
Committee Date:	23/07/2015	Application Number:	2015/02639/PA
Accepted:	08/05/2015	Application Type:	Reserved Matters
Target Date:	07/08/2015		Development
Ward:	Ladywood		

Phase 2, Former Post & Mail Printing Works, Weaman Street, City Centre, Birmingham, B4 6AT

Reserved Matters application for Phase 2 for 14 new storeys above Phase 1 for residential (115 apartments) and office uses.

Applicant: Chatham Billingham (P&M) Limited
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Agent: Associated Architects LLP
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Recommendation

Approve Subject To Conditions

1. Proposal

1.1. This is a reserved matters application for approval of layout, scale, access, appearance and landscaping for Phase 2 of the Post and Mail Building. The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement. In summary, consent is sought for:-

- 7 floors of Class B1 office use with a gross internal floor area of 22,820 sqm (additional to the office floor space included within Phase 1); and,
- 7 floors of Class C3 residential use (13,270 sqm GIA).

This gives a total gross internal floor area of 36,090 sqm for the Phase 2 development.

Layout

- 1.2. The proposed office floor plates (levels 2-8) extend to approximately 2,760 sqm net area per floor with a typical floor plate 50m wide by 70m (maximum) in length. Each floor is served by a main core and a smaller satellite core. The main core would be situated centrally within the floor plate, whilst the secondary core would be located at the south-east end of the building facing Colmore Plaza.
- 1.3. Between levels 8 and 9 of the proposed building there would be a 1.2m high services transition floor.
- 1.4. The apartment floors (levels 9-13) provide 105 1 and 2 bedroom units. The floor plates are arranged around a large external courtyard space allowing all apartments to have a dual aspect. Apartments range from 43 to 119 sqm and all bedroom sizes meet BCC minimum guidelines.

- 1.5. Large format duplex penthouses (between 212-352 sqm) would occupy the top two floors of the building (levels 14-15). The penthouse level floors are similar to the apartment floors below, being arranged around the central courtyard space. The 10 penthouses typically offer large double height living areas, 3 or 4 bedrooms, bathrooms and ensuites, and external terrace spaces.

Scale

- 1.6. The Phase 1 building provides a two-storey base to the Phase 2 development. This comprises of two distinct elements: a 'solid' plinth at ground floor level and a 'transparent' first floor storey expressed in virtually continuous glazing. Within the Phase 1 podium there are retail, restaurant and offices uses. Phase 2 would then comprise 14 new floors above the Phase 1 roof level, resulting in a building of approximately 198m above ordnance datum (AOD).
- 1.7. The footprint of the Phase 2 building follows the building line established by the Phase 1 component below, except along the northwest elevation, where the building line steps back by 7m to accommodate an external plant space at level 2. In common with the Phase 1 building, the building line steps back by approximately 8m at the Printing House Street end of the Colmore Plaza elevation.

Access

- 1.8. The circulation strategy for the proposed building is based on the creation of separate front doors for each use. The main entrance to the office floors would be situated on the corner of Weaman Street and Colmore Plaza, whilst the residential entrance is situated on Printing House Street. Pedestrian access to the car park and retail units provided as part of Phase 1 is primarily from the new pedestrian arcade which runs through the centre of the building. Within the basement there is a car park with 759 spaces, some of which will be allocated to the building occupiers based on their needs.
- 1.9. The main entrance to the office floors would be from a double height space that gives access to the first floor via escalators, lift and stairs. At first floor level, there would be a transition space leading to the main office and car park lift core.
- 1.10. The residential apartments would be served by a dedicated reception accessed directly from Printing House Street and from the new retail arcade. Two lifts would then give access to each residential floor. There would also be direct access from the reception area to the basement car park lift core. Access for visitors to the apartments would be controlled by a managed access control system linked to the reception area from each apartment. The passenger lifts would be located at each residential level within the large communal courtyard space. Individual apartments would be accessed at each floor level via an external covered walkway than runs around the entire perimeter of the courtyard.

Appearance

- 1.11. The palette of materials for Phase 1 sets a precedent for this scheme. These include white granite faced precast concrete cladding, limited areas of polished black granite, and an aluminium curtain walling system. Whilst the plinth level of the building is expressed almost entirely in black and white, a more varied palette of black, grey and silver is proposed at the upper levels of the building to create a randomised effect.

