



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 26th JUNE 2014

Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION OF LIGHTING AND SIGNAGE PROPOSALS FOR LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, PORTLAND WAY AND WOODHOUSE LANE, LEEDS (PREAPP/14/00448)

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

No

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

RECOMMENDATION: This report is brought to Plans Panel for information. The Developer will present the details of the scheme to allow Members to consider and comment on the proposals at this stage.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This presentation is intended to inform Members of the emerging proposals for the collection of Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) buildings located close to the junction of Portland Way and Calverley Street. The initial part of the strategy, prior to more substantive physical alterations to the buildings, is to announce the university's new name from September 2014 "Leeds Beckett University" and to unify the buildings through selected illumination of selected elements of the campus buildings.

1.2 The proposal is brought to City Plans Panel due to it being the first element of a series of changes to the buildings and the potential impact of the lighting scheme on the setting of a number of listed buildings and the conservation area.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 Leeds Metropolitan University city campus comprises 4 interconnected buildings situated to the west of the junction of Woodhouse Lane and Portland Way. The

Portland Building and Calverley Building are 11-storey concrete-framed buildings constructed on a north-west to south-east axis across the site. The Calverley Building is currently being refurbished, including the introduction of new windows throughout the building. The Portland Building, which was overclad in 1999, has a significant blank yorkstone façade fronting Portland Way. Given its height and the elevated position of the campus relative to city centre the rooftop plantroom is highly visible across the city centre. The Leslie Silver Building was constructed at a tangent to these spine buildings incorporating a new entrance onto Woodhouse Lane. The Woodhouse Building comprises a range of buildings, including the student union, dropping down in scale towards the junction of Woodhouse Lane and Portland Way. Trees along the south-eastern edge of the Woodhouse Building are protected by Tree Preservation Order (No.22) 2007.

- 2.2 Buildings immediately to the north-west form part of the Central Village student accommodation developed by Downing. The second phase is due for occupation this autumn. Planning permission was recently granted for Downing's third phase of purpose-built student accommodation to the south-west of the Portland Building and Calverley Building, fronting Calverley Street. Planning permission is also in place for the construction of a hotel at the junction of Calverley Street and Portland Way although there is no current indication of that scheme being built in the near future.
- 2.3 The surrounding area is mainly characterised by institutional and civic uses. The Civic Hall and the LMU Rosebowl building and car park are located to the south of Portland Way. Leeds General Infirmary is situated across Calverley Street to the west and The University of Leeds campus is located directly to the north of the Inner Ring Road. The Dry Dock, public greenspace and the Woodhouse Lane multi-storey car park are situated to the east beyond Woodhouse Lane. Broadcasting Place, which rises to 23 storeys, is located north-east of the campus across Woodhouse Lane and the Inner Ring Road.
- 2.4 The campus is located between the University Conservation Area, the City Centre Conservation Area and Queen Square Conservation Area. The Civic Hall is grade II* listed.

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The current proposals comprise two elements:
- (i) An internally illuminated sign at high level on the south-east gable of the Portland Building reading "Leeds Beckett University". The size of the individual letters would be approximately 1.5 metres in height. The letters would be illuminated using white LED units with a minimum 50,000 hours lifetime to minimise maintenance requirements. It is intended that the sign will be legible 50-150 metres away. An application for express consent has recently been received for this sign (14/03431/ADV). The University hope to have the sign in place prior to the start of the 2014-15 academic year.
 - (ii) Illumination of selected elements of campus buildings. LED floodlights would be located at lower levels of the buildings to wash light up the facades and fading towards the top. It is currently intended to illuminate the Portland Building gable and the Leslie Silver Building facades. It is also intended to illuminate the Portland Building plantroom, providing a solid or gently changing mix of University corporate colours, but with flexibility to use non-corporate colours to mark special events. At the same time the plant room would be reclad to hide the existing flues which project above the existing

cladding. There is potential for this to be of a simple extension to the existing cladding or to create a more sculptural form.

