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**Report of the Chief Planning Officer**

**CITY PLANS PANEL**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

**Subject: Pre-application enquiry PREAPP/15/00302 for a residential development of circa 550 residential dwellings on land at Seacroft Hospital, Bridal Path, Leeds**

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Killingbeck and Seacroft**

**Temple Newsam**

☐ Yes

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity ☐

Community Cohesion ☐

Narrowing the Gap ☐

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**RECOMMENDATION: This report is brought to Plans Panel for information only. The applicant and their representatives will present the proposed scheme and allow Members to consider and comment on the proposals.**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

- 1.1 Under Policy H3-2A.4 of the Leeds Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review 2006, 17.42 hectares of land is allocated for housing purposes at the rear of Seacroft Hospital. The proposal is on a Phase 2 allocated greenfield site, within the main urban area, as well including other brownfield land. The site is also affected by other policy constraints, including the western and southernmost part of the site being designated as Urban Green Corridor under Policy N8. York Road (A64), to the north of the site is recognised as being part of the strategic highway network under Policy T18. Policy T7 also plots the potential for new cycle routes through the Wyke Beck Valley, located to the west and south of the site.
- 1.2 Some Members may recall that the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), started preparing a planning application in order to facilitate the marketing of the site in 2011/12 as part of the Government's initiative to dispose of and develop surplus public land. A pre-application presentation was given to East Plans Panel on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2012 for a scheme of circa 600 houses. At that meeting, Members signalled a clear desire to see a comprehensive redevelopment of the site, including the then vacant hospital buildings.

- 1.3 Since that time, the HCA has been working closely with the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust (LTHT) and has subsequently purchased the additional surplus land from the hospital. Earlier this year, the vacant hospital buildings were demolished, save for the clock tower (a Grade II Listed Building), the administration block and an 'Arts and Crafts' villa at the front of the site.
- 1.4 Following a competition last year, the HCA has appointed its preferred bidder – Keepmoat and Strata, to prepare and submit a planning application to deliver a residential development on the site. It is this emerging scheme which is the subject of the pre-application presentation to City Plans Panel. It should be noted that the eastern end of the allocation is currently being safeguarded as a potential secondary school site and is therefore excluded from the development area of the residential proposals.

## **2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:**

- 2.1 The housing allocation is essentially a wide 'U' shaped piece of land, to the rear (south) of the existing Seacroft Hospital complex. The site is undulating, but broadly falls to the south on a gradual slope, with the lowest point being in the south-west corner. The hospital complex sits in a relatively prominent position above the site. The site is currently mainly mown grass, although there are a number of mature trees, with particular groups in the north-west corner and around the site boundaries. Other single and small groups of trees exist in a scattered fashion in the central southern area of the site. It is evident that there are a number of well used paths across the site, particularly around the boundaries of the site and crossing two railway footbridges.
- 2.2 The site has a frontage to York Road (A64), to the north-west corner of the site. To the north of York Road is a retail / office park, residential development (including that on the former Killingbeck Hospital site) and a cemetery. The area immediately north/west of the site is occupied by the hospital complex and contains a relatively dense development of buildings of various ages, all predominantly two to three storeys in height. The area to the north-east and east of the site is predominantly residential in character, although Cross Gates Primary School and Cross Gates Community Centre are immediately adjacent to the site boundary. The residential properties comprise terraces and semi-detached dwellings of a variety of ages. Some properties in Poole Mount and Poole Square have rear garden areas backing onto the site. Two pedestrian access points exist, providing links to Maryfield Avenue and Poole Square. The southern boundary of the site is formed by the Leeds to York railway line, which is in a shallow cut at this point. There is pedestrian access available over the two railway footbridges in the south-eastern and south-western corners of the site, providing links to the Primrose Valley Park / Halton Deans green space which extends to the north of Halton. The south-eastern footbridge would only be accessible via the potential secondary school development. The area to the west of the site is predominantly residential in character, mainly comprising two-storey terraced properties. The houses on Watson Road and Rye Place have rear garden areas backing onto the site and a further two pedestrian accesses provide links to these streets.

## **3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The proposal is for the development of circa 550 residential units on land comprising the majority of the housing allocation and also the vacated brownfield land on the former hospital site.