- 1.12. The office floors feature a unitised system of curtain-walling and anodised aluminium panels set out to a 1.5m modular grid. The pattern of panels provides alternating full height glazing and windows with sills to assist with internal space planning. Projecting anodised aluminium boxes add depth and modelling to the elevations. In addition, double width cladding modules are used to mark the position of arcade entrances and to provide a corner feature above the Phase 2 office entrance.
- 1.13. Between the office and residential levels, there would be a 1.2m high services transition floor. This is included within the office elevations so that the proportions of cladding elements change at this point to express termination of the office levels. Additionally, a fascia panel runs around the top of the transition floor to create a strong closure element.
- 1.14. The apartment floors are architecturally expressed different though complementary to the office levels. The proposed external cladding comprises of a unitised system of solid anodised aluminium and glazed panels set out to a 1.5m grid. External vertical aluminium fins are incorporated on an alternating grid, and window sill heights are varied. The residential elevations also include opening lights and louvres for the whole house ventilation system.
- 1.15. The penthouse apartment elevations form a distinct top to the building. Vertical fins are used to shroud the penthouse units, whilst to create a further distinction, opaque glazing is proposed instead of solid aluminium panels. Since the plant spaces are all located in a services module within the Phase 1 building, there is no requirement for roof top plant spaces.
- 1.16. On the South East (Colmore Plaza) elevation, a fire escape stair runs up the entire height of the building. The stair enclosure would then be clad in black to form a single unifying element to the building elevations.
- 1.17. The residential courtyard elevations would have a simpler architectural treatment comprising aluminium rainscreen cladding panels and an aluminium window system set out to a 1.5m modular grid. The external walkways are enclosed with structural glass balustrades.

Landscape

- 1.18. The proposed landscaping within the scheme comprises a central courtyard at level 9 for use by residents. It measures 24m by 30m and includes the following elements:-
 - an entrance terrace area and legible walkways to create permeable space;
 - small pockets of informal seating positioned around the courtyard;
 - planting areas to create visual interest and soften physical edges;
 - surface finishes complementary to internal floor finishes to create seamless transition between indoor and outdoor space;
 - low maintenance, shade tolerant planting interspersed with bright, colourful highlight plants; and,
 - a pavilion to provide an indoor space for residents located towards the centre of the courtyard opening out onto a large terrace area.

In addition private terraces and balconies are proposed at roof level. A green living wall is also proposed within the Level 9 courtyard.

1.19. [Link to Documents](#)

2. [Site & Surroundings](#)

- 2.1. The application site is the former Post and Mail printing works building. The Phase 1 works to create basement parking and a double height podium are now complete.
- 2.2. The site is in the heart of the city centre to the north east of the Colmore Business District. It is bounded by Printing House Street to the east with a surface car park on the opposite side of the road. Beyond are Rowchester Court and the locally listed Children's Hospital, both of which fall within the Steelhouse Conservation Area. To the south is a route between the recently completed 14 storey (61m high) Colmore Plaza office building. Further south is the 9 storey (42m high) Wesleyan and General Assurance building. Lloyd House (12 storeys / 54m high) is on the opposite side of Weaman Street to the west; and, to the north is a multi-storey public car park and 6 storey office building at 1 Printing House Street. Further north on the opposite side of Weaman Street is the Thistle Hotel and Kennedy Tower.

[Site Plan](#)

3. [Planning History](#)

- 3.1. 16 March 2012 Application 2011/01322/PA. Planning consent granted for part detailed application (Phase 1) for redevelopment involving partial demolition of the former Post and Mail printing works to street level, the insertion of new levels into the existing basement to create a new car park for up to 800 spaces, with a new two storey building above for retail, restaurant and office uses. Part outline application for Phase 2 comprising multi storey building above Phase 1 for restaurant, office, hotel, residential and non-residential institution uses.
- 3.2. 24 October 2014 Application 2014/05454/PA. Section 73 Applicant approved to reword condition 5 attached to planning application 2011/01322/PA to state the maximum height of any buildings within the site shall not exceed 205m (including plant) in height when measured from AOD Level.
- 3.3. 4 March 2015 Application 2014/08876/PA. Planning consent granted for the variation of condition 3 attached to previous planning application 2014/05454/PA to increase gross internal floor space for Phase 2 from 33,180sqm to 40,000sqm and increase gross internal floor space for residential use (C3) from 12,000sqm to 15,000sqm.
- 3.4. February 2015, Snow Hill Masterplan launched for public consultation. This Masterplan identifies the Post and Mail Building as an opportunity for redevelopment. It also shows public space created on the existing car park on the opposite side of Printing House Street.

