to safeguarding conditions.

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1 Requires the prior submission of extraction and odour control details
2 Limits the noise levels for Plant and Machinery
3 Requires the prior submission of a construction method statement/management plan
4 Requires the prior submission of sample materials
5 Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans
6 Requires the prior submission of staircase details
7 Requires the prior submission of any vibro-impact works
8 Requires the prior submission of any earthworks and excavations
9 Requires the prior submission of drainage details
10 Requires the prior submission of cycle storage details
11 Requires the applicants to join Travelwise
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<td>12</td>
<td>Requires the prior submission and completion of works for the S278/TRO Agreement</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Limits the approval to 3 years (Full)</td>
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Case Officer: David Wells
View of entrance from Cornwall Street
View from corner of Livery Street and Cornwall Street
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