
Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

24th MARCH 2016

PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED EXTENSION, RECLADDING AND CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER OFFICES TO FORM HOTEL, NEW YORK ROAD AND BRIDGE STREET, LEEDS 2 (PREAPP/15/00964)

APPLICANT – ULTRA ASSET HOLDINGS LTD.

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

☐ Yes

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 former British Gas offices located between Bridge Street, Gower Street, Regent Street and New York Road. The site was vacated in the early part of the Twenty-First Century and the buildings have remained vacant since that time.
- 1.2 Planning permission was granted in 2011 for a mixed use redevelopment of the entire site comprising four tall towers located above two separate low rise podiums. Recently, demolition of several buildings around the site boundary has commenced the development such that the 2011 planning permission remains extant.
- 1.3 Following acquisition of the site by a consortium of Singapore investors in summer 2015 revised proposals are now emerging for the whole site, albeit it is intended to deliver these in a number of phases. The intended first phase of development comprises the refurbishment and recladding of the existing tower and its podium,

which would be extended alongside New York Road, to form a 183 bedroom 3* hotel.

- 1.4 The presentation will make reference to the intended later phases of the development although details of these are at a very early stage in the planning process. However, if brought forward at a similar scale and density to the scheme which was previously approved, once complete the redevelopment of this brownfield site has the potential to play a key role in physically and economically regenerating the area and reconnecting neighbourhoods north of the A64 with the City Centre.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site is located towards the northern fringe of the designated city centre on land bordered by Bridge Street, Gower Street, Regent Street and New York Road. The body of the site as a whole is effectively rectangular in shape measuring approximately 140 metres x 70 metres (approximately 1 hectare). Levels tend to fall gradually from the highest point in the north-west corner towards the east (Regent Street). The site was formerly used by British Gas and was primarily used for offices. Other than for a period of unauthorised commuter car parking the site has been vacant for several years. Buildings were primarily located around the periphery of the site with 2 and 3 storey buildings fronting Gower Street and Bridge Street, and a 10 storey tower above a 3 to 4 storey podium at the corner of New York Road and Bridge Street. Several of these buildings have been demolished during recent months.
- 2.2 Existing buildings along New York Road to the west of the site include Crispin House apartments (Grade II listed), 5-7 New York Road (currently being converted into apartments and Baker House (self storage). Other buildings in close proximity to the north of the site including those on the north side of Gower Street are more typically 2 to 3 storeys in height, although beyond Byron Street contemporary residential and commercial buildings are more commonly 5 to 9 storeys in height. Properties on the east side of Regent Street are generally 2 to 3 storeys in height.
- 2.3 The Inner Ring Road (A64M) passes the site at an elevated level to the south of New York Road which falls eastwards towards Regent Street. Pedestrian access via Bridge Street and Eastgate (north) / Regent Street to and from the city centre is currently achieved beneath unwelcoming bridged structures. Low rise residential accommodation is situated at Ladybeck Close to the east of Bridge Street on the southern side of the Inner Ring Road. The west side of Bridge Street, predominantly used for surface car parking, will be redeveloped during Phase 2 of the Victoria Gate development.

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 This first phase of development comprises the conversion of the 10 storey tower and associated 2-3 storey podium bounding New York Road to form a 183-bedroom hotel. The podium would be extended approximately 30 metres towards Regent Street to the east. This new section of the building would be four storeys in height, with the highest floor extruded westwards over the existing podium and beneath the tower to connect the tower to the podium.
- 3.2 The building would be stripped back to its concrete frame prior to recladding, extension and fitting out. Initial indications are that the tower and eastern extension to the plinth would be faced in gun-metal grey aluminium cladding. The existing podium, and potentially part of the northern elevation of the tower, would be clad in

glazed, dark grey, profiled terracotta tiles. The windows of the building would be vertically proportioned.

