



## Report of the Chief Planning Officer

### *CITY PLANS PANEL*

Date: 7th July 2016

**Subject: PREAPP/16/00154 - Pre-application presentation for the remodeling of the former Majestic Cinema/Nightclub to create a 6 story office building with ground floor and basement commercial B1/A1/A3/A4/D2 uses. Creation of office floors behind retained outer walls and new glazed elevation to roof top addition, City Sq .**

**Applicant: Rushbond Plc**

#### 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 the progress with the scheme to refurbish/redevelop the Grade II listed Majestic cinema/nightclub in City Sq. Members will be aware that the building was seriously damaged by fire nearly 2 years ago and this has clearly had an impact on the proposal. Given the prominent nature of the building it was considered appropriate to bring it before Members for a pre-application presentation. Members will be asked to comment on the emerging scheme.

## 2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

2.1 The Majestic is situated at the junction of Wellington Street and Quebec Street, directly opposite the Leeds Train Station's North Concourse entrance in City Sq and is within the City Centre Conservation Area. The site is located on a prominent

corner and has three principal elevations: a curved entrance façade which faces onto City Square and two façades to the north on Quebec Street and Wellington Street to the south. Following the fire in 2014, the external fabric of the building remains relatively intact. This contrasts significantly with the loss of the roof and a significant part of the building's interior.

- 2.2 Within the context of City Square the scale of the Majestic is relatively modest with the exception of the Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel to the east. The former General Post Office building, No 1 City Square and the Queens Hotel are all of larger scale and mass, whilst Exchange House to the east is a refurbished tower structure with a two storey lower plinth. The immediate neighbour to the Majestic on Quebec Street is Quebec's Hotel. This building presents a five storey ornate gabled façade adjacent to the Majestic's three storeys. On Wellington St the neighbour is Queens House which is four and a half storeys on the common boundary.

### **3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The proposal is for a primarily office lead scheme of approximately 6,000 sqm floor space with ground and lower ground floor levels capable of accommodating Class B1/A1/A3/A4/D2 Uses.
- 3.2 The scheme design treats the existing building's façade as a robust, heavyweight plinth from which a more delicate glazed structure is proposed to emerge. The scale of this has been designed to respond to the heights of the 2 neighbouring buildings and the building's place in City Sq as one of the lower building heights. The inclusion of a new high level colonnade, standing forward of the main new glazed envelope, references both the plinth and the adjoining building's mass. A second layer of metal fins is proposed in front of the upper floor glazing which acts as a *brise soleil* and a lightweight contrast to the plinth. This has been designed to provide visual continuity between the existing lower floors and the additional upper floors.
- 3.3 The new glazed roof top addition follows the curve of the front of the building and requires the removal of a remaining section of original walling. New windows are being introduced in the original façade to allow natural light into the new office floorspace. These have been designed to be respectful of the detailing of the original building. This detail will be explained in the presentation by the project architect.
- 3.4 The Majestic has a very distinctive plan form which reflects its former auditorium use and circular rear light-well known as the 'Palm Court'. The evolving scheme design reinterprets these key features through a fan shaped core at the heart of the scheme and light-well serving the deeper plan office spaces to the rear, on the site of the original Palm Court. Due to the increase in height of the building this Palm Court light-well would also be increased in height by 3 storeys in order for it to connect to all levels of the building. The reception area of the proposal references the original cinema screen position within the proscenium arch and incorporates this in to a dramatic 3 storey high entrance void.

### **4.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS**

- 4.1 Officers have had a number of meetings with the project architects which commenced in March this year. These have dealt principally with the internal and external treatment of the building and the justification for removal of interior features.

## **5.0 PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

### **5.1 Ward Members Response**

Cllr Nash and Cllr Iqbal have indicated their support for the scheme.

### **5.2 Historic England**

The applicant has consulted Historic England (HE). At the time of writing this report HE's initial comments are that the previous alterations to the building and the destruction caused by the fire have had an impact on the significance of the building. When taken in isolation, and considering the previous changes that have occurred within the building, they consider that the internal demolition would be harmful, but not substantially harmful, to the current significance of the building. This harm will have to be robustly justified as part of any application for listed building consent.

