



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 12 DECEMBER 2013

Subject: PREAPP/11/00700 – New and replacement offices with 3 new retail units at Merrion House, Merrion Way, Leeds, LS2 8ET.

Electoral Wards Affected:

City & Hunslet

Yes

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

RECOMMENDATION:

For Members to note the content of the report and presentation and to provide any comments on the proposals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 The Developers have requested to present this scheme for the redevelopment of the existing offices at Merrion House to Members for their consideration and comments. The scheme is brought before Members by Town Centre Securities as the Developers and is to create flexible office and frontline accommodation for Leeds City Council, in accordance with the Council's long term strategic aspirations for staff work space.

2.0 PROPOSAL:

2.1 The proposal is for new and replacement offices, with a ground floor and mezzanine 'one stop' reception area, and new retail units. The proposal aims to create some 14,493 sq metres of flexible office accommodation by the stripping back, refurbishment and extension of the existing 10 storey Merrion House. In addition, a new extension of some 6 storeys is proposed to infill the sunken courtyard to the north of the existing Merrion House and at ground floor level 3 double height retail units are proposed to face onto Merrion Way.

3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

- 3.1 The application site is part of the Merrion Shopping Centre, which is a 1960s group of structures housing a series of high and medium rise blocks set above a two storey plinth housing retail units. The Merrion Centre is sited within the Prime Shopping Quarter as defined by Leeds Unitary Development Plan. The Centre is close to but outside of the boundary of the City Centre Conservation Area, which runs along the middle of Woodhouse Lane.
- 3.2 The areas of the Centre affected by the proposal are the existing Merrion House office blocks fronting onto Merrion Way and the corner of Woodhouse Lane, as well as the sunken courtyard to the north of the offices and the ground floor "Georgian Mall" inside the shopping centre. The sunken courtyard is defined as existing public space and the Georgian Mall as existing pedestrian corridor in the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

- 4.1 The shopping centre has been subjected to a high number of alterations over its history, however the most substantial and relevant regenerative changes have been granted planning permission on the following applications;
- 4.2 11/03424/FU - Alterations and extensions involving change of use to provide retail stores, restaurants, bars, hot food takeaways, financial & professional services (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 use classes), leisure use (D2 use class), including refurbishment & recladding of car park, new substation, tenant plant area, public realm works and associated facilities and infrastructure to shopping centre on 15 June 2012.
- 4.3 11/01374/FU - Alterations to the frontages, a change of use of the existing restaurant (Class A3) to restaurant and/or take away (Class A3/A5) and betting office (Class A2), including a new entrance to the Wade Lane Mall on 27 May 2011.
- 4.4 06/07519/FU - Refurbishment involving recladding and 6th floor extension to offices; new frontages to front and side elevations of night club and new shop frontage to shopping centre. Amendments to previous application 06/05886/FU granted planning approval on 02 February 2007.

5.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS:

- 5.1 The proposal has been subject to detailed preapplication discussions with Officers to consider the proposed uses, the design and materials, scale and massing, the loss of the defined public space in the sunken courtyard, key views, pedestrian routes and connectivity and the sustainability credentials of the proposal.
- 5.2 Ward Members were consulted by the Case Officer on 30 July 2013. Councillor Nash responded on 2 August 2013 stating that she would consider the scheme when it was presented at Plans Panel.

6.0 POLICY BACKGROUND:

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and sets out the Government's planning policies and how they expect them to be

applied. This national planning policy document is likely to be of relevance in considering the schemes proposed progression. The NPPF advocates a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and a “centres first’ approach to main town centre uses such as retail. The document also promotes economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. This new high quality, mixed use, retail led, quarter would help consolidate Leeds City Centre’s role as the economic driver of the Yorkshire region, and the focus for investment in highly skilled and competitive businesses, as advocated by the emerging Core Strategy (please see section 6.6 below).

6.2 **Development Plan**

6.3 Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDPR)

The UDPR includes policies requiring that matters such as good urban design principles, sustainability, flood risk, highways and transportation issues, public realm, landscaping, and access for all are addressed through the planning application process. The application site lies within the designated City Centre and parts of the site are defined as existing public space and existing pedestrian corridor protected by Policy CC11.

Other relevant policies include:

Policy A4 (Access for all)

Policy BD2 (Design and siting of new buildings)

Policy BD3 (Accessibility in new buildings)

Policy BD4 (All mechanical plant)

Policy BD5 (Amenity and new buildings)

Policy BD6 (All alterations and extensions)

Policy CC3 (Maintaining the identity and distinctive character of the city centre)

Policy CC7 (Redevelopment of City Centre tower blocks)

Policy CC8 (New buildings to respect the spatial character of existing buildings and streets outside the Prestige Development Areas)

Policy CC11 (Enhanced pedestrian corridors and upgraded streets)

Policy CC12 (New development and new public spaces relating and connecting to the existing street pattern)

Policy CC27 (Principal use quarters)

Policy GP11 (development must meet sustainable design principles)

Policy N12 (Urban building design)

Policy N13 (Design of all new buildings)

Policy N19 (New buildings and extensions within or adjacent to a conservation area)

Policy T2 (Transport infrastructure and new development)

6.4 Leeds Natural Resources and Waste DPD 2013

The Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan was adopted by Leeds City Council on 16th January 2013. The Natural Resources and Waste Development Plan Document (Local Plan) is part of the Local Development Framework. The plan sets out where land is needed to enable the City to manage resources, like minerals, energy, waste and water over the next 15 years, and identifies specific actions which will help use

natural resources in a more efficient way. Policies regarding coal recovery, drainage, and air quality will be relevant to this proposal.

