

Follow up Officer Report to Committee

Application ref:	24/0315
Ward:	Talbot
Application type:	Reserved matters of appearance and landscaping
Location:	Land bounded by Adelaide street, Leopold Grove and Alfred Street, Blackpool.
Proposal:	Application for the approval of reserved matters (Appearance and Landscape) pursuant to outline planning permission 24/0131, comprising the erection of a hotel development with car parking and associated works.
Recommendation:	Grant permission
Recommendation Summary:	The proposals would redevelop a prominent, vacant site within the Town Centre Conservation Area, to provide modern visitor accommodation to complement the high quality conference facilities at the Winter Gardens and the wider Town Centre. It is considered that the benefits of the scheme in terms of redevelopment and regeneration are considered to be significant. As such the proposal is judged to represent sustainable development and Members are, therefore, respectfully recommended to grant planning permission subject to the conditions listed at the end of this report.
Meeting date:	10 December 2024
Reason for bringing to Committee:	Major application in the public interest
Case officer:	Clare Johnson
Case officer contact:	01253 476224

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the meeting on 12 November 2024, the matter of appearance was accepted at that meeting, but concerns were raised regarding the nature and general lack of landscaping details, so the application was deferred to allow the applicant to provide further details. This report provides an update on details of landscaping as requested by the Committee and attached at Appendix 5a is the report presented at the meeting on 12 November 2024.

1.2 Further details have been submitted and these have been duly considered.

2.0 CONSULTEE RESPONSE - Tree and Landscape Officer:

2.1 The 'plant pots with evergreen shrubs' to define the entrance on Leopold are an unimpressive addition and the sizes are also not provided. The steel tree planters (at podium level) are less than one meter wide, which is insufficient for sustainable tree planting and the depth is not provided.

2.2 Trees planted in planters are unlikely to survive, and their lifespan is limited if they make it past establishment. On-site greening is always preferred, but where this is not possible, off-site should be considered to ensure that new trees have the opportunity to thrive and provide multiple benefits for people and nature.

2.3 The need to plant urban trees in cell system tree pits rather than planters is paramount for the following reasons:

- Root Development: Provides ample space for natural root growth.
- Water Management: Efficiently manages water, reducing waterlogging.
- Soil Quality: Better aeration and less compaction.
- Structural Support: Offers stability, reducing the risk of toppling.
- Sustainability: Mimics natural conditions for long-term health.

2.4 Following the submission of amended plans, the Tree and Landscape Officer raised concerns that 92 cubic metres of soils would weigh at least 92 tonnes, without water, the trees and plants or the planters themselves. Therefore the majority of the trees should be an offsite provision but the podium planters should remain with a reduced soil volume to support plants and shrubs to add to the landscaping aesthetics and support placemaking.

3.0 ASSESSMENT

Landscaping

3.1 The amended ground-floor soft works plan now indicates that there would be 173sqm of planting in the ground along Leopold Grove, Alfred Street and Adelaide Street. The planting areas would be irrigated by a "leaky pipe" system. The provision of more planting, and planting in the ground is a welcome improvement to the scheme previously presented to Committee and addresses some of the concerns raised.

3.2 Further details were submitted regarding the podium planting and an amended plan indicated that there would be 258sqm of planting in planters at first floor level, with a lightweight topsoil volume of 92 cubic metres to accommodate tree planting. The planters would contain ornamental planting and 26 multi-stem trees at heights between 2-2.5m tall, all irrigated by a "leaky pipe" system. The amended plan also includes a note stating "the proposal shows 26 proposed trees to the podium gardens. If this is not possible due to structural issues then we refer to S106 contribution".

- 3.3 The Council's Tree and Landscape Officer has been consulted on the amended plans and has raised concerns regarding the weight of the podium planting areas. The officer has confirmed that one cubic metre of moderately damp, freshly dug soil weighs 1.3- 1.7 tonnes depending on how tightly packed it is. Blended topsoil may be less dense and closer to 1 tonne in weight per cubic metre. This means that the 92 cubic metres of soil proposed at podium level to support tree planting would weigh at least 92 tonnes. If the soil were watered and damp, this figure would increase. The weight of the planters themselves and the weight of 26no. 2-2.5m high trees and the other planting further add to the loading. Even if this loading could have been accommodated by the building structure, it would have added considerably to the construction costs of the hotel.
- 3.4 These concerns were fed back to the agent and the scheme has been amended again to remove on-site tree planting and thereby reduce the soil volumes needed for the podium landscaping significantly. The applicant has agreed to enter into a legal agreement to pay £26,000 towards off site tree planting. The plans still indicate 92 cubic metres of soil would be provided at podium level, but as no trees are to be planted, this could reduce significantly and the details could be agreed by condition.
- 3.5 The amended General Arrangement and the Ground Floor Hard-works plan still show three different surfaces on Leopold Grove, Alfred Street and Adelaide Street. They also still show surfacing details in the highway, which would need to be agreed with the Local Highway Authority. As such, reference to these plans are not made in condition 2 and the surfacing/hardworks would be agreed by condition alongside the Highways legal agreement.
- 3.6 Given the above, the previously recommended condition which required the submission of further tree planting specifications and a maintenance plan, or that the applicant demonstrate how else they can meet their tree planting obligations, is no longer considered necessary. The recommendation now is that Committee support the application and delegate the issuing of the decision notice to the Head of Development Management, once the payment of £26,000 for off-site tree planting has been secured. As the Council is currently the landowner, an appropriate mechanism to secure the contribution is being investigated.
- 3.7 Subject to the submission of further details to discharge conditions, it is considered that the scheme would provide good quality hard and soft landscaping. This would preserve the special character and appearance of the Town Centre Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II* listed building. It would also provide benefits for biodiversity and climate change mitigation. As such it would accord with Local Plan policies CS6, CS7, CS8, DM21, DM26, DM27 and DM35.