HE have indicated that the proposal has the following positive elements:

- Impressive architectural response to the history and significance of the building which are of high quality in their own right
- The Palm Court reinterpretation is particularly strong and could be a form of mitigation or benefit to be weighed against the loss of the original fabric
- Welcome the holistic approach to all aspects of the scheme including interior details and this would reintroduce some of the lost 'glamour' and excitement that the building held for people in its heyday.

HE will provide their pre-application advice to the applicant. If this is received prior to Panel then Members can be updated verbally.

### **5.3 Highways Services**

This is a highly sustainable location. Understand it is not possible to provide vehicle parking on site. Cycle parking will be required. Servicing the unit from the loading bays on the public highway on both Quebec St and Wellington St, is acceptable. A Transport Statement and a Travel Plan should be provided in support of any future application.

### **5.4 Flood Risk Management**

The site is in Flood Zone 1 and there have been no records of previous flooding problems. The overall surface water drainage of the site would be relatively unchanged although Sustainable Drainage Systems, e.g. rainwater harvesting, should be considered.

## **6.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

### **6.1 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. Now that the Core Strategy has been adopted, this can now be given full weight as part of the statutory Development Plan for Leeds. For the purposes of decision making, the Development Plan for Leeds currently comprises the following documents:

1. The Leeds Core Strategy (Adopted November 2014)
2. Saved UDP Policies (2006), included as Appendix 1 of the Core Strategy

3. The Natural Resources & Waste Local Plan (NRWLP, Adopted January 2013)
4. Any Neighbourhood Plan, once Adopted

These development plan policies are supplemented 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.

## **6.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF includes policy guidance on sustainable development, economic growth, transport, design, and climate change. 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 of the NPPF states 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 that may be given to them.

The NPPF advocates a presumption in favour of sustainable development and a 'centres first' approach to main town centre uses such as offices. The NPPF also promotes economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, when applied at a local level, this supports Leeds City Centre's role as the economic driver of the Yorkshire region.

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;
- Responding to local character and history;
- Reflecting the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- Creating safe and accessible environments; and
- Requiring development to be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. In particular paragraph 131: In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes policies relating to heritage assets and states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Paragraph 134 would be relevant in determining any application. This states that: "where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use." Retrospective and proposed demolitions within Conservation Areas would be subject to Paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

### **6.3 Core Strategy**

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. The most relevant policies to the Majestic proposal are set out in the paragraphs below:

Spatial Policy 1 sets out the broad spatial framework for the location and scale of development. This policy prioritizes the redevelopment of previously developed land within the Main Urban Area, in a way that respects and enhances the local character and identity of places and neighbourhoods. New office facilities should be prioritised in the City Centre, maximising the opportunities that derive from the existing services and high levels of accessibility.

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:

- promoting the City Centre's role as the regional capital of major new office and culture development
- making the City Centre the main focus for office development in the District
- comprehensively planning the redevelopment and re-use of vacant and underused sites for mixed use development

Spatial Policy 8 supports a competitive local economy through provision of sufficient supply of buildings to match employment needs for B Class Uses and developing the City Centre as the core location for new office employment.

Spatial Policy 9 seeks to provide a minimum of 706,250 sqm of office floorspace in the District.

Core Strategy Policy CC1 outlines the planned growth within the City Centre for at least 355,000 sqm of office floorspace. This will be achieved favouring locations with the best public transport accessibility. All other town centre uses will be supported within the City Centre boundary provided the use does not negatively impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses and that the proposal is in accordance with all other Core Strategy policies.

Policy EC2 states the focus for most office development will be within and/or edge of the City Centre and designated Town and Local Centres.

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 enhancing existing landscapes and spaces. Proposals will be supported which protect and enhance existing historic assets.

