

# PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT



**ITEM: 13**

**Application Number:** 13/00486/LBC

**Applicant:** University of Plymouth

**Description of Application:** Internal alterations to provide 90 student bedspaces (within 8 townhouses) and associated communal facilities and covered bike store.

**Type of Application:** Listed Building

**Site Address:** PORTLAND SOUTH, UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH,  
DRAKE CIRCUS PLYMOUTH

**Ward:** Drake

**Valid Date of Application:** 18/03/2013

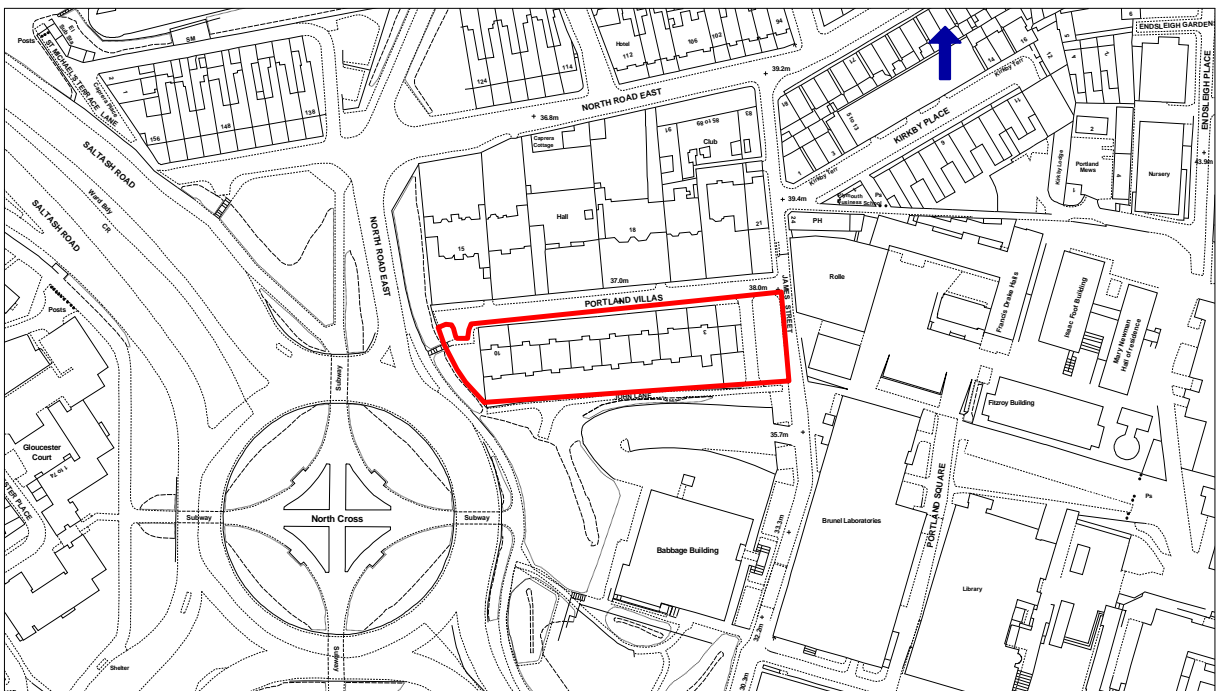
**8/13 Week Date:** **13/05/2013**

**Decision Category:** Member Referral

**Case Officer :** Kate Saunders

**Recommendation:** Grant Conditionally

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**This application has been referred to Planning Committee by Cllr Ricketts.**

### **Site Description**

3-10 Portland Villas are a Grade II listed period terrace constructed around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The properties have garden areas to the front and rear with a large stone wall forming the rear boundary.

The terrace is located to the north west of the main university campus and is bounded by North Cross roundabout to the west. To the north are similar period properties whilst to the south there is currently a cobbled lane, car park and an area of open space containing some small trees. To the east are James Street and the modern Rolle Building.

### **Proposal Description**

Change of use, conversion and alteration from university offices to 90 student bedspaces (within 8 townhouses) and associated communal facilities and covered bike store.

