

Our ref: 40b – Planning Conformity/Final Responses/Sheffield Mixed Use Meadowhall Jul 08

10 July 2008

Howard Baxter
Sheffield City Council
Howden House
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Dear Howard

Planning Application Number: 08/02594/OUT

Demolition of existing buildings and erection of mixed use development and business facilities (Use Class B1), residential accommodation (including serviced apartments) (C3), hotels (C1), commercial office floorspace (A2), food and drink facilities (A3, A4, and A5), community and civic facilities (D1), leisure uses (D2), retail floorspace (A1), and ancillary commercial and non-commercial uses, car parking spaces (including multi-storey car parking), public and private open space, and landscaping, highways, access and engineering works at Land and Buildings at Weir Head Carbrook Street Meadowhall Way Meadowhall Drive and Weedon, Weedon Street, Sheffield.

The Assembly is grateful for the opportunity to comment on this proposed development. The Assembly, as the Regional Planning Body, has been asked to comment on this development as its nature and location mean that it could have an effect on the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The current RSS - The Yorkshire and Humber Plan was issued by the Secretary of State in May 2008. The RSS has the status of a Development Plan Document and forms part of the framework for decisions taken under section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), which means that decisions on all applications have to be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Regional Policy Context

Policies in RSS seek to focus development on the region's town and city centres. The Core Approach (Policies YH1-YH9) makes it clear that most new development, and high trip generating uses, should be focused on Regional Cities and Sub-Regional Cities and Towns and that away from these sufficient development should be permitted in Principal Towns to enable them to fulfil their role as service centres.

Location of development

The proposed development is located north-east of Sheffield City Centre. Sheffield is identified in RSS as a Regional City. Policy YH4 of RSS states that Regional Cities should be the prime focus for housing, employment, shopping, leisure, education, health and cultural activities and facilities in the region.

Policy SY1A provides for the development of Sheffield as a Regional City offering high order shops and services, as well as jobs and homes needed to serve its extended city region, with particular emphasis on continuing the renaissance and enhancing the role of the city centre. Policy SY1B supports the role of Sheffield as a major provider of jobs through the renaissance of Sheffield City Centre, and further regeneration of the Upper and Lower Don Valleys.

Town Centre Uses

Policy E2 of RSS provides for plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes to strengthen the role and performance of existing city and town centres. Policy E2 emphasises that the centres of Regional Cities and Sub Regional Cities and Towns should be the focus for offices, retail, leisure, entertainment, arts, culture, tourism and more intensive sport and recreation across the region.

The proposal includes a range of between 60,000 to 120, 000 sqm of B1 Office Use intended to be delivered in phases. RSS Policy E3 states that local employment reviews to inform LDFs should take account of the potential job growth set out in Tables 11.1 and 11.2 and the guidance on employment land in Table 11.3 along with more detailed sub regional or local forecasts or more up-to-date information about land needs. Table 11.1 states that the potential annual job growth from 2006 in Sheffield is 4,400. Table 11.2 in RSS suggests the potential annual job growth from 2006 for B1 office uses is 1,170 and 682 for retail and leisure uses in Sheffield. The applicant states that the office campus alone has the potential to create approximately 5,500 jobs. Clearly, this is likely to have a significant impact on the level of jobs within the City and it will be up to the local authority to decide in the context of the local Employment Land Review if this development is of an appropriate scale.

However, given this scale there is potential for the proposal to harm RSS Policy E2, which states that the Regional Cities should be the focus for office development. Sheffield City Council in their emerging Core Strategy has indicated that 65% of all office development should be focussed within the City Centre. According to figures from the Local Authority Sheffield are currently delivering approximately 78 % of office development in the City Centre. If 60,000 sqm of office development were

to be delivered in association with the proposal this would still keep the office distribution within Sheffield in line with the City Centre focus (i.e. 65%). However, further development in this location i.e. an additional 60,000 sqm would bring the distribution out of line with this approach and with RSS Policy E2. To that end, the Assembly would only wish to see the initial phase of office development delivered. The additional phase should be subject to monitoring of the performance of the City Centre office market.

The applicant states that the River Don District Office Campus will cover in excess of 9 hectares of land and can potentially deliver up to 120,000 sq m of new floorspace for Sheffield. It is also stated by the applicant that opportunities of this scale and nature do not exist in Sheffield City Centre and therefore in order to secure the benefit of the inward investment and jobs the proposal will create, there is a pressing requirement for the development to be delivered outside the City Centre area.

The Assembly would have concerns if the proposed office development would have potential to harm the city centre office market. Therefore, the Assembly would support the office development in principle if it were a high quality "campus style" office provision suitable only for large occupiers, such as could not be accommodated within the City Centre on this scale. The Assembly would be concerned if the office was speculatively marketed to a number of smaller or medium sized users and would consider such development likely to cause harm to RSS location policies and RSS Policy E2.