Policy P11 states the historic environment will be conserved and enhanced. Where appropriate the significance of assets, impact of proposals and mitigation measures will be required to be considered through a Heritage Statement. Innovative and sustainable construction which integrates with and enhances the historic environment will be encouraged

Policy P12 requires the quality, character and biodiversity of Leeds' townscapes, including their historical and cultural significance, to be conserved and enhanced.

Policies T1 and T2 identify transport management and accessibility requirements for new development.

Policies EN1 and EN2 set out the sustainable construction and on-going sustainability measures for new development. In this case BREEAM 'Excellent' is required. Policy EN1 requires development over 1,000sqm to reduce predicted carbon dioxide emissions to zero and provide a minimum of 10% of the predicted energy needs of the development from low carbon energy.

Policy ID2, planning obligations and developer contributions requires the use of Section 106 planning obligations as part of a planning permission where necessary.

#### **6.4 Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 – Saved Policies**

The UDPR saved policies of relevance to this scheme are:

GP5 General Planning Considerations

N14 assumption in favour of retention of listed buildings

N17 all listed building features to be retained and repaired

N19 Conservation Area and new buildings

N20 resist removal of features which contribute to the character of a conservation area

BD2 Design of new buildings

BD4 All mechanical plant

BD6 Alterations and extensions

BC7 Building Conservation

#### **6.5 Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan**

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. There are no policies which are directly relevant to these changes to a listed building.

#### **6.6 Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance includes:**

SPD Travel Plans

SPD Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction

City Centre Urban Design Strategy

### **7.0 ISSUES**

#### **7.1 Use**

The owner had marketed the original Majestic and had not secured a tenant meaning that the building had been vacant for a number of years. It is accepted that the former entertainment uses associated with the building are not what is favoured

by the owner and that the most viable use is as offices. This building is within the designated City Centre where office uses are supported.

In addition, the introduction of ground floor and basement supporting uses is proposed and these will help to provide a vibrant and active appearance to the street. In respect of any retailing use the size of any unit would be the subject of further discussions and any policy requirements addressed in respect of retail impact. In principle, the proposal to provide a range of supporting uses at ground floor level is supported by officers.

**Do Members consider that the uses now proposed for the building are acceptable?**

## **7.2 External alterations**

This is a prominent building and is clearly in need of restoration. Much of the original interior has been lost. The case has been made for the use of the building as offices and this requires the total remodelling of the interior to create the necessary floor plates. These floors tie in to the windows which are being inserted in logical places which respect the detailing of the outer walls. The ground floor windows increase views in to the building and engage better with the street.

The new glazed upper stories are set back from the main building line and curve and step back and away to reduce mass and help to create a better profile when viewed from City Sq. The glazing sitting behind the metal frame is considered to add layering and detail. The size of the building and its detailing have been designed to relate well to both of its neighbours on Quebec St and Wellington St.

**Do Members consider that the external elevations are acceptable?**

## **7.3 Internal alterations**

What remains of the original interior has been largely lost, the most notable feature of the original interior was the dome. However, this has been totally destroyed by the fire. The circle was cut back when converted to the night club in the mid-nineties and therefore is not the original size anyway and in the current form now looks deep and bulky.

Most of the surviving elements are at the rear of the building in the area of the original Palm Court. After much work by the developer team it has been considered that the best approach is to carry out a rebuild of this area. The approach which has been adopted is to remove the Palm Court and the staircases and replace with elements which have used the original as inspiration but tailored to suit the new format which also increases the height. This also enables it to perform a useful circulatory function. It is acknowledged by officers and Historic England that this is a very high quality design. In the light of this, officers are minded to support this approach rather than insist on the faithful restoration of what remains of the building, which would compromise functionality and viability.