The proposal is to revert the buildings back to their original residential use with minimal alterations to the historic fabric. The application will involve no alterations to the external appearance of the properties. The properties will be arranged with communal space on the lower ground floor and then bedrooms and bathrooms on the upper floors. There will be a mix of both twin and single rooms provided.

### **Pre-Application Enquiry**

A formal pre-application was submitted, reference 12/02287/MAJ, to consider the conversion of existing buildings and new development to provide approximately 820 student bedspaces. Plans were provided indicating the proposed floor plans for this site and positive feedback was given.

### **Relevant Planning History**

This application has been submitted alongside a number of other applications, which are currently under consideration that will provide a total of 885 student bedspaces with a range of associated facilities including cafes, common rooms, and a sports hall.

### **Consultation Responses**

No external consultations requested or received.

### **Representations**

Nineteen letters of representation have been received. Eighteen letters are objecting to the proposals and raise the following issues:

- Detrimental to the nature, character and dynamic of this part of the city centre
- Too many student properties in the area already

- Effect the amenities of neighbouring residential properties
- Contribute to existing noise and waste pollution
- Affordable housing should be provided in the area not more student housing
- Parking problems will increase
- Anti-social behaviour will increase e.g. car damage, graffiti, litter
- So many extra people in one area will lead to overcrowding
- The introduction of further tall buildings may create “wind tunnels”
- Poor quality of life will be created for students and staff
- Noise study is not representative
- No management plan is in existence yet
- Small hotels and guesthouses have closed as a result of the university letting out their rooms during the summer months.
- The applications should be considered by Planning Committee
- The public consultation event was done at a busy time of year when people couldn't attend
- It was not easy to make comments and the process has not been open and transparent
- The density of buildings on campus is already too high
- Loss of offices will change the nature of the campus
- HMOs will lie vacant in surrounding areas and what impact will this have
- An agreement should be used to increase campus patrols at night to limit noise, there should be daily refuse collections on North Hill (Thurs-Sun) and the university should provide a 24hr shop on campus.

One letter of support has been received which suggests that moving students on to campus will lead to existing HMOs in surrounding areas e.g. Mutley being turned back in to family housing.

### **Analysis**

1. This application turns on Policy CS03 (Historic Environment) of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007 and the Development Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document 2010. Appropriate consideration has also been given to the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

2. The main planning consideration is the effect on the character and fabric of the listed building, as detailed below.

3. Since Portland Villas original construction as dwellings for family and servants, they have undergone a number of changes, including being subdivided into flats, and then most recently being used by the university as academic and administrative spaces. Despite this, significant numbers of original features survive, including tiled vestibules, stair and door furniture and windows.

4. The development has the potential to impact on the internal fabric and integrity of the buildings. Proposed works include the subdivision of rooms and the insertion of capsules/pods to provide en-suite facilities for residents, in line with modern requirements. Overall a “light touch” approach has been adopted, in order to prevent any unnecessary work, and this is welcomed. Few “new” partitions are proposed with the current layout largely being retained. In addition the blocking up of more ‘recent’ openings in the original party walls is very much welcomed which will reinstate the separation between the individual dwellings. In this instance no recording of the openings is necessary.

5. The drawings are unfortunately lacking in specific detail but do show generic approaches to the insertion of openings, the blocking of others and removal of existing partitions and insertion of new. In principle these approaches are acceptable but all openings where original should be maintained visually, with architraves and archways, quoin beads etc retained and the new blocking up and plaster finishes set back. In addition where at all possible the original panelled doors should be re-used elsewhere. Furthermore new ceiling cornices should be inserted to match existing to the former ‘new’ separating partitions on the bedrooms side of the partition if the cornices are plain or decorative in the principal rooms. It is accepted that the ceilings may need to be lowered above the bathrooms to accommodate some plumbing and extraction as the bathrooms are one above the other on ground and first floors, but this is not shown on the drawings and will therefore be requested via condition. New lengths of skirting and architraves should also match the existing pattern and again this will be conditioned.