4.0 POLICY

4.1 Unitary Development Plan Review (UDPR)

4.1.1 The buildings are located within the designated Education Quarter. The main objective of the designation is to facilitate the University's main functional requirements on site, enhance its character and reinforce its distinct sense of place, improve linkages with the rest of the city centre, encourage the provision of extra student housing, and resolve vehicular access and circulation.

4.1.2 Relevant UDPR policies include GP5 (detailed planning considerations to be resolved); N12, CC3 and BD6 identify priorities for urban design; policy T2 states that development should not create or materially add to problems of safety or efficiency on the highway network; and policies BD8 and BD9 refer to the need for signs to be well designed and sensitively located. Policy BD14 states that carefully designed floodlighting schemes will be encouraged.

4.2 Draft Core Strategy (DCS)

4.2.1 The draft Core Strategy sets out strategic level policies and vision to guide the delivery of development investment decisions and the overall future of the district. The Inspector examined the Strategy during October 2013 and the Inspector's Modifications have been consulted on. The weight to be attached is limited where representations have been made.

4.2.2 Spatial Policy 1 states development should respect and enhance local character. Policy P10 requires new development, including alterations, to be based on a thorough contextual analysis to provide good design appropriate to its scale and function, delivering high quality innovative design. Development should protect and enhance locally important buildings, skylines and views. Policy P11 states that the historic environment, including its setting, will be conserved.

4.3 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

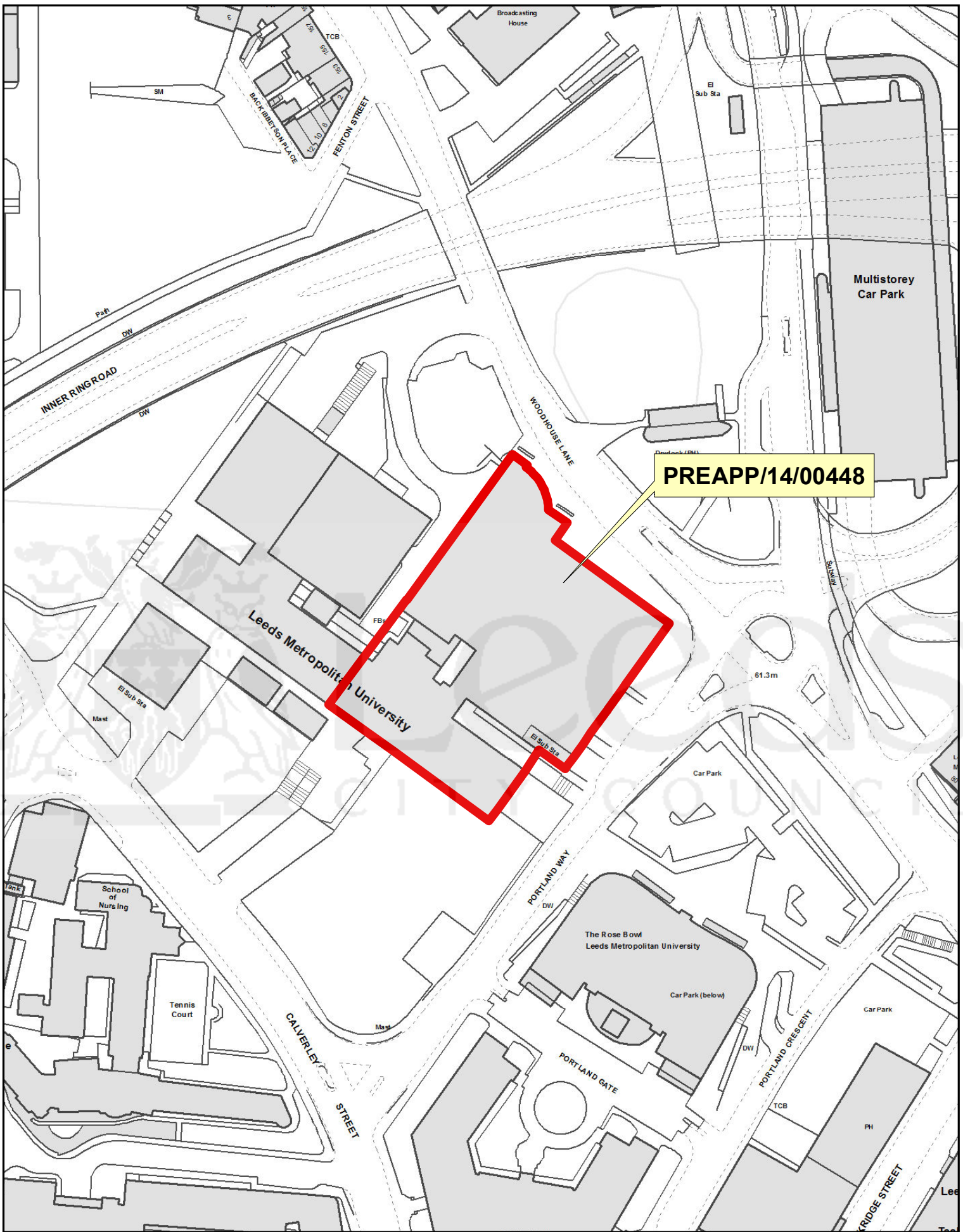
4.3.1 Poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact upon the appearance of the built environment. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts (para 67).

