



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 18th September 2014

Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION FOR OUTLINE PROPOSAL – MIXED USE SCHEME COMPRISING OFFICES AND RESIDENTIAL USES WITH ANCILLARY GROUND FLOOR ‘ACTIVE’ USES, SMALL SCALE RETAILING, CAFÉ/RESTAURANTS, BARS (PREAPP/14/00564) AT SITE BOUNDED BY WELLINGTON ST AND WELLINGTON BRIDGE ST (FORMER YORKSHIRE POST SITE).

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

Yes

Ward Members consulted

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

RECOMMENDATION: This report is brought to Panel for information. The Developer will be asked to present the emerging scheme to allow Members to consider and comment on the proposals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 This presentation is intended to inform Members of a new major mixed use scheme proposed on the vacant former Yorkshire Post site at the corner of Wellington St and the on-slip of the Inner Ring Road called Wellington Bridge St. Members will be aware that the site was vacated by Yorkshire Post approximately one year ago and since then demolition of the building has commenced and is now nearing completion. The land has been sold and the new owner wishes to pursue a redevelopment of the land. Members will be asked to comment on the emerging scheme.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

2.1 The site is approximately 1.87 hectares and is located to the south of Wellington Street, Leeds. The majority of the site area is now cleared following the demolition of the Yorkshire Post Building. The site is generally flat and is bound by Wellington

Street to the north, the low-rise car park of the Crowne Plaza hotel and the Wellington Place multi-storey car park to the east, the River Aire to the south, and the Inner Ring Road slip road (A58) to the west. The surrounding area has a mix of uses comprising offices, hotels, small scale retail and residential. A number of large scale developments have been built in close proximity to the site:

- City Island Development (Residential), immediately south of the site on the opposite side of the River Aire. The development consists of two 15 storey curved stepped blocks and a 20 storey tower.
- Wellington Place (Mixed Use), to the east of the Yorkshire Post site. The proposal consists of 2 million sq ft of commercial, retail, leisure and residential space in buildings of up to 19 storeys. Construction has started on site with the second building having just commenced - although this is at the eastern end of the site well away from the current proposal.

The site to the north, on the opposite side of Wellington St, is a row of now disused office buildings fronting Westgate (Ring Road off-slip). This site benefits from planning permission for a 28 storey tower comprising 272 flats, offices, A3 use and basement parking.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is to be submitted in outline with vehicular access points and building locations to form part of the details to be submitted for approval. It is the rationale for these which first need to be considered. This site occupies a prominent location at the intersection of 2 main routes, both into and around the city centre, as well as having a river frontage. It also has its only boundary with neighbouring land partly interfacing the Wellington Place development. Therefore, it is important to consider the way the proposal addresses these 3 prominent frontages, as well as its boundary with the existing and proposed neighbouring buildings.
- 3.2 The existing 2 no. access points on to the public highway are to remain in the same locations. With these points fixed, pedestrian routes through the site have been considered. Along the eastern boundary, the existing buildings, as well as the approved layout for Wellington Place, have been used to establish the logical positions for the linkage points. There are 2 points along this boundary, in addition to the river frontage, which have the potential for connections to be created. The buildings have been located in positions which take account of these routes in a way which is described below and which will be explained in the presentation by the project architect.
- 3.3 It is proposed to develop the site with 4 buildings. Three of these run parallel to Wellington Street but are off-set to create a built frontage to Wellington Bridge St. These buildings set up well defined east-west routes across the site which enables both pedestrian and vehicular access to be achieved with the pedestrian route aligning with the large bus layby on Wellington Bridge St and the southern route, set by the location of the existing vehicular access point. These three buildings are proposed to be mainly offices containing approx. 37,000 sqm of floor space in total with a mix of commercial uses at ground level and 220 car parking spaces in the basement. Each of the three buildings will decline in height towards the east and also step down towards the river, with the highest point being approximately 13 no. storeys and the lowest approximately 8 no storeys. This means that their scale will relate better to that of the existing and proposed development along the common

boundary. Each building will also have a double height colonnade at its eastern end to provide an increased amount of public realm and improve pedestrian circulation.