The proposed development will comprise 6,600 sq m of retail/leisure/community. From the information provided by the applicant, the proposed maximum retail floor space will be approximately 2,499 sq m. It is worth noting that Meadowhall Shopping Centre provides 132,800 sq m of retail space. Policy E2 of RSS provides for no further development of new or large-scale expansion of existing, out-of-centre regional or sub-regional shopping centres should be permitted.

The Assembly would support the development in principle, if the retail element of the development is to serve the local residents and is for convenience shopping and not comparison shopping of Meadowhall.

Housing

The application states that the proposed development will provide approximately 1,300 residential units. RSS sets an annual target of 1,425 dwellings between 2008-2026. Therefore this proposal will make a significant contribution to delivering housing in the Sheffield district.

The application provides no details of the type of homes that will be constructed. Housing mix will need to be a key consideration in this development. Policy H5 in RSS (2008) emphasises the need for the current mix of housing in the Region to change so that it better supports the creation of more sustainable communities. The Policy recommends that plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes should ensure the provision of homes for a mix that reflects the needs

of the area, including homes for families with children, single persons, and older persons, to create sustainable communities. Should the local authority decide to accept housing development on this site it will be important ensure that there is an appropriate housing mix.

The applicant states that 15% of the proposed housing will be affordable. Policy H4A of RSS states that the Region needs to increase its provision of affordable housing. Plans, strategies, programmes and investment decisions should ensure the provision of affordable housing to address the needs of local communities. RSS (2008) identifies Sheffield as an area of 'medium need' for affordable housing (based on the Regional Housing Strategy, 2005). Policy H4B of the RSS suggests that in areas of 'medium need' (including Sheffield) 30-40% of homes need to be affordable. Again, should the local authority decide to accept housing development this site provides a significant opportunity to deliver much needed affordable homes. The findings of the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be applicable to this issue.

Accessibility

Accessibility criteria are set out in RSS (Table 13.8 and 13.9). These tables include acceptable walking and overall journey times for the population that would be travelling to the site. It is worth noting that the proposed site is highly accessible by regular bus, train and supertram services. The development should capitalise on the transport interchange, and should therefore seek to minimise the level of car parking facilities.

Furthermore, the proposed development should make efforts through its layout, design and connectivity to deliver a personal travel reduction and modal shift in line with RSS Policy T1.

It is not clear from the application whether or not an assessment against the accessibility criteria has been carried out.

Renewable Energy

The sustainable use of resources is a key theme in RSS. Policy ENV5 states that in advance of local targets being set in DPDs, new developments of more than 10 dwellings should secure at least 10% of their energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources.

The applicant states that where appropriate the following renewable energy technologies will be applied; ground source heat pumps, biomass heating, solar panel heating, photovoltaic panels, and small micro-wind turbines. These are welcomed in principle and it is expected that their contribution towards Policy ENV5 be made more explicit in a reserved matters application.

Conclusion

Given the issues set out above, the Assembly offers the following comments that:

- an appropriate housing mix, taking into account the RSS indication of between 30-40% affordable units and the outcomes of the Local Authority's own housing needs assessments,
- levels of car parking in line or lower than those within RSS so as to reflect the site's excellent public transport connectivity, and
- details on how the technologies proposed will secure at least 10% on-site renewable energy generation.

and that the proposed development does have the potential to harm the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy. To that end, the Assembly would only support the proposal subject to the following:

- to avoid harm to RSS Policy E2 and maintain the City Centre as the focus for office development the Assembly proposes that the Local Authority impose a condition which limits the first phase of the office development to 60,000 sqm,
- to avoid harm to RSS Policy E2 and maintain the City Centre as the focus for office development the Assembly proposes that the Local Authority impose a condition, which limits the remainder of the 120,000 sqm office development to be tested against the Development Plan in place at that time dependant upon the success or otherwise of the city centre office market. This should be revealed through Sheffield City Council annual monitoring in accordance with the Core Strategy,
- to avoid harm to the RSS Policy E2 the Assembly proposes that the Local Authority imposes a condition which controls the number and type of office units proposed so that it does not compete directly with the City Centre office market, but offers larger users a high quality site close to a transport interchange and in an area of regeneration need
- to avoid harm to RSS Policy E2 the Assembly proposes that the Local Authority impose a condition which limits the retailing element of the scheme to 2,500 sq m and that specifically this should be convenience shopping that is ancillary to the development and be physically separated from Meadowhall Shopping Centre so that there is no function retail link between the two sites
- to avoid harm to RSS Policy T1 the Assembly proposes that the Local Authority impose a condition which requires that the detailed design and layout of the scheme should reflect the key requirement to maximise and facilitate the efficient use of nearby public transport by walkers and cyclists.

If you have any queries about these points, please do not hesitate to contact Andy Haigh on 01924 331601.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Box'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Peter' written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name 'Box'.

Peter Box
Chair, Regional Planning Board
Yorkshire and Humber Assembly