**Do Members consider that the approach to the internal spaces is an acceptable one?**

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

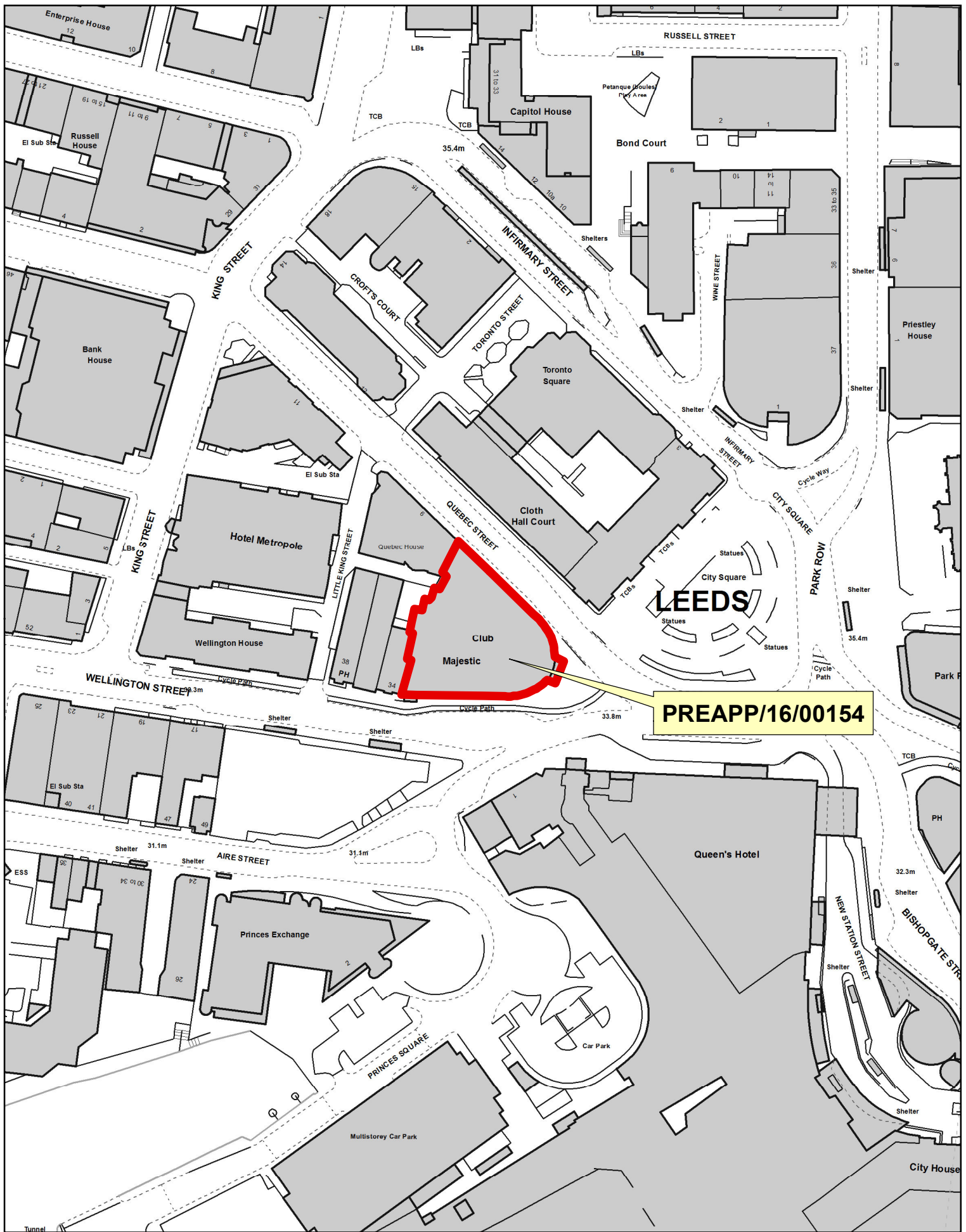
Members will be advised of the details of this scheme as they are emerging from the ongoing discussions between officers and the applicant and are asked to provide responses to the following:

- 1. Do Members consider that the uses now proposed for the building are acceptable?**
- 2. Do Members consider that the external elevations are acceptable?**
- 3. Do Members consider that the approach to the internal spaces is an acceptable one?**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Pre-application file: PREAPP/16/00154





# CITY PLANS PANEL



# GROUND FLOOR PLAN - MAJESTIC