- 3.4 The fourth building is perpendicular to the other 3 and aligns itself more closely with the eastern boundary to Wellington Place. This is proposed to be residential building of approximately 200 units (a mix of 1 and 2 bed), and also steps down towards the river from a height of approximately 16 residential storeys. The future applicant has stated that these would consist of one and two bedroom units and be developed under the Private Rented Sector model where the units are built to rent rather than to sell. Locating the residential use here means that it is kept away from the primary road frontages where issues of amenity from road traffic noise and air quality are less likely to occur. The roof tops can also be used as private or communal amenity space for the residents.
- 3.5 As the application is in outline there are no elevational details to be included for approval with the building footprints and heights being dealt with by parameter plans. However, in order to provide an impression of the way the scheme could look the architect has prepared indicative sketches as well as precedent images and these will be displayed as part of the Panel presentation.
- 3.6 Across the entire scheme the changes in building heights produces a scheme which steps down from the road frontage and also down towards the river with the highest part of the development being located on the Wellington St/ Wellington Bridge St corner. This approach, coupled with the orientation of the site and the river frontage towards the south west, would also allow greater amounts of sunlight to penetrate the scheme and in to the areas where the open space is to be provided.
- 3.7 The proposed layout creates a series of interlinked spaces with a hard landscaped square at the north-eastern corner of the site (approx. 30m x 50m including colonnade area), a soft landscaped triangular space fronting the full length of the river (approx. 100m long by 40m deep) and a linking space between the two (approx. 25m wide x 50m long including colonnade area). This provides the opportunity to create a continuous pedestrian space from Wellington St all the way through to the river corridor and then along the river corridor, as the space would be linked to Wellington Place to the east and then up to the footway of the Inner Ring Road to the west. Members should note that it is not possible to pass beneath the road bridge at this point. The total amount of publicly accessible open space, including pedestrian routes, on site has been calculated at approximately 40% of the total site area.
- 3.8 These spaces are served by the main access nodes around the site, as described above. In addition to these, two further low level pedestrian links to the surrounding footway network are proposed through the ground floors of the buildings fronting Wellington St and the residential building. The ground floor frontages to the spaces would be animated by the main entrances to the buildings as well as a series of commercial units which would provide life and vitality throughout the day and in to the evening. In addition there are 2 no. free-standing buildings, in the square and the river front spaces, which would also provide focal points for activity and help to animate and, in the case of the square, visually contain the space.
- 3.9 Servicing and vehicle access is to be taken from the existing vehicle access points on Wellington St and Wellington Bridge St. The principle which has been adopted is to locate the parking in basements beneath each building so cars are not visible on the surface in order to create a better environment. This would require a surface link between the two sides of the scheme to allow refuse, emergency and larger service

vehicles, which are too large to access the basement, to pass through the site and service it when required. This is the same approach which has been approved as part of the neighbouring Wellington Place site. This link will also enable vehicles leaving the site during peak times to exit the site from the chosen egress point, thereby reducing traffic movement on the highway network.

- 3.10 The vehicular route along the eastern boundary sits above a culvert which cannot be built over and would give access to a servicing lay-by, the access ramp to the 72 space car parking beneath the residential building and a turning head. It will also provide a direct route for cyclists to get from Wellington St to the riverside. The space which it creates along this side of the site also provides physical separation between the residential building and the neighbouring multi-storey car park (minimum distance 26 m). The original brick wall of the former Been Ing Mills, which used to occupy this site, is to be retained along this boundary but will be removed at the points where pedestrian through-routes are required.
- 3.11 The applicant will be responsible for providing a full set of supporting documents. Clearly a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan will be required as well as a Flood Risk Assessment given this site's location within a Zone 3 flood risk area. A wind study would also form part of the package of submitted documents.

4.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS

- 4.1 Officers have had a number of meetings with the project architects which commenced in June this year. These have dealt principally with planning and design in order to develop the layout, scale, massing and vehicular access for the site.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 5.1 The Development Plan
Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan is the adopted Leeds Unitary Development Plan (Review 2006) (UDPR) and the Natural Resources and Waste DPD. These development plan policies are supported by supplementary planning guidance and documents. The introduction of the NPPF has not changed the legal requirement that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The policy guidance in Annex 1 to the NPPF is that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight they may be given.