#### **4.0 PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 PREAPP/12/00663 - Laying out of access and erection of circa 600 houses (relates to the housing allocation only).
- 4.2 34/385/98/OT – Outline application to erect a residential development. The application was withdrawn as it was considered to be premature at the time.

#### **5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Leeds currently comprises the Core Strategy (2014), saved policies within the Leeds Unitary Development Plan (Review 2006) and the Natural Resources and Waste Development Plan Document (2013). The Site Allocations Plan is emerging and is due to be deposited for Publication at the end of the Summer 2015.

##### Adopted Core Strategy:

- 5.2 The Core Strategy is the development plan for the whole of the Leeds district. The Core Strategy (CS) was Adopted in November 2014. The following CS policies are relevant:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Spatial policy 1  | Location of development                            |
| Spatial policy 6  | Housing requirement and allocation of housing land |
| Spatial policy 7  | Distribution of housing land and allocations       |
| Spatial policy 11 | Transport infrastructure investment priorities     |
| Policy H1         | Managed release of sites                           |
| Policy H3         | Density of residential development                 |
| Policy H4         | Housing mix  |
| Policy H5         | Affordable housing                                 |
| Policy H8         | Housing for independent living                     |
| Policy P9         | Community facilities and other services            |
| Policy P10        | Design   |
| Policy P12        | Landscape  |
| Policy T1         | Transport Management                               |
| Policy T2         | Accessibility requirements and new development     |
| Policy G4         | New Greenspace provision                           |
| Policy G8         | Protection of species and habitats                 |
| Policy G9         | Biodiversity improvements                          |
| Policy EN2        | Sustainable design and construction                |
| Policy EN5        | Managing flood risk                                |
| Policy ID2        | Planning obligations and developer contributions   |

##### Leeds Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review:

A large part of the site is allocated for housing purposes under policy H3-2A.04 of the UDP, which states that:

**‘...17.42 ha of land is allocated for housing at the rear of Seacroft Hospital subject to:**

- i. Provision of acceptable off-site highway works following the construction of the M1 motorway;**
- ii. Laying out as part of the development of a linear park as part of an urban**

**green corridor running north/south through the site to link Halton Deans to Wyke Beck Valley Park.'**

Other policies of relevance are:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Policy GP5       | General planning considerations         |
| Policy N5        | Improving acquisition of greenspace     |
| Policies N23/N25 | Landscape design and boundary treatment |
| Policy N29       | Archaeology                             |
| Policy BD5       | Design considerations for new build     |
| Policy T7A       | Cycle parking guidelines                |
| Policy T24       | Parking guidelines                      |
| Policy H3        | Delivery of housing on allocated sites  |
| Policy R2        | Area based initiatives                  |

Supplementary Planning Guidance / Documents:

- 5.3 SPG10 Sustainable Development Design Guide (adopted).  
SPG13 Neighbourhoods for Living (adopted).  
SPG22 Sustainable Urban Drainage (adopted).  
SPD Street Design Guide (adopted).  
SPD Designing for Community Safety (adopted).  
SPD Travel Plans (draft).  
SPD Sustainable Design and Construction (adopted).

National Planning Guidance:

- 5.4 National Planning Policy Framework: Paragraph 49 requires that housing applications be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites.

## **6.0 ISSUES**

Principle of development

- 6.1 The majority of the site is identified in the UDP Review (2006) as a Phase 2 site suitable for residential development. The remainder of the site comprises brownfield land that has now been cleared of the redundant hospital buildings. Accordingly, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

Planning Policy issues

- 6.2 The proposal accords with the housing allocation set out under saved UDP Policy H3-2A.4 in that it would provide approximately 550 new houses.
- 6.3 The western and southern portions of the site are also washed over by Urban Green Corridor, under Policy N8 of the UDP, which states that:

**'The strategic network of urban green corridors links the main urban area with the countryside. These corridors provide or have the potential to provide for informal recreation and also contribute to visual amenity and nature conservation. Within these corridors, development proposals should ensure that:**

- i. Any existing corridor function of the land is retained, enhanced or replaced; and**

**ii. Where there is potential to create a link between existing greenspaces, provision is made for one or more corridor function.'**

- 6.4 In considering the implications of Policy N8, it will be important to consider how any proposals for development address the existing landscape, trees, ecology and biodiversity, as well as the existing pedestrian desire lines across the site and how these tie into the wider network of paths and greenspaces in the locality. In particular, the Wyke Beck Way provides links from the north-east to the south of the city, within which this site has the ability to provide a potentially crucial link.