6. The new use as student housing will also necessitate associated plumbing, drainage and ventilation, which can raise issues. It is welcome that the new kitchens are all on the lower ground floor in the more subservient rooms to the former dwellings. However the insertion of bathrooms to the upper floors, albeit most within existing compartments, will necessitate careful consideration of plumbing and drainage runs alongside ventilation extraction/ducts etc. Further details will again therefore be requested via condition

7. Fire precautions will inevitably be more strenuous with provision of living accommodation compared to offices and there is possibly a requirement under building regulations for upgrading the fire resistance including that of the original doors (if not already upgraded for the previous use) , the provision of horizontal separation between floors and protection of staircases. Details of fire precautionary measures will be requested as part of the conditions. Fire separation should be carried out within the floor construction zone and above the floor-boarding where decorative ceilings exist. Normally the undergirding of decorative plaster ceilings will not be acceptable.

8. It is also possible that sound and thermal insulation measures may be required and again if so then these details will be provided as part of the condition discharge process.

9. Existing historic floor tiles in vestibules, and original floor-boarding should be retained together with existing staircases and existing original fireplaces.

10. Internal refurbishment will also include electrical works to ensure safety and appropriate access to IT services. This work will include the removal of live and redundant cabling that currently includes unsightly bunches that detract from the appearance of the hallways, and the running of new cabling within the walls, where possible. Currently the cabling presents an intrusive visual element, in the entrance halls of a number of the properties, and detracts from their otherwise well-preserved appearance that reflects the quality of the villas when originally constructed and occupied in the 19th century. The removal of cabling will enhance the internal quality of the properties.

11. Externally, few changes are proposed. However the accompanying Design and Access Statement does suggest that a number of non-original external doors and windows will be replaced. It is suggested that the replacement of the visually intrusive doors and windows with materials and styles more in keeping with the terrace would be an enhancement, and while this may be the case, no details have been provided. Further information will therefore be requested via condition.

12. To the rear of the properties changes will be minimal, including the removal of modern greenhouses and dog pens, which is considered acceptable. However again no details are provided of the proposed cycle storage and this would need to be agreed through the condition discharge process.

13. The Grade II listed wall that backs onto John Lane will not be affected but it may require consolidation and repair in places, details of which will need to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

14. It also appears that the two secure gates shown in the listed garden wall at each end are new although not stated as such. Further details of their size, construction and materials will again be requested via condition

15. A number of points have been raised in the letters of representation received. This application can only consider the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the listed building therefore the issues raised will be thoroughly considered in the accompanying planning application.

Human Rights Act - The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, and in particular Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8 of the Act itself. This Act gives further effect to the rights included in the European Convention on Human Rights. In arriving at this recommendation, due regard has been given to the applicant's reasonable development rights and expectations which have been balanced and weighed against the wider community interests, as expressed through third party interests / the Development Plan and Central Government Guidance.

### **Section 106 Obligations**

The associated planning application for this site will make infrastructure contributions to mitigate the impacts of the development.

## **Equalities & Diversities issues**

The University, in accordance with their 'service provider duties' under the Equality Act together with UPP are committed to inclusive design and accessibility for everyone, where reasonably possible, including learners, staff and visitors with a range of physical, sensory, cognitive and learning impairments.

The University has taken the view that provision of access bedrooms should be considered on a campus-wide basis. Within the existing portfolio of rooms, there are a number of 'accessible' rooms many of which include student / carer specific facilities.

In 2012, 183 applicants for enrolment with Plymouth University declared a disability and for those wishing to live in the accommodation, in accordance with the University's service provider duties, many reasonable adjustments have been made to suit the individual student's requirements. These include 14 bedrooms specifically designed for use by wheelchair users, purpose designed kitchens allowing wheelchair turning and circulation space to manoeuvre around, designated disabled persons' parking spaces available for Blue Badge holders and the 'deaf alert' pager fire alarm system has been and will continue to be installed in all halls of residence.

The proposal takes into consideration UPP's Inclusive Design Policy and appropriate best practice solutions will be adopted where it is reasonable to do so. Best practice includes British Standard 8300:2009 + A1 2010, Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. Guidance published by the Equalities Commission has also been considered in the development of the scheme strategy.

