



Planning Committee

17 June 2014

Planning application no.	14/00310/FUL
Site	Mander Centre
Proposal	Demolition of south western corner of Mander Centre fronting Bell Street, to be replaced by a new 8,360sqm. department store unit. Creation of larger retail units at ground floor, construction of a new retail kiosk fronting Woolpack Alley and refurbishment of existing mall
Ward	St Peters
Applicant	Mander Investments Ltd
Cabinet Member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson Economic Regeneration and Prosperity
Accountable director	Tim Johnson, Education and Enterprise
Planning officer	Name Andy Carter Tel 01902 551132 Email andy.carter@wolverhampton.gov.uk

1. Summary Recommendation

1.1 Grant subject to conditions.

2. Application site

2.1 The development site is located within the shopping quarter of the city centre.

3. Application Details

3.1 The proposed development involves the demolition and redevelopment of the part of the Mander Centre fronting Bell Street. The space was previously occupied by TJ Hughes. The redevelopment would create a new unit for a modern department store to occupy.

3.2 The proposals also include the reconfiguration of the ground floor units and mall space to create larger units, and a new kiosk fronting Woolpack Alley.

4. Relevant Policy Documents

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 4.2 The Development Plan:
Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)
- 4.3 City Centre Area Action Plan (emerging)

5. Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations

- 5.1 A “screening opinion” was issued by the Local Planning Authority on 25 February 2014 advising that a formal Environmental Impact Assessment was not required.

6. Publicity

- 6.1 Four representations have been received. Their content can be summarised as follows:
 - Wider benefits to the city of a new department store;
 - Reduced footfall through closure of Bell Street and St John’s Street entrances;
 - Impact on the viability of existing units within St John’s Street;
 - Impact on future investment within Victoria Street and Bell Street;
 - Dead frontage along Bell Street, with a lack of natural surveillance; and
 - Reduced permeability through the city centre.

7. Internal Consultees

- 7.1 Transportation – Reduced connectivity from closed Bell Street entrance and altered St John’s Street entrance.
- 7.2 Environmental Health – No objections.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 When an application is situated in or affects the setting of a Conservation Area by virtue of Section 72 and Section 73 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in considering the application and exercising their powers in relation to any buildings or other land in or adjacent to a Conservation Area the Local Planning Authority must ensure that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and further should have regard to any representations ensuing from the publicity required under Section 73 of the Act. [LM/03062014/Z]

9. Appraisal

- 9.1 The key issues are:-
 - Benefits to the City Centre

- Retail vitality and viability
- Design and Massing
- Reduction in parking

Benefits to the City Centre

9.2 The proposals would enhance the retail offer within the City Centre, improving the vitality and viability of the shopping quarter. The proposals would increase footfall both inside the Mander Centre, and on surrounding streets. Internal changes to the lower mall area of the shopping centre would support the attraction of new national retailers to the City Centre.

Retail vitality and viability

9.3 The proposals would result in the closure of the pedestrian entrance on Bell Street, and the existing pedestrian entrance via St John's Street would become a staff entrance for the department store. The applicants have explained that there are currently too many routes into and out of the Mander Centre, the proposals seek to concentrate footfall within the centre, whilst improving the routes which would be maintained. Policy CC6 of the UDP states "any development in this area must create effective linkages, both internally and externally, with the surrounding City Centre".

9.4 Victoria Street is a primary retail frontage and has three pedestrian routes into the Mander Centre; St John's Street, Farmer's Fold, and the main entrance opposite Beatties. St John's Street and Farmer's Fold are both secondary entrances, separated by a frontage of five shop units, approximately 40m in distance. Farmer's Fold therefore represents a convenient alternative access into the Mander Centre for shoppers walking north up Victoria Street. The proposals include the upgrading of the Farmer's Fold entrance, and through a separate advertisement application, improved signage onto Victoria Street. This would result in a more visible and effective route in the Mander Centre, supporting the viability of the smaller units currently within Farmer's Fold, and maintaining permeability.

9.5 The change to the pedestrian route into the Mander Centre along St John's Street, would result in a reduction in footfall in this route. However staff accessing the department store would continue to use the route. The street also has a good level of visibility from Victoria Street, due to its width, open nature and public realm space. Therefore although the closure would result in some harm to the four units within the street, a level of activity would continue.

9.6 Bell Street (although classed as a primary frontage in the Development Plan) operates as a route for vehicles servicing the Mander Centre, and customers accessing the multi-storey car park. No retail units front onto Bell Street from the Mander Centre. The units on the opposite side of Bell Street would remain. Current footfall along Bell Street is low. The proposals to close the Bell Street entrance would have a negligible impact on retail viability in this location.

9.7 There are no current applications for retail development in the areas of Bell Street, Skinner Street or Worcester Street. Connectivity between these routes and a redeveloped Mander Centre would continue to be served by an improved Farmer's Fold access. There will be an overall increase in footfall within the shopping quarter,

supporting existing occupiers and attracting new occupiers to the city. The proposals are consistent with the retail policies in the Development Plan including policy CC6.

Design, Massing and Surveillance

- 9.8 The structure to be demolished, which formerly housed TJ Hughes, measures just over 16m in height and is of little architectural merit. The replacement department store would have the same footprint, but would have a height of 19.2m. The massing of the building is appropriate within a city centre location, creating an appropriate sense of scale, with a contemporary design. The additional height would allow for storage and staff areas beneath the sales area of the department store, and avoid the sloped gradients which currently exist in that part of the Mander Centre.
- 9.9 The proposed materials are contemporary and unfussy. Buff brick at street level, with a metal panel system in a dark grey finish. The elevation to Bell Street would also have a glazed section at the upper floor level. Signage panels would be introduced to brand the building and achieve commercial visibility for the department store.
- 9.10 The application site abuts the boundary of the City Centre Conservation Area. The proposals would enhance the conservation area through the removal of a dated building with limited presence, and provide a replacement in the form of a modern alternative.

Reduction in parking

- 9.11 The proposals would result in a reduction of 30 parking spaces from the Mander Centre car park. The loss is to allow a reconfiguration of the roof space, allowing more natural light in the centre. Given the highly sustainable location, and range of non-car transport options, the reduction in spaces is of limited concern set against the benefits of the proposals.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The proposals would enhance the retail offer within the City Centre, improving the vitality and viability of the shopping quarter. The proposals would increase footfall both inside the Mander Centre, and on surrounding streets. Internal changes to the lower mall area of the shopping centre would support the attraction of new national retailers to the City Centre. These significant benefits outweigh the relatively minor harm caused to the retail viability of units within the St John's Arcade and Bell Street areas. The proposals are consistent with the retail policies in the Development Plan and the emerging Town Centre Area Action Plan.
- 10.2 The proposal would be acceptable and would be in accordance with the development plan.

11. Detailed Recommendation

- 11.1 That planning application 14/00310/FUL be granted subject to any appropriate conditions including:
- Materials;
 - Details of external plant;

- Cycle storage;
- Noise levels for plant and ventilation;
- Construction Method Statement;
- Hours of demolition and construction:
 - 0800 to 1800 hours Monday to Friday; and
 - 0800 to 1300 hours on Saturdays; and
 - No working on Sundays or Bank Holidays.
- Targeted recruitment and training;
- 10% renewable energy;
- Public art;
- Primary frontages (control of non-A1 uses)