- 3.3 Two entrances to the hotel are identified: one on the southern side of the building from the existing footway on New York Road close to Bridge Street; and the second on the northern side of the building at the site ground level close to Bridge Street.
- 3.4 All other buildings on the wider site would have been demolished in advance of the hotel works providing a large, cleared area, to the north and east of the retained building. The proposals identify the laying out of a 59 (including 5 disabled) space surface car park for use by the hotel. There would be a drop-off layby within the site outside the ground level entrance; a coach drop-off zone and an area allocated for servicing and deliveries. A single point of vehicular access into and out of the site onto Gower Street would be formed approximately equidistant between Bridge Street and Regent Street. Peripheral soft landscaping strips are identified around the boundaries of the site fronting Bridge Street and Gower Street and around the parking areas.
- 3.5 The eastern third of the site would be enclosed by site hoardings.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 Planning permission was granted in May 2011 for the redevelopment of the site (reference 08/01948/FU). None of the existing buildings would have been retained. The scheme comprised 4 slender towers ranging in height from 23 to 40 storeys, located above 3 and 4 storey podiums. Each of the four towers was positioned at a slightly different orientation to form a shallow curve. Approximately 25 per cent of the total developable site area was allocated for ground level external public space; additional tree planting was to have been delivered along Regent Street; and a contribution was to have been made towards improvement of off-site greenspace. The top of the main podium, almost 0.5 hectares in extent, was also to have been landscaped and used as private amenity space. A three-storey car park and service area was intended beneath ground level.
- 4.2 The approved uses comprised:
- 4049m² of bulky goods retail warehousing
 - 228m² of ancillary A1 retail
 - 3427m² of D1/D2 “healthy-living” uses
 - 204 bed hotel
 - 99 serviced apartments and 108 long-stay hotel rooms
 - 636 residential apartments including 15% affordable housing

5.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 5.1 LCC Highways - Car and cycle parking has been provided in accordance with the Leeds Parking SPD, along with space for drop off, servicing and coach parking. The placement of these facilities will need to match the access points into the hotel but the principle of placing the main entrance at the western end seems sensible.

Some improvements will be required on Gower Street along the site frontage; to construct a vehicular access, provide a footway and kerb where currently a long section of flush set paving exists. It will also be necessary to relocate some pay and display parking spaces to maintain visibility at the new access location.

The submitted plans show Gower Street to be one-way eastbound with a signalised all moves junction with Gower Street. Unless the developer intends to promote these proposals as a part of the hotel development, the proposal should be based on the existing highway lay out and kerb side use.

The footway arrangements on Bridge Street need improvement, currently an old access to the building provides a difficult arrangement for pedestrians. As this access is redundant the footway should be reconstructed to a much improved profile.

The pedestrian route beneath the Inner Ring Road over-bridge is poor; this will be an important pedestrian route to the development from the City and should be improved as part of the development.

Vehicular movement from the hotel is unlikely to have a significant impact on the highway network. However, the development should be supported by a travel plan.

- 5.2 LCC Flood Risk Management - Flood Zone 3 extends within the eastern boundary of the site as well as the Gower Street access to the site while parts of the western boundary along Bridge Street fall within Flood Zone 2. Hence a Flood Risk Assessment would be required to determine finished floor/ basement entrance level of the redeveloped site to reduce the risk of flooding from these surrounding areas during extreme rainfall events. It is expected that at least there should be a betterment of the overall surface water drainage of the site derived from a reduction of the post development surface water discharges with appropriate infiltration or attenuation of excess runoff as required by the Council's Minimum Development Control Standards for Flood Risk.
- 5.3 LCC Contaminated Land Team – the site has been the subject of a potentially contaminative land use. As such, a phase 1 desk study would be required in support of the application. Depending on the outcome of the phase 1, a phase 2 site investigation and remediation statement may also be required.
- 5.4 LCC Environmental Action Service - the hotel in itself will not trigger the criteria for an Air Quality Management Area and the contribution of movements associated with the development described as 350 movements/day and with 59 parking spaces would not require detailed modelling although a qualitative assessment will confirm the position. In addition, mitigation measures in both construction and operational phases are important and should be incorporated in the.

6.0 POLICY

6.1 Development Plan

- 6.1.1 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. For the purposes of decision making, the Development Plan for Leeds currently comprises the following documents:
- The Leeds Core Strategy (Adopted November 2014)
 - Saved UDP Policies (2006), included as Appendix 1 of the Core Strategy
 - The Natural Resources & Waste Local Plan (NRWLP, Adopted January 2013) including revised policies Minerals 13 and 14 (Adopted September 2015).
 - Any Neighbourhood Plan, once Adopted.