6.5 Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance includes:

SPD5 Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions

SPD Travel Plans

SPD Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction

City Centre Urban Design Strategy

6.6 Emerging Policy

6.7 The Core Strategy sets out strategic level policies and vision to guide the delivery of development investment decisions and the overall future of the district. On 26th April 2013 the Council submitted the Publication Draft Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for examination and the examination took place in October 2013.

6.8 As the Council has submitted the Publication Draft Core Strategy for independent examination some weight can now be attached to the document and its contents recognising that the weight to be attached may be limited by outstanding representations which have been made.

The most relevant policies include:

6.9 Spatial Policy 2: Hierarchy of Centres & Spatial Approach to Retailing, Offices, Intensive Leisure & Culture states that:

The Council will direct retailing, offices, intensive leisure and culture, and community development to the city centre and designated town and local centres in order to promote their vitality and viability as the focus for shopping, employment, leisure, culture, and community services.

6.10 Policy P10: Design states that:

New development for buildings and spaces, and alterations to existing, should be based on a thorough contextual analysis to provide good design appropriate to its scale and function.

New development will be expected to deliver high quality innovative design that has evolved, where appropriate, through community consultation and which respects and enhances the variety of existing landscapes, streets, spaces and buildings according to the particular local distinctiveness and wider setting of the place, contributing positively towards place making and quality of life and be accessible to all.

Proposals will be supported where they accord with the following key principles;

(i) The size, scale and layout of the development is appropriate to its location and respects the character and quality of the external spaces and the wider locality,

(ii) The development protects the visual and general amenity of the area including useable space, privacy, noise, air quality and satisfactory penetration of daylight and sunlight,

(iii) The development protects and enhance the district's historic assets in particular existing natural site features, historically and locally important buildings, skylines and views,

(iv) Cycle, waste and recycling storage are integral to the development,

(v) The development creates a safe and secure environment that reduce the opportunities for crime without compromising community cohesion,

(vi) The development is accessible to all users.

- 6.11 Policy EN1: Climate Change – Carbon Dioxide Reduction states that; All developments of over 1,000 square metres of floorspace whether new-build or conversion, will be required to:
- (i) Reduce total predicted carbon dioxide emissions to achieve 20% less than the Building Regulations Target Emission Rate until 2016 when all development should Be zero carbon; and,
 - (ii) Provide a minimum of 10% of the predicted energy needs of the development from low carbon energy.
- Carbon dioxide reductions achieved in meeting criteria (i) will contribute to meeting criteria (ii).

7.0 PROPOSALS:

- 7.1 The proposal involves a number of different elements as follows:
- 7.2 The stripping back, refurbishment and re-elevation of the existing 10 storey Merrion House to provide modern, open plan office accommodation above a one stop centre. The new elevations would maximise the use of glazing in a strong regular stone framed pattern to both the north and south facing elevations, with the south possibly accommodating some photovoltaic panels. The exact rhythm of the frame patterning and the materials of the elevations are subject to further discussion between the Developer and Officers.
- 7.3 To the ground floor facing Merrion Way, 3 new double height retail units are proposed. The design of the overall elevations would be detailed to clearly define a top, middle and base to the building, with the depths of window recesses differing between these three elements, adding architectural interest.
- 7.4 These proposals would require the closer of the existing Georgian Mall, which is defined as existing public corridor in the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006.
- 7.5 Linked to the regenerated Merrion House, via a glazed atrium containing high level walkways, would be a new 6 storey building positioned in the existing sunken courtyard area. The façade of this new element would visually reference that of the larger refurbished blocks of Merrion House, in respect of its design, materials and appearance. Roof mounted plant enclosures are proposed to both the building and the 6 storey extension.
- 7.6 The sunken court is an area which is defined as existing public space in the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006. As such there will be a need to agree compensation in the vicinity for the loss of this designated open space. Officers are in discussions with the Developer about exact manner in which the compensation should come forward. One of the opportunities could be the infilling of the subway adjacent to the site and the associated enhancement of the public realm via appropriate surface treatments in this area at the junction of Claypit Lane and Woodhouse Lane.
- 7.7 Both of the linked parts of the overall scheme would allow the creation of a ground and mezzanine floor one stop centre beneath open plan office accommodation. Entrances to the one stop centre would principally be from Woodhouse Lane, with a second entrance off Merrion Way. The change in street levels from one side of the

site to the other mean that one of these entrances will be at lower ground floor level whilst the other will be at upper ground floor level.