Urban Design issues

- 6.5 The proposals are being developed with a view to a full planning application being prepared. The discussions to date have centred around developing a masterplan for the site and an emerging high level layout. It is important to consider how the overall masterplan for the site works, taking into account good design practice, the topography of the site, views into and out of the site, retention of trees, provision of greenspaces, provision of and enhancement of routes across the site and the urban green corridor functions. The masterplan has been evolving over time as a result of community consultation and feedback from officers. Essentially, the scheme generally provides for a series of connected loops of streets with development arranged in a series of perimeter blocks (blocks formed by houses fronting streets with secure interlocking rear garden areas).
- 6.6 Design workshops have been held with officers as part of the pre-application discussions to date. Officer advice has been that the scheme must provide at least two main accesses, provide for a connected layout, linking into to the existing urban fabric and open spaces – utilising existing established links. The layout should also reflect the topography of the site and make optimum use of existing views to tree groups, as well as to the hospital clock tower, which is a Grade II Listed Building. It is also considered that the scheme needs to provide adequate space to provide for the 'green links' and footway/cycleway connections across the site in order to address the Urban Green Corridor functions. With regard to the new vehicular accesses, these need to create interesting spaces in their own right, as well as fulfilling their function. The primary access should therefore have regard to the mature trees and its soft landscape setting.
- 6.7 At this stage, the focus has been on the layout of the development at a reasonably high level. It is therefore difficult to thoroughly assess the scheme against the space standards in Neighbourhoods for Living, for example. Nevertheless, it is noted that a good number of properties benefit from spaces between them, particularly along the spine road, where car parking has been accommodated to the sides of houses. This removes cars from the street frontage and also provides streetscenes with a more spacious feel. However, it is noted that in these circumstances, the houses are closer to the street than they would otherwise usually be, having shorter front gardens. It is possible that appropriate use of boundary treatments such as walls and railing could help provide sufficient defensible space. The close proximity to the street also has implications for the species of trees that may be planted in highway verges. Trees which grow very large would not be appropriate as they will block light and potentially create conflict. Careful choice of small and medium sized trees could overcome this.
- 6.8 During the pre-application discussions, consideration has been given to replacing the 'Arts and Crafts' villa to the east of the clock tower. The villa, as it exists, would effectively back onto the new access across Bridle Path. The developer team has therefore looked at a higher quality replacement for this building and explored the use of Strata's Livorno house type. These have previously been used on the Otter Island

development. It is important that this gateway to the development incorporates high quality buildings with particular care given to the setting of the Grade II Listed clock tower.

**6.9 What are Members thoughts on the approach to the layout and design of the proposals (including the potential character of the spine road and the area around the Grade II Listed clock tower)?**

Landscape issues

6.10 As already mentioned, there are key groups of trees on site, particularly in the northwest corner, around the boundaries and in small clusters around the central southern part of the site. Unfortunately, given the limited scope for access, some trees will need to be lost from the north-west corner of the site in order to facilitate the principal access. However, the proposed layout indicates that a reasonable amount of the trees in this area would remain. With regard to the secondary access through the hospital site, it is apparent that this is likely to affect some trees around the junction of York Road and Bridle Path. Elsewhere on site, it is highly desirable that as many trees as possible are retained, not least because they provide immediate landscape structure to some of the proposed greenspaces.

6.11 In terms of public spaces, the current layout seeks to provide areas of greenspace around the north-west corner of the site (in the area with the greatest tree cover), a series of smaller overlooked parkland areas between blocks of housing and a linear park along the southern boundary to the railway. Given that the lowest part of the site is along the southern boundary, this is also where a number of swales are proposed to assist in dealing with surface water drainage. The swales have the potential to offer habitat areas and could benefit the biodiversity of the area.