6.2 Core Strategy (CS)

6.2.1 Relevant Core Strategy policies include:

Spatial and economic policies

Spatial Policy 1 prioritises the redevelopment of previously developed land within Main Urban Area, in a way that respects and enhances the local character and identity of places and neighbourhoods.

Spatial Policy 3 seeks to maintain and enhance the role of the City Centre as an economic driver for the District and City Region, by 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; and improving connections between the City Centre and adjoining neighbourhoods.

Spatial Policy 8 supports a competitive local economy including through the provision of a sufficient supply of buildings for B class uses; developing the City Centre for new retail, office and other main town centre uses; and by supporting training/skills and job creation initiatives via planning agreements.

Spatial Policy 11 includes a priority related to improved facilities for pedestrians to promote safety and accessibility, particularly connectivity between the edges of the City Centre and the City Centre itself.

City Centre policies

Policy CC1 outlines the planned growth within the City Centre. All other town centre uses will be supported in the City Centre providing the use does not negatively impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses.

Policy CC3 states new development will need to provide and improve walking and cycling routes connecting the City Centre with adjoining neighbourhoods, and improve connections with the City Centre.

Design, conservation, transport and other policies

Policy P10 requires new development to be based on a thorough contextual analysis to provide good design appropriate to its scale and function, delivering high quality innovative design and that development protects and enhance the district's historic assets in particular, historically and locally important buildings, skylines and views.

Policy P11 states that the historic environment will be conserved and their settings will be conserved, particularly those elements which help to give Leeds its distinct identity.

Policies T1 and T2 identify transport management and accessibility requirements to ensure new development is adequately served by highways and public transport, and with safe and secure access for pedestrians, cyclists and people with impaired mobility.

Policy G5 requires commercial developments over 0.5 hectares in the City Centre to provide a minimum of 20% of the total site area as open space.

Policy G9 states that development will need to demonstrate biodiversity improvements.

Policies EN1 and EN2 set targets for CO² reduction and sustainable design and construction, and at least 10% low or zero carbon energy production on-site.

Policy EN5 identifies requirements to manage flood risk.

EC3(A) Change of use of sites last used in employment to town centre uses will only be permitted where (i) the proposal would not result in the loss of a deliverable employment site or (ii) existing buildings and land are considered to be non-viable in terms of market attractiveness, business operations, age, condition and/or compatibility with adjacent uses; or (iii) the proposal will deliver a mixed use development which continues to provide for a range of local employment opportunities and would not undermine the viability of the remaining employment site.

6.3 Saved Unitary Development Plan Review policies (UDPR)

6.3.1 Relevant Saved Policies include:

GP5 - All relevant planning considerations to be resolved.

BD2 - New buildings should complement and enhance existing skylines, vistas and landmarks.

BD6 states alterations and extensions should respect the scale, form, detailing and materials of the original building.

LD1 - Sets out criteria for landscape schemes.

6.4 Natural Resources & Waste DPD 2013

6.4.1 The plan sets out where land is needed to enable the City to manage resources, such as 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 drainage, air quality and land contamination are relevant to this proposal.

6.4.2 AIR1 states that all applications for major development will be required to incorporate low emission measures to ensure that the overall impact of proposals on air quality is mitigated.

WATER 4 - All developments are required to consider the effect of the proposed development on flood risk, both on-site and off-site

WATER 6 - All applications for new development will be required to consider flood risk, commensurate with the scale and impact of the development.

6.5 Other material considerations

6.5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF identifies 12 core planning principles (para 17) which include that planning should:

- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development
- Seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.

Planning should proactively support sustainable economic development and seek to secure high quality design. It encourages the effective use of land and the reuse of land that has previously been developed.

