

Planning, Transport & Sustainability Division
Planning and Rights of Way (EAST) Panel - 1 March 2016
Planning Application Report of the Planning and Development Manager

Application address: Albion Towers, Golden Grove			
Proposed development: Application for approval of details reserved by condition 2 (colouring and appearance) of planning permission ref 14/01577/R3CFL			
Application number	15/02429/DIS	Application type	DIS
Case officer	Jenna Turner	Public speaking time	N/A
Last date for determination:	10.02.16	Ward	Bargate
Reason for Panel Referral:	Referred by the Planning & Development Manager	Ward Councillors	Cllr Noon Cllr Bogle Cllr Tucker

Applicant: Southampton City Council	Agent: Capita Property And Infrastructure
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Recommendation Summary	Refuse to discharge condition
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Reason for Objection

The proposed render finish represents a significantly different appearance to the building to that approved by planning permission 14/01577/R3CFL. As such, full planning permission is required for the alteration as proposed. Notwithstanding this, the use of colour in the manner proposed would result in visually intrusive appearance to the building which would have a harmful impact on the city's skyline and would neither preserve nor enhance the setting of designated heritage assets including the Central Parks and the adjacent St Mary's Primary School. The proposal would, therefore, prove contrary to the provisions of policies SDP1, SDP7, SDP9, HE3, HE4, HE5 of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review (amended March 2015), policies CS13 and CS14 of the Southampton Core Strategy Development Plan Document (amended 2015), policies AP16 and AP36 of the City Centre Action Plan 2015 and as supported by Development Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2004).

Appendix attached			
1	Development Plan Policies	2	Relevant Planning History

1. The site and its context

- 1.1 Albion Towers is a 16-storey residential block comprising 150 flats, located within Golden Grove, in the defined city centre. The building was constructed in 1965 and is monolithic in appearance, with a flat roof and a wide and relatively narrow form. It is currently finished in grey and white concrete panels (REEMA construction). A structural survey of the building has been carried out and confirmed that the external concrete structure is deteriorating.
- 1.2 To the east of the site is the Locally Listed St Mary's Church of England Primary

school which is a handsome, red-brick building. With the exception of this, the immediate site context is characterised by three-storey, flat roof flatted blocks constructed from buff bricks.

- 1.3 Due to the relatively low-rise nature of the neighbouring buildings, location of the site and scale and massing of the building, Albion Towers is a highly prominent building within the city centre skyline. It is apparent from a number of locations in and around the city centre, including from key vehicle, pedestrian and rail routes into the city centre as well as from the Central Parks.

2. Proposal and Background to Project

- 2.1 Planning permission was granted in November 2014 for external wall insulation and replacement windows to Albion Towers (reference 14/01577/R3CFL). Due to the deterioration of the existing concrete cladding panels, it was recognised that the new cladding would reach ground level, to be self-supporting.
- 2.2 Condition 2 of the planning permission required the final colouring and appearance of the render finish to be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority, before works commenced. This application seeks to discharge the requirements of that condition. The details submitted propose to clad the building with a mainly white render finish with vertical red stripes to the ends of the building.
- 2.3 Prior to the submission of the material details to the Planning Authority, the applicant undertook a consultation exercise with residents of the building, presenting three colour options and two design options for the application of colour. Of the 47 respondents, 35 households expressed a preference for the red and white option.
- 2.4 The works are part of a wider scheme to improve the energy efficiency of disadvantaged households and hard-to-treat homes. At the same time, five other applications have been submitted seeking to agree the material finish to five other City Council residential tower blocks. These applications propose alternative colour treatments to that proposed for Albion Towers. The works follow those successfully completed at International Way in Weston.