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF advocates a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and a 'centres first' approach to main town centre uses such as offices. The location of prime office development within the City Centre, close to the railway station meets this requirement to locate such uses in sustainable locations. The NPPF also promotes economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. These new office buildings 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.

5.3 Development Plan

Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDPR)

The site lies within the designated City Centre and is within the Prime Office Quarter. This allocates the area as principally for office use, with other uses bringing activity and variety.

Other relevant policies include:

GP5 all relevant planning considerations

GP7 planning obligations

GP11 sustainability

GP12 sustainability

BD2 new buildings

A1 improving access for all

A4 safety and security provision

N12 urban design

N13 design and new buildings

N25 boundary treatments

N29 archaeology

BD4 all mechanical plant

CC3 city centre character

CC10 20% of site area to be public space on sites over 0.5 Hectares

CC11 streets and pedestrian corridors

CC12 public space and connectivity

CC13 public spaces and design criteria

CC19 office development

CC27 principal use quarters

E14 Office development

T2 Transport provision for development

T2C Travel plans

T2D public transport provision for development

T5 pedestrian and cycle provision

T6 provision for the disabled

T7A cycle parking

T7B motorcycle parking

T24 Car parking provision

LD1 landscaping

R5 employment and training for local residents associated with the construction and subsequent use of developments

N39A sustainable drainage systems

5.4 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. The requirements for a coal recovery report are also set out.

5.5 Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance includes:

SPD Street Design Guide

SPD5 Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions

SPD Travel Plans

SPD Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction

5.6 Leeds Core Strategy Publication Draft 2012

- 5.6.1 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 May 2014. Some weight can now be attached to the document and its contents recognizing that the weight to be attached may be limited by outstanding representations which have been considered at the examinations.
- 5.6.2 Of particular relevance to this scheme proposal is Spatial Policy 3 Role of Leeds City Centre. This seeks to maintain and enhance the role of the City Centre as an economic driver for the District and City Region, by
- promoting the City Centre's role as the regional capital of major new office development,
 - making the City Centre the main focus for office development in the District including the West End within which this site is located.
 - comprehensively planning the redevelopment and re-use of vacant and under-used sites for mixed use development and areas of public space,
 - enhancing streets and creating a network of open and green spaces to make the City Centre more attractive
 - improving connections between the City Centre and adjoining neighbourhoods

Core Strategy Policy CC1 outlines the planned growth within the City Centre, including office growth.

6.0 ISSUES

The scheme is in a prominent location and will act as a gateway to the city centre. The buildings present a built frontage to Wellington St and Wellington Bridge St but step down towards both the centre of the scheme and the river which is where the open space is located which runs through the scheme. Officers consider that the buildings are of an appropriate height for this prominent city centre site and have worked to try and sculpt the development so that it relates to the scale and mass of the neighbouring buildings and its river frontage setting.

In the light of this, and the description of the development and the presentation received from the project architect, Members are asked to comment on the following matters, in particular:

Do Members consider that the height of the building on to Wellington St is acceptable?

Do Members consider that the heights of the buildings on to Wellington Bridge St are acceptable?

Do Members consider that the stepping down of the building heights towards the centre of the scheme, and also towards the River Aire, is the correct approach to addressing the river and providing daylight to enter the scheme?

The proposal includes the provision of open space and pedestrian routes of a significant size (approximately 40% of the site area) which provides connectivity, both through to and along the river corridor. Considerable effort has been made to try and segregate the vehicle movement areas from the pedestrian routes. In the light of this:

Do Members consider that the creation of linked open spaces through the scheme, as well as the location and size of those spaces, is acceptable?

Are Members satisfied that the location and number of pedestrian linkage points will provide an acceptable level of connectivity with the surrounding public highway network, Wellington Place and the waterfront?

Do Members consider that the approach taken to pedestrian and vehicle segregation is successful including the requirement to?

There is to be a significant residential presence on the site. The building is proposed to contain 1 and 2 bedroom flats and follow the Private Rented Sector model.

Do Members consider that the mix of unit types is acceptable?