4. [Consultation/PP Responses](#)

- 4.1. Nearby occupiers, residents association, Colmore BID, local ward Councillors and M.P. notified. Site and Press notices displayed. No comments received.
- 4.2. Prior to submission of the application an earlier version of the scheme was presented to CABE who commented that both the internal courtyard and the

elevational treatment would benefit from further refinement to make this project a successful building and compelling piece of architecture.

- 4.3. BCC Regulatory Services – no objections.
- 4.4. Historic England – no adverse comments.
- 4.5. West Midlands Police - Phase 1 of the development was the subject of a successful Secure by Design application and they would welcome a formal SBD application for this phase of the development. They recommend a full CCTV system, that suitable lighting be provided, access into and around the building be controlled and the location of post rooms and refuse storage be carefully considered. They note that large buildings of this nature can interfere with the communications systems of the emergency services and recommend that a telecommunications assessment be undertaken.

5. Policy Context

- 5.1. Relevant planning policies include the National Planning Policy Framework; Birmingham Unitary Development Plan (2005) - saved policies, Draft Birmingham Development Plan 2031, High Places SPG, Lighting Places SPD, Places for All / Places for Living SPG; Car Parking Guidelines SPD and Draft Snowhill Masterplan.
- 5.2. In addition, to the east of Printing House Street and Whittall Street is the Steelhouse Lane Conservation Area, which includes the locally listed Children's Hospital. The site is also an Enterprise Zone site.

6. Planning Considerations

Background Information

- 6.1. Planning permission for the Post & Mail development was granted on 16 March 2012 through application 2011/01322/PA. This included detailed consent for Phase 1 and outline consent for Phase 2. The outline consent established a number of principles for Phase 2 including building use and maximum floor areas, building height and massing, external works, and residential unit type apportionment. Matters which were reserved are as follows:-
 - access into the Phase 2 building uses from street level;
 - appearance of the building above Phase 1 roof level;
 - landscape works associated with Phase 2 of the development;
 - layout of floors for the Phase 2 building uses; and,
 - scale and massing of the Phase 2 development.
- 6.2. Two Section 73 applications were submitted in 2014 to vary planning conditions associated with the approved scheme. An application was firstly made to vary condition 5 to state that the maximum height of any building within the site should not exceed 205m AOD. This was the building height originally applied for through application 2011/01322/PA, but due to an objection from the West Midlands Police, permission was only granted for a building height of up to 184m AOD. This objection has since been withdrawn, and consent was granted for the increased building height on 24 October 2014.

- 6.3. A second Section 73 application was then submitted to vary condition 3 of this consent in order to increase the maximum permissible gross internal floor area of the Phase 2 development to 40,000 sqm and to increase the maximum gross internal floor area for residential (Class C3) use to 15,000 sqm. This was granted on 4 March 2015.

Layout

- 6.4. Attached to the outline consent and amended by the most recent Section 73 application is a condition that restricts the maximum gross internal floor areas of Phase 2 to the following:-
- restaurant (Use Class A3) 6,500 sqm
 - offices (Use Class B1A) 33,180 sqm
 - residential (Use Class C3) 15,000 sqm
 - hotel (Use Class C1) 15,000 sqm
 - medical and clinical (Use Class D1) 25,000 sqm
 - total for all uses 40,000 sqm
- 6.5. The Phase 2 proposals include 22,820 sqm of gross internal office floor space over the lower 7 floors. Given the location of the development within the Colmore Business District, Class B1 office use is clearly appropriate. Furthermore there is high demand for purpose built Grade A office space within the city, and large format floor plates, which the Post & Mail building is capable of offering, are particularly attractive in the current market.
- 6.6. There is no proposal to include a restaurant, hotel or any provision for Class D1 Medical and Clinical Use within Phase 2 of the development.
- 6.7. The Phase 2 development proposals also include 13,270 sqm (GIA) of Class C3 residential use over the upper 7 floors. Whilst residential use is currently limited within the Colmore Business District, there is potential for introducing high quality provision into the area. The residential component of the scheme would also complement the future provision of housing within the existing Birmingham Children's' Hospital site, as envisaged by the draft Snow Hill Masterplan document.
- 6.8. To secure a range of accommodation types the outline planning consent places some restrictions on the residential mix as follows:-
- 1 Bedroom apartments 5 – 20%
 - 2 Bedroom apartments 45 – 85%
 - 3-4 Bedroom 5 – 20%
- 6.9. The scheme meets this restriction by offering standard 1 bed (13%) and 2 bed (78%) apartments as well as large format 3 and 4 bedroom penthouses (9%). In addition all bedroom sizes comply with minimum guidelines. Moreover, setting the apartments around a central courtyard ensures that they are all dual aspect.
- 6.10. Overall, the amount of office and residential floorspace and the total floorspace for the Phase 2 development is within the maximum limits permitted by the outline consent. Furthermore placing the residential accommodation above the offices is appropriate. In addition the apartment mix complies with the restrictions placed on the outline consent and the dual aspect apartments sizes are generous and meet