Section 7 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. It is important that design is inclusive and of high quality. Key principles include:

- Establishing a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
- Optimising the potential of the site to accommodate development;
- Respond to local character and history;
- Reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- Create safe and accessible environments; and
- Development to be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

6.6 Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance includes:

SPD Parking
SPD Street Design Guide
SPD Travel Plans
SPD Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction
SPG City Centre Urban Design Strategy

6.7 Best Council Plan

The Plan identifies 6 objectives in order to achieve the best council outcomes identified between 2014-2017. Best Council objectives “Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth” and “Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth” are applicable to this proposal.

6.8 Vision for Leeds 2011-2030

One of the aims is that by 2030 Leeds’ economy will be more prosperous and sustainable. The vision states that Leeds will be a great place to live, including the provision of high quality buildings, places and green spaces, where local people benefit from regeneration investment.

6.9 Leeds Growth Strategy

The Strategy identifies seven core priorities intended to drive future growth to create a prosperous and sustainable economy. The hotel development would help to support growth in the financial services and retail sectors.

7.0 ISSUES

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

7.1 Principle of the development

7.1.1 The previous use of the site as British Gas offices ended over twenty years ago and there has been minimal investment in the buildings since that time. Buildings around the site boundary have recently been demolished leaving the office tower and podium, and a neighbouring building on New York Road (which is due to be demolished in the near future). There has been no commercial interest in utilising the office space which does not meet current requirements whilst there remains significant, undeveloped, office accommodation in the area such as at Quarry Hill.

7.1.2 The site is located within the designated City Centre where town centre uses, such as hotels, are encouraged. Such a use would help to support other city centre functions, such as business, entertainment and retail.

7.1.3 **Do Members consider that the proposed use is acceptable in principle?**

7.2 Design and townscape considerations

7.2.1 The deteriorating condition of the tower, which is located in a prominent position, has increasingly adversely affected the character and appearance of the area. Following recent demolition of other buildings on the site its appearance would add to a sense of dereliction and abandonment.

7.2.2 The proposed development would represent the first significant investment in the wider site in many years. The podium extension of the building would, itself, not have a major impact given the historic location of buildings around the periphery of the site and the position of buildings on New York Road on the back edge of the footpath. Likewise, the addition of a further storey to the height of the podium would not be likely to have a significant visual impact due to the height of the tower and the scale of other existing buildings along New York Road (Crispin House 7 storey; 5-7 New York Road 5 storey; and Baker House 4 storey).

7.2.3 Current proposals have been designed to present a new vertical emphasis to the appearance of the extended building. The strategy involves defining two primary components; firstly, the original podium and secondly, the tower and extended building. These elements would be differentiated through the use of different though complementary materials; dark grey, profiled terracotta tiles for the podium and gun-metal grey aluminium cladding for the tower. When this report was drafted the pattern of fenestration around the building appeared arbitrary with a number of approaches combined whereas more order and clarity is considered necessary to deliver a unified form.

7.2.4 Subject to the detail of materials and construction, the recladding of the extended building should significantly improve its external appearance creating a cohesive and contemporary form. This would have a positive impact on local views of the site including from the south along Bridge Street under the A64M, and also in longer distance views from the north on Regent Street; from the east along the A64, and from St Peter's Street to the south. In doing so the setting of listed buildings, such as Crispin House to the west would also be preserved.

7.2.5 Do Members consider that the proposed alterations and extensions, subject to detailed design, are likely to have an acceptable impact upon the appearance of the building and its integration into the wider townscape?

7.3 Landscape and open space

7.3.1 The original site was largely enclosed by buildings constructed up to the back edge of the footway. Those buildings along the Bridge Street boundary although unlisted, were considered to have some visual interest and provided a visual termination to the approach to the site from Trafalgar Street. The appearance of the boundary wall fronting Regent Street is softened by the presence of some tree planting immediately behind it.

7.3.2 The current proposals identify a surface car parking area between the hotel and Gower Street. A soft landscaping strip including tree planting is identified abutting the Bridge Street and Gower Street boundaries, varying in depth from 2.5 metres on the Bridge Street boundary to 13 metres on Gower Street. Additionally, areas of planting are intended to be provided within the car park and in the pedestrian space to the north side of the hotel. This landscaping would help to assimilate the car parking and related hard-surfacing into the area albeit that proposed on the western periphery of the site is considered too narrow to provide an effective boundary. The applicant indicates that the landscaping needs to be read as an interim solution.