6.12 A key question is to what extent the proposed layout addresses the Urban Green Corridor policy – to what degree are the nature and extent of greenspaces able to provide for the corridor functions with regard to informal recreation, visual amenity, nature conservation and providing links. Additionally, it is also important to consider how these spaces and links tie into the wider area – the Wyke Beck Valley to the north of York Road and Primrose Valley Park / Halton Deans and beyond, to the south, noting the established desire lines across the site and existing footbridge links over the railway line.

**6.13 What are Members thoughts on the nature and location of greenspaces on site and how these link into the wider strategic green links across this part of the city?**

Housing issues

6.14 The site is significant in terms of its size and context within east Leeds and has the potential to offer a range of housing, including Affordable Housing. The applicant will be required to undertake a Housing Needs Assessment and to plan for a scheme to reflect its findings. With regard to Affordable Housing, the Council's policy is to secure 15% Affordable Housing in this part of the city.

**6.15 What are Members views on the nature and type of housing provision on site?**

Highway issues

6.16 The proposed development will take a principal access from York Road, at the north west corner of the site. Given the geometry of York Road and the otherwise land locked nature of the site, there is limited scope for any alternative principal access. A secondary access is also proposed through the former hospital site, to the north east.

It is considered that both of the new accesses must be designed with quality of place in mind, as well as the functional requirements. Other non-vehicular accesses also exist around the boundary of the site, providing links to Watson Road and Rye Place to the west. Links to Maryfield Avenue and Poole Square to the east could be secured as part of any secondary school development. Additionally, there is a potential link through to Cross Gates Primary School and it is noted that a gate has existed here historically. There is also pedestrian access available over the two railway footbridges in the south-eastern and south-western corners of the site.

- 6.17 The highway impact of the proposal and what it means in terms of traffic generation on the local highway network, particularly York Road, is under consideration by the applicant and highway officers. Whilst the application relates solely to the housing development, the Transport Assessment will also take account of a notional secondary school development.
- 6.18 In the negotiations to date, highway officers have been keen to secure as much spine road frontage as possible for the potential secondary school, to ensure that it can be adequately serviced in the future. This is in recognition of the problems associated with schools which are accessed from cul-de-sacs in other parts of the city. Accordingly, the applicants have considered options for re-aligning the spine road in order to achieve this. One option gave slightly more frontage than the other and had a straighter alignment, but resulted in the loss of a number of good quality trees. In terms of striking a planning balance, officers have advised that the applicant should continue working up their alternative option which is a more curved road, but which retains the trees and offers better placemaking benefits, though it is not the optimum highway solution.

#### Drainage issues

- 6.19 Through the public consultation exercises carried out historically, it is noted that there are concerns from local residents in the Dunhills (located to the south-west of Primrose Valley Park and accessed from Selby Road) about drainage. Residents in this part of the city have experienced flooding problems in the past, associated with Wyke Beck. The applicant has undertaken a consultation event for residents in the Dunhills, in liaison with the residents group. The applicant will need to submit a Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy for the site to ensure that the proposed development does not exceed the existing greenfield rates of run off and does not exacerbate drainage problems in the surrounding area.

- 6.20 **Do Members have any comments on the proposed drainage strategy?**

#### Other Matters

- 6.21 In addition to the issues discussed above, officers have also commenced dialogue with Education and Health colleagues. Given the quantum of development, this is likely to generate a significant demand for school places. It is noted that the development will generate a CIL contribution and this could be used to fund further education provision. The addition of a secondary school adjacent to the development will clearly be beneficial if this is pursued by the City Council. Discussions with health colleagues are ongoing in order to ascertain what primary healthcare requirements may be needed as a result of the scheme, as well as looking in detail at the residential environment likely to be created from a public health point of view – considering greenspaces, links, speed limits and street/place creation etc. It is also noted that the development is likely to create a significant amount of jobs in the construction phase and it would be expected that training and employment initiatives are included as an obligation in the S106 agreement, focussed on the east Leeds area.