3. Relevant Planning Policy

- 3.1 The Development Plan for Southampton currently comprises the “saved” policies of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review (as amended 2015) and the City of Southampton Core Strategy (as amended 2015). The most relevant policies to these proposals are set out at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 Of particular relevance to this application, SDP1 resists development that unacceptably harms the amenity of the city, whilst SDP7 requires new development to integrate into the community and SDP9 only supports new development that respect the context in terms of visual impact and the quality and use of materials. Policies HE3 and HE4 protect the setting of Listed and Locally Listed Buildings and HE5 prevents development that detracts from the setting of parks and gardens of special historic interest. Core Strategy policies CS13 and CS14 sets out the requirement for high-quality, context-sensitive development and safeguards the setting of the city’s heritage assets. The City Centre Action Plan affirms the Council’s commitment to high-quality development in the city centre. It requires the use of materials and colours that reflect the individual

characteristics of the local area and that new development in the St Mary's area respects and enhance the setting of St Marys Church and the central parks.

- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into force on 27th March 2012 and replaces the previous set of national planning policy guidance notes and statements. The Council has reviewed the Core Strategy to ensure that it is in compliance with the NPPF and are satisfied that the vast majority of policies accord with the aims of the NPPF and therefore retain their full material weight for decision making purposes, unless otherwise indicated.

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 The most relevant planning history is set out in **Appendix 2** to this report.

5. Consultation Responses

- 5.1 **SCC City Design-** I find the use of the colour on the building to be too superficial/artificial. I would suggest that the building is simply clad in white. If there is a desire to use colour I would suggest that it is confined to the recessed elements only.

- 5.2 **SCC Historic Environment** – It does not appear that a Heritage Statement was provided which assesses the impact of the proposal on designated heritage assets. The application of a render in these colours would be out of context with the local character and aggressively intrusive. Also concerned with how the render would weather. The more muted colours suggested originally would be preferred.

6.0 Planning Consideration Key Issues

- 6.1 The keys issues for consideration are the visual impact of the proposed finish on the character and appearance of the area and on the setting of designated heritage assets. Furthermore, since details reserved by planning condition are not subject to public consultation, it is also important to judge whether the submitted information is within the scope of the planning condition and the matters considered, assessed and approved as part of the original planning permission.
- 6.2 The principle of re-cladding the building to improve its thermal efficiency has been approved by the planning application. The Design and Access Statement that was submitted with the application confirmed that whilst the final colour treatment would be reserved by planning condition, the alterations would “minimise impact through use of materials and a colour palette in line with the residential environment”.
- 6.3 The indicative images that accompanied the planning application displayed a muted, cream coloured finish, with a fawn colour to the central stair core. It is important to note that, as such, the planning application was assessed on the basis of the material finish resulting in an improvement to the appearance of the building albeit not producing a significant effect on the character and appearance of the building and area. The information submitted to discharge the planning condition is significantly different to that approved and, as such, it is considered would need to be assessed as part of a fresh planning application. This would enable residents and statutory consultees to fully assess the wider effects such a significant change would have on the character and appearance of the existing

building.

- 6.4 In terms of the visual effect of the alterations, the Development Design Guide (SPD) provides specific guidance on the use of external materials and colour choices. It requires a careful analysis to be undertaken of colour in relation to the appearance of surrounding buildings and landscape in different lighting conditions. Moreover, it advises that where strong colours are used, they should be limited to restricted areas such as frames and details.
- 6.5 Red is a vibrant and bold colour and the back-drop of a neutral colour palette amplifies its striking impact. This can be positive and add fun and diversity to the built environment, however, to achieve the desired effect strong colours should be used in a controlled way and in a manner that integrates into the fabric and design of the building. As noted, the existing building is extremely prominent within the Southampton skyline and its brutalist appearance means that the building makes a poor contribution to that skyline. Similarly, when viewed from closer vantage points, the building has an imposing appearance.
- 6.6 Whilst the re-cladding of the building presents the opportunity to improve the appearance of the building, to a degree, the extent and tone of the red colour proposed, against a contrasting white render, would not achieve the desired effect. Rather, since the colour choice is unusual in this context, the amount and striped nature of the colour application would instead accentuate the poor design of the building and increase its negative prominence within the cityscape. This impact is considered to be particularly harmful to the visual quality of the city centre given that the building would be readily visible from longer-distance views and key approaches into the city, including from the train line. Similarly, it is also considered that the proposed material finish would fail to preserve or enhance the setting of the listed parks or nearby locally and listed buildings.