7.3.3 The current proposals cover an area over 0.5 hectares such that, in accordance with Policy G5 of the Core Strategy, a minimum of 20% of the total site area should be provided as open space. No open space is currently identified as part of the scheme. At the same time no information is provided regarding the use of the eastern third of the site prior to the development of any later phases of the site. Given that there is no certainty as to when these later phases may come forward the eastern third of the site would present a suitable opportunity for the provision of open space to both accord with policy and also to provide an appropriate visual appearance to the site when viewed from Regent Street. The applicant states that the open space would only be provided for a limited period of time before it would have to be removed for later phases of the development. However, it is considered that open space requirements for the wider site should be reviewed as proposals for the later phases of development come forward.

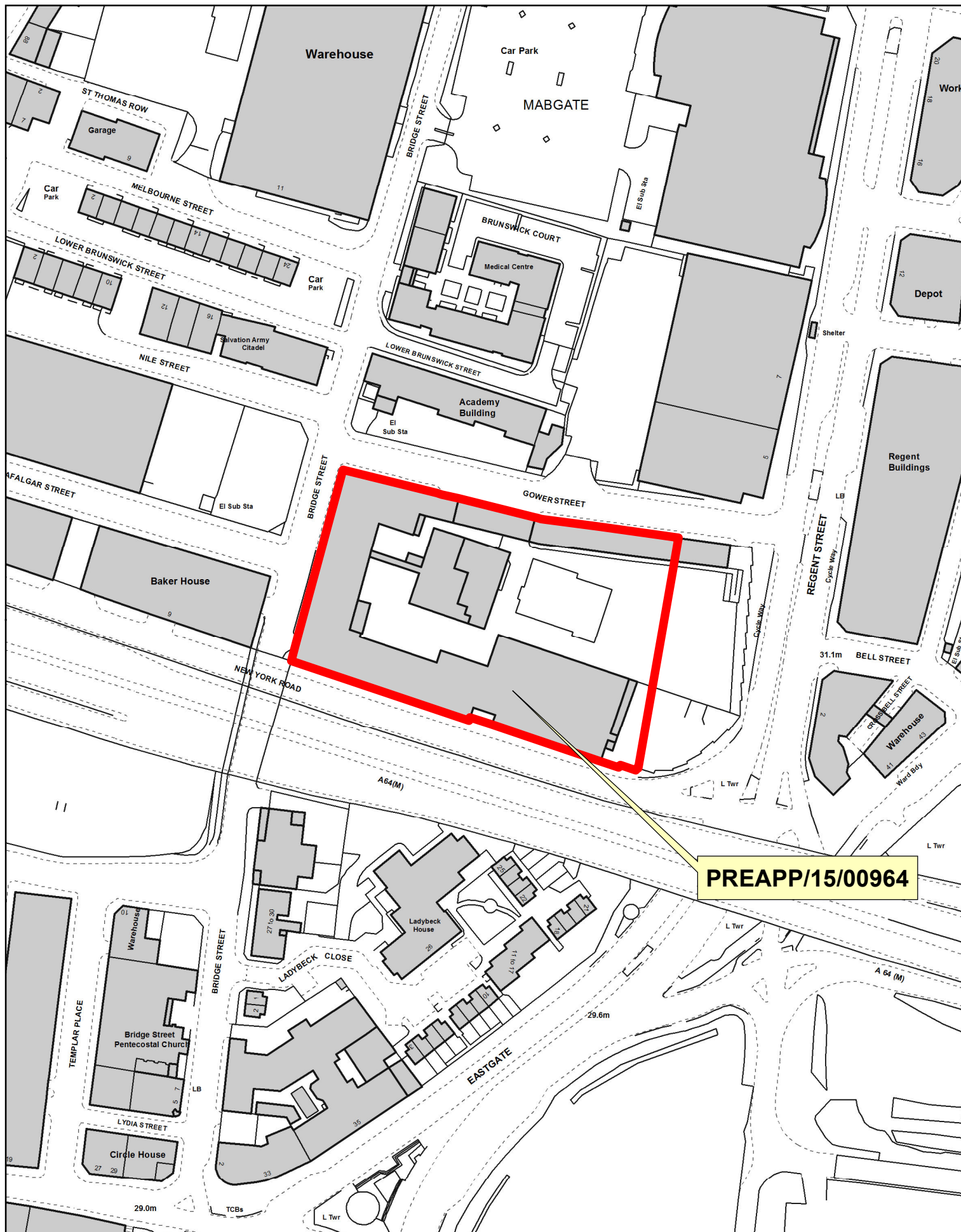
7.3.4 Do Members consider that the proposals for soft landscaping of the site need to be supplemented and that the eastern third of the site should be laid out as open space in advance of any future phases of development?

