

Daniel Kalley

Sent by email

Dear Mr Kalley,

The Solstice, Northminster

Application reference – 20/00554/OUT

We are writing to you ahead of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee meeting on 23 February 2021 regarding MPB Structures' application for a development on the site of the current Solstice building on Northminster. The application is recommended for approval.

The proposed development, which falls within the Peterborough Local Plan and under the Northminster Opportunity Area, includes:

- 56 self-contained private apartments
- Two retail/commercial units on the ground floor
- 77 student rooms with communal facilities
- Improved access to and greater natural surveillance of Stanley Recreation Ground

Our proposal

Planning permission was granted in 2007 to previous owners of the site by members of the committee for a development of a similar scale to the scheme now proposed. However, MPB Structures has decided to pursue a new application that it feels better reflects current local needs and is more commercially viable, whilst at the same time ensuring that the impact on views of the Cathedral is no greater.

MPB Structures has worked closely with key stakeholders – including the Council's planning officers – to ensure the proposal for the site meets the needs of Peterborough and provides a step forward in the regeneration of Northminster, supporting the Council's own plans for the redevelopment of the market and former multi-storey car park.

The proposed plans would provide new accommodation in the heart of the city, including the first investment in student living for the city's new university.

The ground floor of the development would include two retail/commercial units, helping to support the vitality of the area and providing local employment opportunities as well as during construction of the project.

Regeneration

The development will play a vital role in kickstarting the regeneration of Northminster and supports the Council's wider aspirations for the city centre. With many of the current regeneration plans



focused on Fletton Quays and the Station Quarter, this proposal will bring new life to an area that has declined in recent years and which currently offers limited opportunities for residents and visitors. The proposed development would bring students to the area, benefiting the night-time economy in the area and wider city centre.

Under Peterborough's Local Plan, Northminster falls within a designated opportunity area. Our consultation process highlighted the necessity of regeneration and significant investment in this area to ensure Northminster is not 'left behind'.

Subject to planning permission being granted, MPB Structures originally committed to commissioning a scoping study to identify and fund improvements to the nearby Stanley Recreation Ground. However, since then, The Towns Fund has allocated £1 million to 14 city parks and open spaces in Peterborough, including Stanley Recreation Ground. MPB Structures is keen to see the enhancement of local public open space and has offered to contribute a further £25,000 towards Stanley Recreation Ground, with £20,000 already paid to the Council from the previously approved scheme which was started.

MPB Structures remain committed to supporting the revitalisation of local public open spaces, and will work closely alongside the Towns Fund to identify how best to support that objective and help Stanley Recreation Ground become a safer, more enjoyable space for local residents and visitors.

Stakeholder engagement

Since our initial proposal was outlined in April 2020, we have undertaken consultation with local stakeholders including Peterborough Civic Society, Peterborough City Council councillors and officials, Friends of Stanley Recreation Ground, City College Peterborough, Peterborough Cathedral and the Combined Authority.

Our proposal has received positive comments from stakeholders and members of the public, including:

- Support for the design and structure of the scheme
- Recognition that more investment is needed in this particular area of the City
- Support for the provision of student and private accommodation
- Support for investment in Stanley Recreation Ground

During the consultation, stakeholders and local residents stated that they would like to see retail and hospitality facilities included in the proposal. As a result, we have included space on the ground floor for hospitality and retail, increasing the potential for commercial opportunities in the area and helping to ensure that Northminster becomes a destination in itself.

Design and landscaping

The development is designed to complement the scale and form of nearby buildings and the illustrative plans show a high-quality finish. A green roof would also be incorporated on two levels of the building to increase biodiversity and sustainability measures.

The view of Peterborough Cathedral and the immediate streetscape have been carefully considered



in the development of the scheme and we have worked closely with officers to demonstrate that the scheme has a similar impact to that previously approved by committee in 2007. After careful consideration, as set out in the planning officer's committee report, they recommend the scheme should be approved, that it offers a number of significant benefits to the city, and there has been no change in planning policy or legislation that could justify the current scheme being refused.

Access and traffic

The site is near several bus stops and is also a short walk from Peterborough train and bus stations. Pedestrian access to the buildings would be via Brook Street.

The scheme would have parking facilities on-site, sited underground, again with access via Brook Street. There would also be on-site, secure storage areas to encourage cycle use.

Meeting housing need

While there is not as much emphasis in the Local Plan on student accommodation, the new university is likely to attract students from further afield as well as from the city itself. This development would provide the first purpose designed private-sector accommodation available to students, helping to meet the growing need for such provision in the city centre. The proposal also includes a 30% affordable housing contribution.

Conclusion

We have developed our proposal for this site with careful consideration of the Local Plan, the existing area and the needs of the local residents, as well as national and local planning policy requirements.

As outlined above, the development would bring many benefits to the local community and Peterborough, including the proposed investment and collaborative work with The Towns Fund to improve Stanley Recreation Ground in order to provide a safer and more accessible open space for residents and the wider community. The development would also provide support to the University of Peterborough, creating the first private sector student accommodation ready for its opening in 2022.

Going forward, if the application is approved, MPB Structures would offer to work with the university project team to ensure that the building reflects its emerging needs. We would also commit to working closely with the local community to minimise disruption during the construction process.

Yours sincerely,

Maddie Astle
On behalf of MPB Structures



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