5.0 ISSUES

Members are asked to comment on the emerging proposals and to consider the following matters:

5.1 The existing purple fabric LMU sign on the Portland Building gable end has limited daytime presence and is not visible during evening periods when the University is still in use. Further, the materials do not complement those of the building. The change of name to Leeds Beckett University introduces a requirement to replace the existing sign and provides the opportunity to be designed to meet the current needs of the University and changing context.

- 5.1.1 During recent years new high level illuminated signage has been erected nearby at Woodhouse Lane multi-storey car park and Leeds City College. Slightly further afield new signage has been added to the top of West Riding House as part of its rebranding as Pinnacle.
- 5.1.2 The gable end of the building is currently visible in views from the south along Woodhouse Lane although the range of view will be limited with the construction of the new Hilton hotel on Portland Crescent. The gable end of the Portland Building is largely hidden from the south by the Civic Hall and other buildings.
- 5.1.3 Do Members agree that the size of text, position and form of the proposed internally illuminated sign are acceptable? Given the aspiration for a sign to be installed over the summer are Members happy for the application to be determined with delegated powers?**
- 5.2 The campus buildings have been developed over a fifty year period and utilise a range of external materials. Future elevational changes may bring about a greater commonality between the buildings and are intended to have a much stronger physical and visual relationship with the city centre. In the meantime, and as a first step towards unifying the buildings, it is intended to illuminate key facades to frame the campus and to introduce a clear presence when viewed from ground level. Details of luminaires, and their fixings, the colour variation and its brightness, could all have an impact upon the appearance of the buildings and their wider setting.
- 5.2.1 The Portland Building plant room is visible from a number of medium range and distant locations across of the city centre, including behind the Civic Hall when viewed from the southern end of Millennium Square. The University propose to utilise this visibility to create a high intensity, luminous, beacon that would be visible across the city skyline. During the daytime, whilst the lighting would not be visible, the extended plantroom would be likely to be more visible. Screening existing flues, which cannot be removed or reduced in height, is considered beneficial. However, the design of the taller structure is not yet settled. A simple extension of the existing treatment is likely to have least visibility whereas a more sculptural form would be likely to be more conspicuous.
- 5.2.2 The night-time context is clearly different from that during the daytime and the association with the setting and appearance of other buildings is less distinct. As noted, high level, illuminated signage has been introduced onto other buildings in the city centre and other buildings such as The Light have been floodlit for many years. In the vicinity both the Arena and, in the near future the Merrion Centre car park, have purpose-designed lighting schemes and the addition of a carefully designed lighting scheme could help to activate the campus during evening periods.
- 5.2.3 Do Members consider that the provision of a carefully designed lighting scheme would be acceptable on the LMU campus and, if so, do Members have any comments regarding the possibility of the use of changing colours? Further, do Members have any comments regarding the extension of the existing Portland Building plant room?**



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