

## **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

### **15 June 2006**

**PROPOSAL:** Outline Planning Application for Casino and Hotel  
**LOCATION:** Waterloo Road, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent  
**DEVELOPER:** Lear Management Limited  
**REF NO:** 038

#### **Background**

This scheme involves a 4,500m<sup>2</sup> casino and a 100 bedroom hotel with associated parking for 158 cars on a 2.8 ha site immediately to the north of the junction of the Potteries Way and Waterloo Road. The site was formerly occupied by industrial and commercial uses, and some housing, but is now cleared in readiness for new development. The scheme is in outline with only the proposed land use and means of access being specified in the current application. Although siting and design have been reserved for subsequent approval, the Panel welcomed the opportunity to comment at this early stage, in the absence of site-specific design guidance from the local authority. The Panel made an unaccompanied site visit prior to considering the proposal.

#### **Strategic Planning Context**

The site lies within the urban core of Stoke-on-Trent in the City Centre North West Area of Major Intervention identified by Renew North Staffordshire for the second wave of housing market renewal. No statement of planning policy was provided by the local authority and no design or development brief is available for the site.

#### **Context and Urban Design**

The site occupies a prominent gateway location on the northern edge of Stoke-on-Trent City Centre on the main A50 road that runs the length of the conurbation. The development of the site affords the opportunity to continue the Potteries Way (the City Centre by-pass) in a westerly direction, in order initially to link up to Etruria Road and eventually to complete the ring road around the City Centre.

The triangular site is flanked by a housing area to the north west, industrial development to the south, and housing to the north east. A strategic greenway route along the north western boundary connects Etruria Road with Central Forest Park. However, the Transport Statement accompanying the application makes only the most cursory reference to pedestrian facilities, and the impact of the proposed Potteries Way extension on the greenway is not explained.

The Panel pointed out that when a major new road is constructed through a city it invariably leaves odd shaped spaces and plots of land alongside it, as well as the exposed backs of properties which were never intended to be on public view. A proposal showing, even in an indicative fashion, large freestanding casino and hotel buildings set in a car park is an inadequate contribution to the renewal of the city. Better information about how the buildings are to be distributed on the site is absolutely essential, otherwise the result is likely to be an uncoordinated townscape which creates a poor impression to prospective visitors, investors and residents alike. This problem can be avoided by carrying out a contextual analysis of the site concerned, so that a proper understanding of the townscape implications of the development can be gained. The Panel considered that the lack of contextual analysis for the proposal is a serious deficiency which would have an adverse effect on the way that any subsequent development integrates with its setting.

### **Urban Design Guidance**

Given the prominence of the site and the scale of the proposal, the Panel considered that an urban design analysis should be produced as a prerequisite of obtaining planning permission. This should address the seven principal urban design issues identified by CABE, paying particular attention in this instance to

- the need to present strong elevations to the main roads bordering the site (Waterloo Road and the Potteries Way extension) with continuous building blocks and active frontages
- the opportunities available to enhance the public realm by setting the buildings within a landscape which relates to the nearby public open space
- the need to provide good connections with the surrounding footway network and particularly the City Centre
- the views of the development from the main approaches to the site
- the opportunity afforded by the development of a casino to create an exuberant building which has landmark qualities on this City Centre gateway

Explicit consideration should also be given to the need to provide a sustainable form of development by dealing with the issues of energy, materials, supply, services, waste and recycling, and the natural environment, as an integral part of any proposals for the site.

### **Conclusion**

The Panel thought that the indicative site layout provided with this outline application gave far too much importance to car parking and pylon signage, and too little to good quality buildings and pedestrian linkages. The needs of vehicular traffic appeared to have determined the layout, rather than a desire to create good townscape.

The Panel regarded it as essential that design guidance or a design statement be produced for this significant site which is a major gateway to the City Centre and fronts two of the most important thoroughfares in the city. If the local authority is unable to provide this, it should be a legal requirement of any planning permission for the proposal.

### **Recommended Actions:**

- 1 An urban design analysis should be produced as a prerequisite of any planning permission which specifically addresses the need for continuous active frontages to the main roads, a

good quality landscape setting for the development, integration with the surrounding footway network including good linkages with the City Centre, and the opportunities for a special landmark development on this gateway site.

- 2 Detailed proposals for the site should be supported by a Design Statement explaining how the design has been generated by the urban design analysis and how the issue of sustainable development has been addressed.
- 3 Any scheme giving pre-eminence to car parking and signage, rather than to building quality, townscape and pedestrian movement, should not be given planning permission.