7.4 Transport and connectivity

7.4.1 The site is located in a sustainable location close to the many amenities offered by the City Centre. Highways have no objection in principle to the proposed use and the general arrangement of parking, coach parking and servicing facilities is sensible.

- 7.4.2 Some improvements will be required along Gower Street to construct the vehicular access and it will also be necessary to relocate some pay and display spaces to maintain visibility at the new access location.
- 7.4.3 The existing pedestrian connections with the City Centre are far from ideal. The route along Bridge Street is hampered by an old vehicular access and the steep gradient of the neighbouring footway. This access will become redundant and, consequently, the footway needs to be reconstructed to a much improved profile to enable its' much easier use.
- 7.4.4 It is considered that the pedestrian route along Bridge Street and Regent Street beneath the Inner Ring Road over-bridge is poor. This will be an important pedestrian route to the development from the City and should be improved as part of the development.
- 7.4.5 Do Members agree that the pedestrian connections to and from the City Centre need to be improved as part of this phase of development?**
- 7.5 The applicant is keen to commence the development in July / August 2016 and a planning application is to be submitted in the near future.
- 7.5.1 Subject to the issues above being resolved and no other significant issues arising do Members agree that, when submitted, the planning application for the hotel can be determined on a delegated basis?**
- 7.6 Future phases
- 7.6.1 Whilst the current proposals for a hotel could be developed independently the applicant has commenced preliminary discussions regarding the potential future development of the site. Some of these details may have been displayed to Members as part of the presentation. The key differences from the approved scheme involve the addition of a further tower in the south-east corner of the site and the retention of the tower and podium which are the subject of the current pre-application proposals; the re-ordering of the towers with the highest and longest tower alongside Regent Street; the removal of a ground level pedestrian route and public realm across the site; the relocation of proposed basement car parking into above ground parking decks largely contained in a podium with an active frontage containing cafes and restaurants; and the removal of proposals for retail warehousing and leisure uses. Recognising the extant planning permission for development of the site some of the key issues to consider relate to the scale and density of the proposed development; the arrangement of buildings and spaces around the site including both their inter-relationship and also their juxtaposition with surrounding buildings; the provision of public realm and public routes; and proposals for servicing the site.
- 7.6.2 Whereas proposals for future phases will be presented to City Plans Panel at a later date do Members have any initial observations regarding the emerging masterplan for the site?**
- 7.7 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and the presentation, and are invited to provide feedback on the issues outlined below:
- **Do Members consider that the proposed use is acceptable in principle (7.1.3)?**

- Do Members consider that the proposed alterations and extensions, subject to detailed design, are likely to have an acceptable impact upon the appearance of the building and its integration into the wider townscape (7.2.5)?
- Do Members consider that the proposals for soft landscaping of the site need to be supplemented and that the eastern third of the site should be laid out as open space in advance of any future phases of development (7.3.4)?
- Do Members agree that the pedestrian connections to and from the City Centre need to be improved as part of this phase of development (7.4.5)?
- Subject to the issues above being resolved and no other significant issues arising do Members agree that, when submitted, the planning application for the hotel can be determined on a delegated basis (7.5.1)?
- Whereas proposals for future phases will be presented to City Plans Panel at a later date do Members have any initial observations regarding the emerging masterplan for the site (7.6.2)?



CITY PLANS PANEL

© Crown copyright and database rights 2016 Ordnance Survey 100019567

PRODUCED BY CITY DEVELOPMENT, GIS MAPPING & DATA TEAM, LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

SCALE : 1/1500