7.0 Summary and Next Steps

- 7.1 As noted above, if the red and white colour option is pursued, it is considered that a fresh planning application should be submitted for consideration. That said, for the reasons set out above, this approach is not encouraged due to the adverse visual impact that the colour finish would have on the city centre.
- 7.2 Options that are likely to be acceptable are a more muted finish, as indicated on the approved planning application, or a similar approach to that used for Weston Towers. If red is to be used for Albion Towers, this should be in a more considered way, for example, to the recessed sections of the stair core, or to the window panels or the ground floor plinth of the building.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The submitted information is not acceptable to discharge the requirements of condition 2 of planning permission 14/01577/R3CFL and an objection is, therefore, raised.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Documents used in the preparation of this report Background Papers

1(a)(b)(c) 2(b)(d)(e) 4(d)(f)(r)(uu)

POLICY CONTEXT

Core Strategy - (as amended 2015)

CS1	City Centre Approach
CS3	Promoting Successful Places
CS12	Accessible and Attractive Waterfront
CS13	Fundamentals of Design
CS14	Historic Environment
CS20	Tackling and Adapting to Climate Change

City of Southampton Local Plan Review – (as amended 2015)

SDP1	Quality of Development
SDP7	Context
SDP9	Scale, Massing & Appearance
HE3	Listed Buildings
HE4	Local List
HE5	Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest
MSA1	City Centre Design

City Centre Action Plan - March 2015

AP 16	Design
AP 33	St Mary's Road
AP 36	St Mary Street and Northam Road

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Residential Design Guide (Approved - September 2006)
City Centre Design Guide (2000)
The Development Design Guide (2004)

Other Relevant Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Relevant Planning History

Albion Towers:

14/01577/R3CFL

Conditionally Approved 05.11.14

Addition of external wall insulation and replacement windows

Condition 2: Final colouring and appearance

The final colouring and appearance of the proposed render finish shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of works and maintained as such thereafter unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to control the appearance of the development in the interests of visual amenity.

Shirley Towers:

14/01575/R3CFL

Conditionally Approved 19.11.14

Addition of external wall insulation with render finish from 1st floor up and brick finish to ground floor. Resin coating to concrete piers. Replacement windows.

15/02428/DIS

Pending Consideration

Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3 (colouring and appearance) of planning permission ref 14/01575/R3CFL

Sturminster House:

14/01578/R3CFL

Conditionally Approved 19.11.14

Alterations including installation of external wall insulation with render finish from 1st floor upwards, brick cladding finish to ground floor and replacement windows.

15/02430/DIS

Pending Consideration

Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3 (colouring and appearance) of planning permission ref 14/01578/R3CFL

Hightown Tower:

14/01580/R3CFL

Conditionally Approved 05.11.14

Addition of external wall insulation, replacement windows and balcony infills

15/02431/DIS

Pending Consideration

Application for approval of details reserved by condition 2 (colouring and appearance) of planning permission ref 14/01580/R3CFL

Dumbleton Towers:

14/01579/R3CFL

Conditionally Approved 13.11.14

Addition of external wall insulation, replacement windows and balcony infills

15/02432/DIS

Pending Consideration

Application for approval of details reserved by condition 2 (colouring and appearance) of planning permission ref 14/01579/R3CFL

Meredith Towers:

14/01581/R3CFL

Conditionally Approved 05.11.14

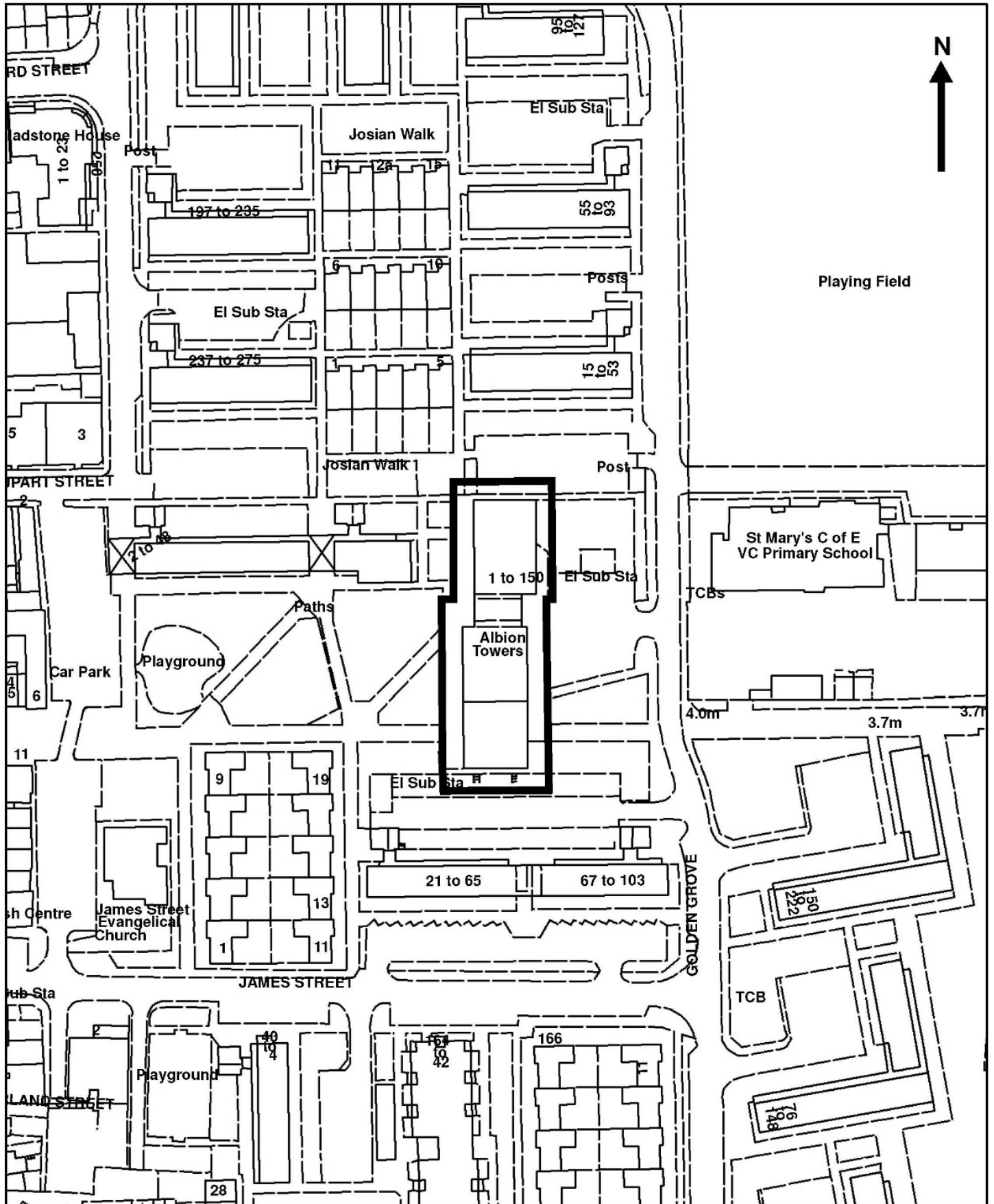
Addition of external wall insulation, replacement windows and balcony infills

15/02433/DIS

Pending Consideration

Application for approval of details reserved by condition 2 (colouring and appearance) of planning permission ref 14/01581/R3CFL

15/02429/DIS



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