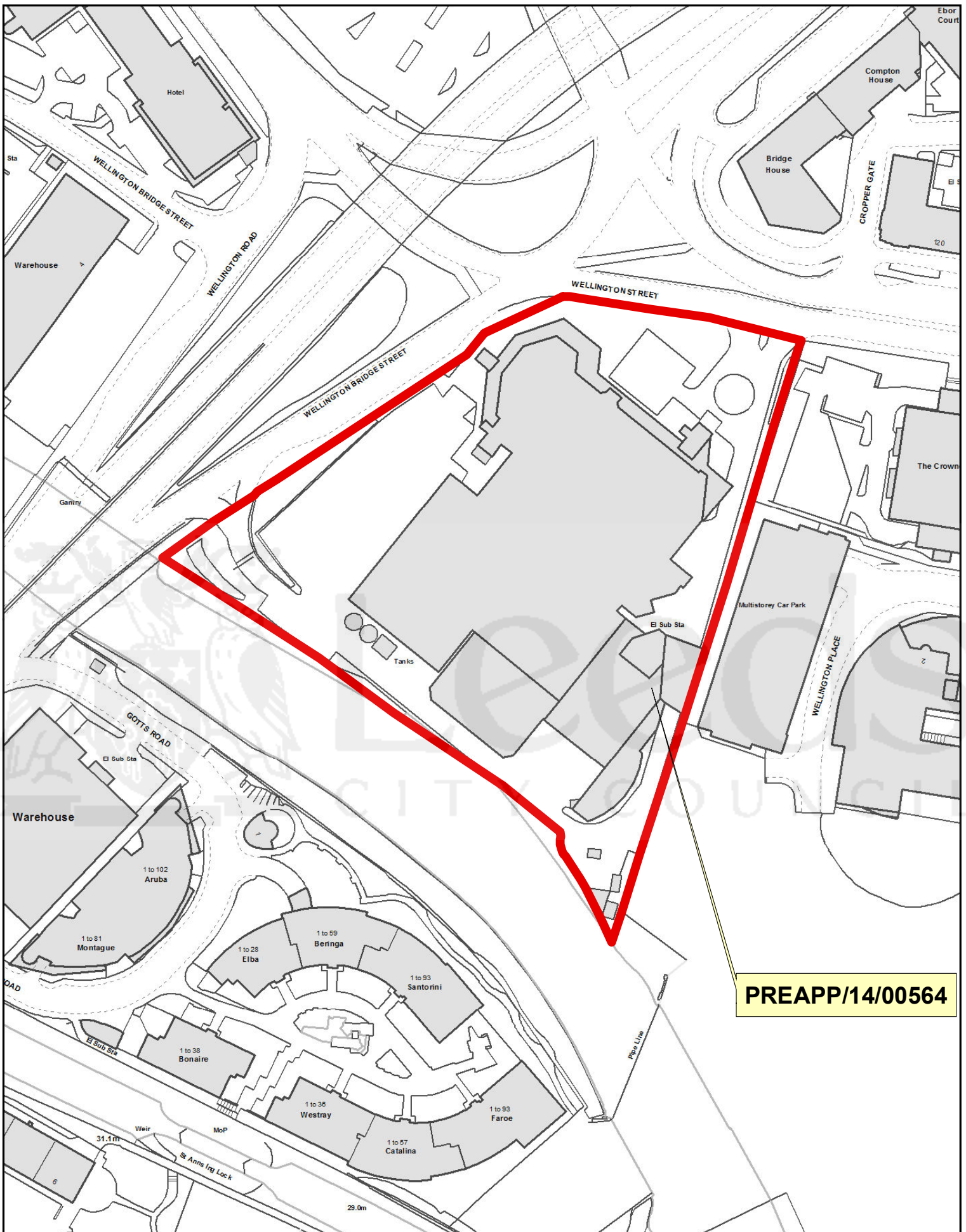
Do Members consider that the provision of these units under the Private Rented Sector model is acceptable?

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Pre-application file: PREAPP/14/00564

Application file: Wellington Place 06/06824/OT

Application file: Cropper Gate/Westgate 10/03459/EXT



PREAPP/14/00564

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