BCC minimum guidelines. I therefore have no objections to the layout and uses proposed.

Scale

- 6.11. The outline planning application was accompanied by a Statement of Design Principles informed by various supporting technical documents. This set the minimum height of the Phase 2 building at 170m AOD and the maximum height at 205m AOD. The proposed building would be a maximum of 198m AOD, which is within the parameters set by the outline consent, as amended by the Section 73 application.
- 6.12. In addition, the footprint of the building follows the building line established by the Phase 1 component below, except along the northwest elevation, where the building line steps back by 7m to accommodate an external plant space at level 2. The scale and massing of the building are therefore consistent with the Statement of Design Principles agreed at outline planning stage.
- 6.13. With regard to the comments from the Police a telecommunications assessment was submitted in support of the most recent S73 application to increase the height of the building to 205m AOD. In addition, attached to the S73 planning permission is a condition that requires submission of a post completion telecommunications reception assessment.

Access

- 6.14. The circulation strategy for the proposed building centres on the creation of separate front doors for each use. This improves the legibility of the building, allows the specific requirements of each user group to be addressed, and means that each reception area can have its own character and identity. This is a robust approach which has been proved on similar mixed use schemes in Birmingham.
- 6.15. The main entrance to the office floors would be situated on the corner of Weaman Street and Colmore Plaza, where it would clearly visible and immediately accessible from the Colmore Business District. The residential entrance would be on Printing House Street, opposite the area designated as a new public square by the Snow Hill Masterplan. This means that the residential entrance would help to animate Printing House Street.
- 6.16. From within the building it would be possible to access the basement car park either from the office core or the residential reception via the retail arcade. Level access suitable for people with disabilities can therefore be provided for each user group through the building. As recommended by the Police, access would be managed and CCTV/ lighting incorporated.

Appearance

- 6.17. Prior to submission of this reserved matters application an earlier version of the scheme was presented to CABE. They considered that the commercial storeys of the building elevation were well proportioned and the articulation of the cladding panels compelling. However, they considered that the sequencing could be further refined to achieve a more diverse façade. CABE also liked the deep recessed intermediate storey between the plinth and office storeys but thought that the differentiation between the commercial and residential storeys less successful. With

regard to the residential façade, including the top part, they considered that further work was needed that either unifies the façade or has a unique logic to both.

6.18. In response the architect has addressed these concerns by:-

- refining the office façade by randomising the panel colours and by introducing additional double width modules towards the centres of the main elevations. This has the additional benefit of marking the positions of the arcade entrances;
- introducing a black/grey fascia panel around the perimeter of the building above the office glazing which more clearly marks the transition from one use to another;
- developing the office and residential facades further to give a unique logic to each part; and,
- using the same elements of solid/ glazed panels and external projecting fins, they have tested different configurations and refined the architectural language of the residential elevations. The revised proposals incorporate differing window sill heights, variation in panel colours and types, and a different proposal for the configuration of external fins.

I am of the view that the residential façade is now more fully resolved, that the scale and proportion of the different elements is appropriate, and that it reflects the residential use more clearly. Conditions are attached to the outline consent to secure samples of materials.

Landscape

6.19. The proposed central landscaped courtyard at level 9 would provide a communal amenity space for residents of 720 sqm. This would be equivalent to 6.2 sqm per apartment. In addition, the 10 larger penthouses would each have private terraces. Taking into account its city centre location I consider that this level of amenity provision is acceptable.

6.20. In terms of its design CABA commented that the deep cross section may result in overshadowing and present challenges in dealing with noise. However, overall they were of the view that the high level residential courtyard had great potential to provide a delightful space for residents.