Sustainability and planning balance appraisal

- 3.8 Sustainability comprises economic, environmental and social components.

- 3.9 Economically the proposal would regenerate a prominent, vacant site on the edge of the Town Centre for good quality visitor accommodation and would therefore support the regeneration and improvement of Blackpool and support the ambitions of the town becoming a year-round leisure destination that appeals to a wider audience, including conference delegates which carries substantial weight in the planning balance. Some limited employment would be generated during construction and some local employment would be created through the operation of the hotel which also weighs in favour of the scheme.
- 3.10 Environmentally, the proposal is considered to be visually acceptable in its heritage setting. The site would be landscaped to deliver biodiversity benefits and climate change mitigation. Issues relating to drainage, access, traffic generation and environmental quality were addressed at outline stage and would continue to be addressed through the discharge of condition process.
- 3.11 Socially, the proposed hotel would have no greater impacts on residential amenity than the previous development on the site in terms of light and privacy. The redevelopment of the site for modern, good quality hotel accommodation would have wider social benefits through regeneration and employment opportunities. Likewise flood risk and highway safety were considered at outline stage.
- 3.12 In light of the above and subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 As set out above, the details provided in relation to the reserved matters of appearance and layout are considered to be acceptable, subject to further details to be agreed by condition and a payment of £26,000 being secured towards off-site tree planting. The mechanism to secure this contribution has not yet been finalised. No other material planning considerations have been identified that would outweigh this assessment.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 Committee is recommended to:
- Support the application subject to the following conditions.
 - Delegate authority to the Head of Development Management to issue the decision notice once a planning obligation of £26,000 towards off-site tree planting has been secured.
 - Authorise the Head of Development Management to make changes to the conditions below including the removal or addition of conditions as may be appropriate, as long as the changes do not affect the substance of the permission being granted.

Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of two years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development shall be carried out, except where modified by the conditions attached to this permission, in accordance with the planning application received by the Local Planning Authority including the following plans and information:

Location plan recorded as received by the Council on

- General Arrangement Plan – Podium - 1115-ASRI-XX-01-DR-L-0001 Rev. P03
- Hardworks Plan – Podium – 1115-ASRI-XX-01-DR-L-1000 Rev. P04
- Softworks Plan – Podium – 1115-ASRI-XX-01-DR-L-2000 Rev. P06
- Softworks Plan – Groundfloor – 1115-ASRI-XX-XX-DR-L-2000 Rev. P09
- Church Street and Adelaide Street Elevations – 1727 A 110 001 Rev. P4
- Leopold Grove and Alfred Street Elevations – 1727 A 110 002 Rev. P4
- Section AA – 1727 A 120 001 Rev. P3
- Sections BB and CC – 1727 A 120 002 Rev. P2

The development shall thereafter be retained and maintained in accordance with these approved details.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and so the Local Planning Authority can be satisfied as to the details of the permission.

- 3 The external materials to be used on the development hereby approved shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any above ground construction and the development shall thereafter proceed in full accordance with these approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the site and to preserve the special character of the Town Centre Conservation Area and the setting of a Grade II* listed building, in accordance with Policies CS7 and CS8 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policy DM17, DM26 and DM27 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2012-2027.

- 4 The surfacing materials to be used in the development hereby approved shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the laying down of any final surfacing and the development shall thereafter proceed in full accordance with these approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the site and to preserve the special character of the Town Centre Conservation Area and the setting of a Grade II* listed building, in accordance with Policies CS7 and CS8 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1:

Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policy DM17, DM26 and DM27 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2012-2027.

- 5 (a) Prior to the hotel hereby approved being first brought into use, the landscaping shown on the Softworks Plan – Podium – 1115-ASRI-XX-01-DR-L-2000 Rev. P06 and Softworks Plan – Groundfloor – 1115-ASRI-XX-XX-DR-L-2000 Rev. P09 shall be implemented in full and in full accordance with the approved details either prior to occupation or within the first planting season following first occupation; and

(b) The planting shall thereafter be maintained as approved at all times that the hotel is operational. Please note that this requirement would not preclude replacement planting with plants of similar size and species or as otherwise first submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped in the interests of visual amenity and in the interests of biodiversity and climate change mitigation, in accordance with Policies CS6, CS7 and CS8 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policies DM17, DM21, DM26, DM27 and DM35 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2012-2027 document.

- 6 (a) Prior to the commencement of any above ground construction, a landscaping maintenance and management plan shall be submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

(b) The landscaping maintenance and management plan agreed pursuant to part (a) of this condition shall then be implemented in full and in full accordance with the approved details at all times when the hotel use hereby approved is operational

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped in the interests of visual amenity and in the interests of biodiversity and climate change mitigation, in accordance with Policies CS6, CS7 and CS8 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policies DM17, DM21, DM26, DM27 and DM35 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2012-2027 document.