**6.22 Are there any other issues Members would like to raise?**

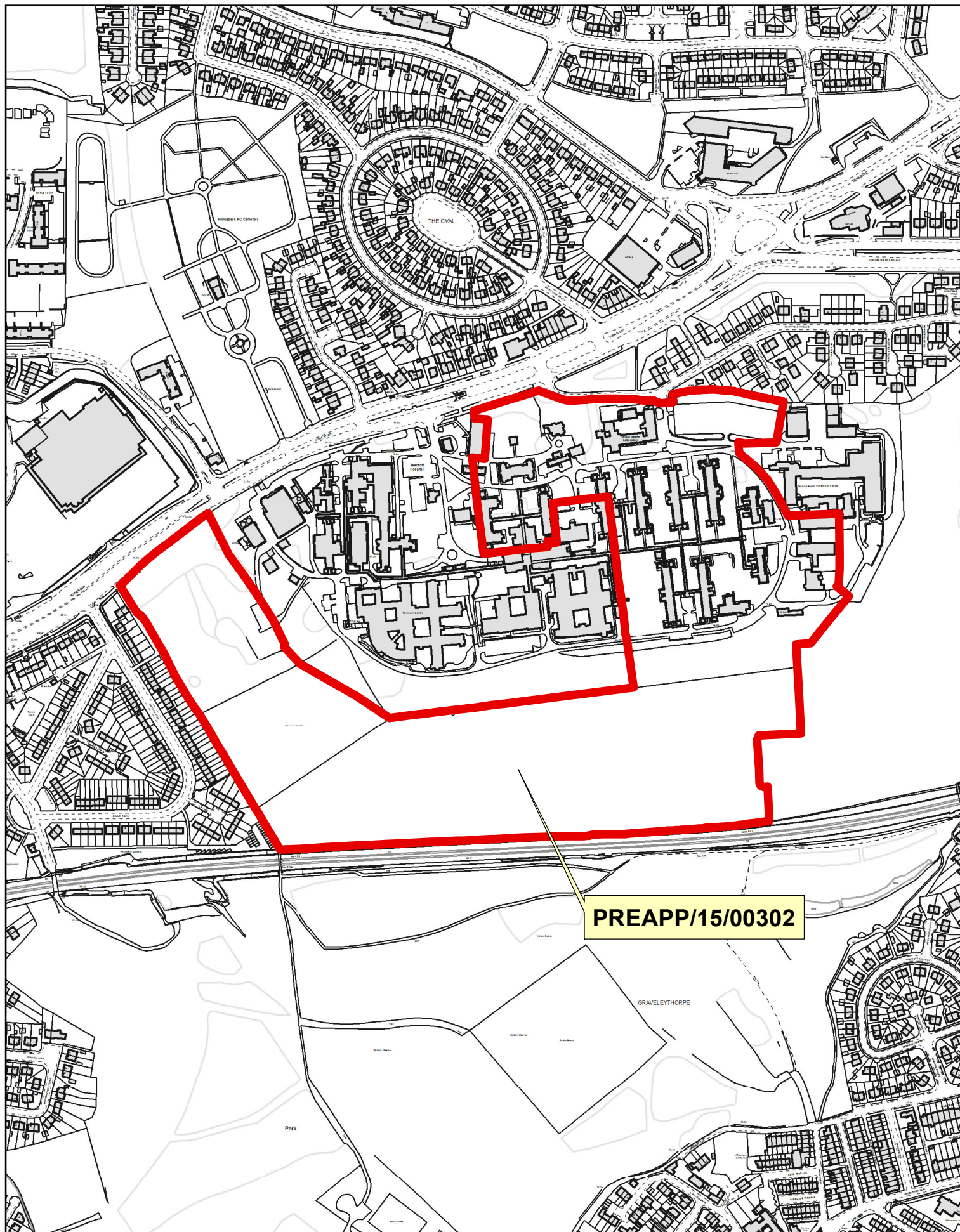
6.23 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and the presentation, and are invited to provide feedback on the issues outlined below:

1. **What are Members thoughts on the approach to the layout and design of the proposals (including the potential character of the spine road and the area around the Grade II Listed clock tower)?**
2. **What are Members thoughts on the nature and location of greenspaces on site and how these link into the wider strategic green links across this part of the city?**
3. **What are Members views on the nature and type of housing provision on site?**
4. **Do Members have any comments on the proposed drainage strategy?**
5. **Are there any other issues Members would like to raise?**

**Background Papers:**

None





# CITY PLANS PANEL

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