7. Conclusion

7.1. I consider that the application is consistent with the principles agreed at outline planning stage and therefore acceptable. Accordingly I recommend approval of this reserved matters application for Phase 2 of the Post and Mail Building.

8. Recommendation

8.1. Approve subject to conditions.

1	Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans
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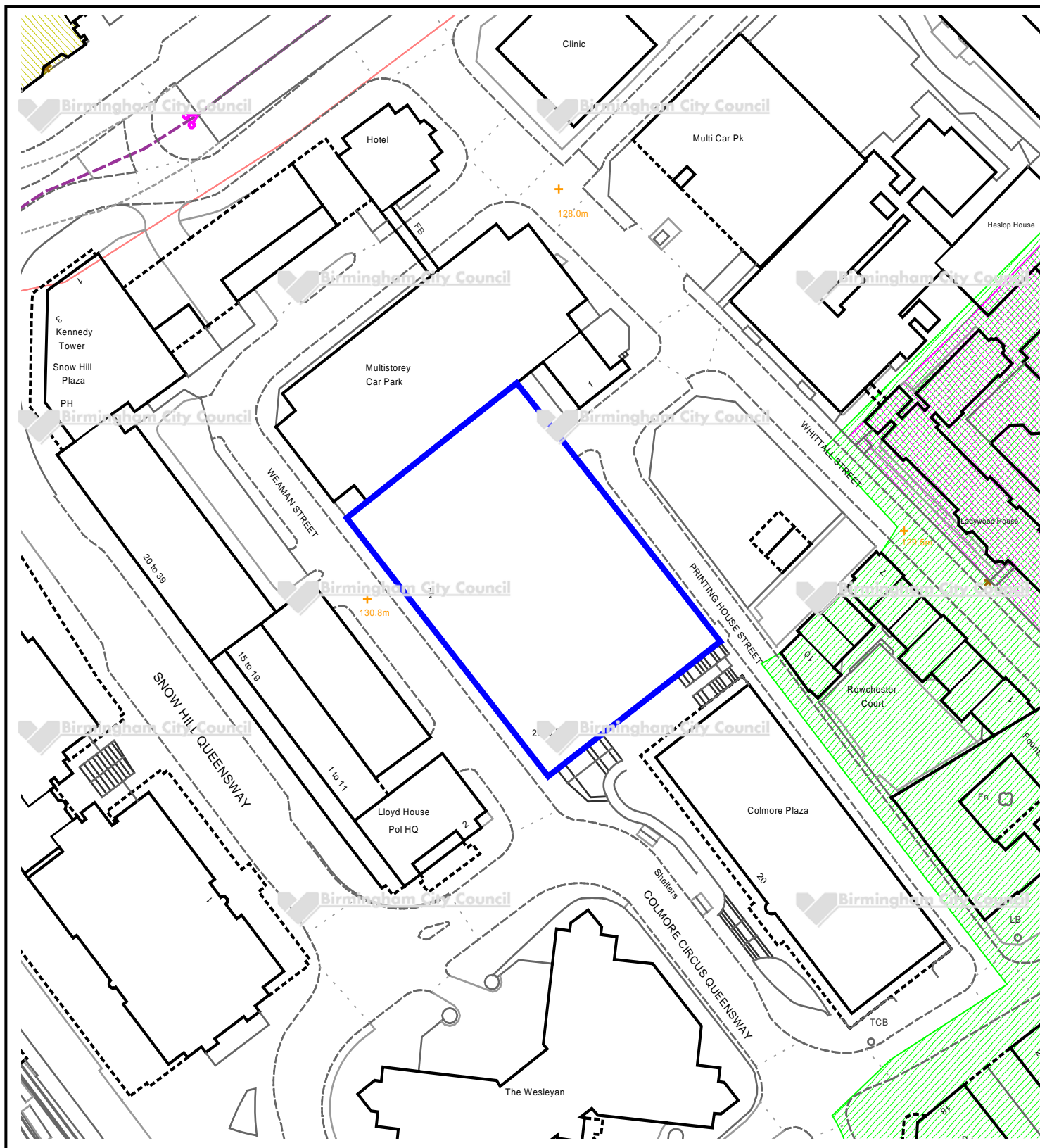
Case Officer: David Wells

Photo(s)



View along Weaman Street

Location Plan



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