Where full wheelchair access cannot be reasonably achieved e.g. in some of the proposed refurbishments of existing buildings, or where accommodation is above ground floor level and an acceptable assisted escape strategy cannot be developed, no wheelchair accessible units will be provided. It should be noted, however, that accommodation for students with ambulant or sensory impairments is to be provided in all residential units.

## **Conclusions**

The change of use and refurbishment of Portland Villas will adopt a "light touch" approach which will ensure the historic character and fabric of the properties is preserved and enhanced. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

## **Recommendation**

In respect of the application dated **18/03/2013** and the submitted drawings 338-PVS-PL-SITE-002, 338-PVS-PL-SITE-010, 338-PVS-PL-GA-001, 338-PVS-PL-GA-010 Rev A, Phase 1 Geo-environmental Desk Study Report ref. RP5464-B, Noise Report ref. C/30466/S08/R01c/GDW, Transport Assessment Issue 4 dated 13.03.13, Overarching Sustainable Energy Statement Issue 2 March 2013, Statement of Community Consultation, Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Philosophy dated 07.12.12, Planning Statement Issue 3 dated 13.03.13, Archeology and Heritage Desk-based Assessment Issue 2 dated 14.12.12 and accompanying Design and Access Statement, it is recommended to: **Grant Conditionally**

## **Conditions**

### **TIME LIMIT FOR COMMENCEMENT**

(1) The works hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

#### **Reason:**

To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### **APPROVED PLANS [LISTED BUILDING CONSENT]**

(2) The works hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 338-PVS-PL-SITE-002, 338-PVS-PL-SITE-010, 338-PVS-PL-GA-001, 338-PVS-PL-GA-010 Rev A

#### **Reason:**

For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of good planning, in accordance with policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

### **NEW PARTITIONS**

(3) No works shall take place until details of the proposed new partitions have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said details shall include the design, method of construction, material and finish of the proposed partitions. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

#### **Reason:**

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

### **OPENING DETAILS**

(4) No works shall take place until details for blocking existing openings or creating new openings have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said details shall include the design, method of construction, material and finish to be used. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### FIRE PROTECTION

(5) No works shall take place until details of any fire protection methods have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### SOUND INSULATION

(6) No works shall take place until details of any sound insulation methods have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### BATHROOMS AND KITCHENS

(7) No works shall take place until details of the proposed plumbing, drainage and extraction equipment to be installed in association with any new bathrooms and kitchens have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### BATHROOM PODS

(8) No works shall take place until details of the proposed new bathroom pods have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said details shall include the design, method of construction, material, finish and method of fixing to be used. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.



#### GARDEN WALL

(9) No works shall take place until details of the proposed repairs and new openings to the garden wall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said details shall include a schedule for all repairs and information of the design, method of construction, material and finish of the proposed new gates. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### EXTERNAL JOINERY DETAILS

(10) No works shall take place until a schedule of all external joinery details (with cross sections at 1:5 scale and 1:1 moulding details) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### INTERNAL JOINERY DETAILS

(11) All new joinery to be installed including skirtings and architraves shall replicate existing patterns and designs.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### CEILING CORNICES

(12) All new ceiling cornices to be installed shall replicate existing patterns and designs.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

#### IRONMONGERY

(13) No works shall take place until details of the proposed ironmongery have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

To ensure that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

**INFORMATIVE: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL [WITH NEGOTIATION]**

(1) In accordance with the requirements of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 and paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the Applicant including pre-application discussions and has negotiated amendments to the application to enable the grant of planning permission.

**Statement of Reasons for Approval and Relevant Policies**

Having regard to the main planning considerations, which in this case are considered to be: the effect on the Listed Building, the proposal is not considered to be demonstrably harmful. In the absence of any other overriding considerations, and with the imposition of the specified conditions, the proposed works are acceptable and comply with (1) policies of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007 and supporting Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents (the status of these documents is set out within the City of Plymouth Local Development Scheme) and (b) relevant Government Policy Statements and Government Circulars, as follows:

CS03 - Historic Environment

SPDI - Development Guidelines

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework March 2012