- 7.8 Due to the floor space requirements of the one stop centre the extension will fill the entire area of the sunken courtyard up to the line of the existing boundary wall. This means that the existing pedestrian footpath to Claypit Lane to the side of this boundary wall would remain at its current width, which spans from approximately 2.2 metres to some 2.5 metres.
- 7.9 It is proposed to provide 72 staff cycle parking spaces in a back of house area at upper ground floor level, with showers and changing facilities being provided at lower ground floor level.
- 7.10 The aspiration is for the linked blocks to achieve BREEAM Excellent.

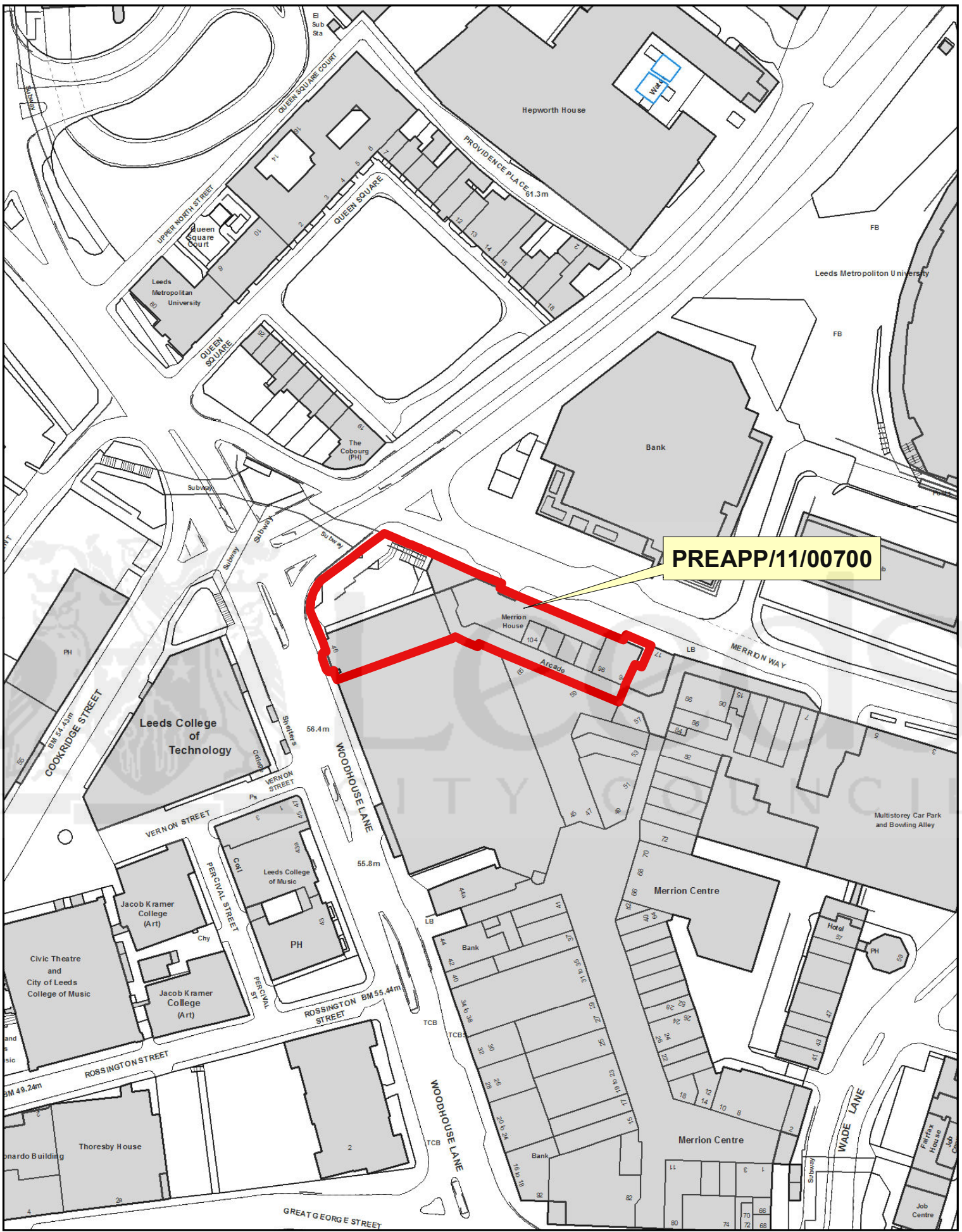
8.0 ISSUES:

For clarity the above key issues Members are asked to consider and provide feedback are as follows:

- 1. What are Members' thoughts on the principal of the uses including the new retail units to Merrion Way?**
- 2. What are Members' thoughts on the design, massing and elevational treatment of the buildings?**
- 3 What are Members' thoughts on the loss of the defined existing public space in the sunken courtyard and the existing pedestrian corridor through the Georgian Mall and potential opportunities for mitigation?**

Background Papers:

PREAPP/11/00700



CITY PLANS PANEL

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