



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

27th OCTOBER 2016

Pre-application presentation of the proposed redevelopment of Hume House, Wade Lane, Merrion Way and Tower House Street, Leeds to form a 40 storey student accommodation building (PREAPP/16/00428)

Applicant – Knightsbridge Capital (Leeds) Ltd.

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 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 a new 40 storey tower on land currently occupied by Hume House, Wade Lane. The vision is to provide a landmark building for Leeds intended to enhance the quality of the evolving Arena Quarter and provide a significant addition to the skyline of the city.

1.2 The building, designed by Nick Brown Architects, is likely to comprise primarily student accommodation with commercial space at ground floor level.

2.0 Site and surroundings

2.1 The existing building is a part 2, part 5 storey office building sitting on top of a basement car park dating from the late 1960's. The site sits towards the eastern extreme of Woodhouse Ridge such that natural ground levels fall towards Mabgate to the east and the heart of the city centre to the south.

2.2 The site is located close to the junction of Merrion Way and Wade Lane to the north-east of the Merrion Centre. Tower House Street is a short street running north from Merrion Way along the western flank of the site. Arena Point (originally known as Tower House), a 19-storey (77m) office building, is situated on the west side of the street. There is a footway on the northern side of Hume House beyond which is the clv student accommodation building (formerly Opal 3) which is 26 storeys high (90m) at its maximum extent. The First Direct Arena is a large building to the north-west. Beyond the arena, Sky Plaza standing at the junction of Clay Pit Lane and the Inner Ring Road is the tallest building in the area (37 storeys / 106m). The scale of buildings generally reduces substantially with greater distance from the city centre although there are tower blocks beyond the Inner Ring Road in Little London to the north-east. Similarly, although to a lesser degree, the height of buildings beyond Wade Lane to the east reduces as natural ground levels fall.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 It is proposed to demolish the existing building and to construct a 40 storey (126 metre) tower in a similar position to that existing. The building would be likely to be primarily student accommodation, housing between 750 and 800 student rooms depending upon the mix of cluster rooms and studios brought forward. Approximately half of the ground floor (220sqm) would comprise commercial space and the remainder of that level together with the first and second floors would accommodate student amenities including reception area, dining area, lounge, laundry, library and cinema room. A gym is identified at level 39 whilst level 40 would primarily house plant.

3.2 A basement, accessed from Tower House Street, would house bike and bin stores and car parking. The base of the tower is distinct from the body of the building above. The first two levels above ground would have an irregular hexagonal footprint, 19.4 metres at its widest point and 38 metres across its longest dimension. The northern elevation would be parallel to the clv student tower, located approximately 6.7 metres to the north. There would be no windows in this elevation. The southern end would be slightly oblique, projecting 4.5 metres beyond Arena Point (originally Tower House) to the west. This west elevation would be slightly cranked, 12.6 metres from Arena Point across Tower House Street at its closest point. The eastern elevation would be more noticeably cranked with its south-eastern facet parallel to Wade Lane.

3.3 Levels 2-34 would share a common footplate. The western elevations would oversail the ground and first floor typically by 1 metre and 3.5 metres towards the north-west corner. The south-eastern elevation would extrude 7 metres further north than the levels below then return back at an acute angle to the eastern elevation.

3.4 The top 6 floors of the building would gradually become more slender than the levels below. Levels 35-38 would step back to the arrangement at the two lowest ground levels. Levels 39-40 would have a slimmer footplate to levels 35-38 albeit sharing a common north-south dimension.

3.5 The variation in footplates helps to define the base, middle and top of the building. The ground and first floor would be set back behind slender columns supporting and accentuating the upper layers. These levels would be taller than the levels above helping to create a clear base and also setting a rhythm of scale for the levels above. As such, the principal frame to the facades from level 2 upwards would repeat every 3 storeys. This device continues to the top of the building where the top 6 floors step back every 3 storeys.

- 3.6 Within the frame each storey would be highlighted by recessed spandrel panels and floor to ceiling openings reflecting a human scale. A variety of different options for materials have been tested. Subject to costing it is presently intended that the main frame would be clad in Yorkshire Gritstone with insulated glazed infill panels used for the inset cladding.
- 3.7 The basement of the building would accommodate 12 car parking spaces, including disabled parking, motorcycle parking and cycle parking, and bin store accessed by either a car lift or hoist. A loading bay is proposed on the east side of Tower House Street.
- 3.8 The applicant states that the development would create the opportunity to significantly enhance the public realm in the area. Indicative proposals have been submitted which show a new hard-surfaced area around the periphery of the building containing street trees and the potential for pedestrian priority zones in Merrion Way and Wade Lane.

4.0 Relevant planning history

- 4.1 The existing building is little changed since its construction in the late 1960's. The clv student building (formerly Opal 3) was constructed on the site of the Little Londoner public house in 2007. The arena was completed in summer 2013.

5.0 Consultation responses

- 5.1 LCC Highways – Cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the parking SPD. The proposals suggest that Merrion Way and Lowell Park Road could be altered to become 'Pedestrian Priority Zones', although there is no information about how this would be achieved. 3 metre wide footways should be provided. Any proposals for Merrion Way would need to extend further along to encompass Merrion centre entrances, and would need to take account of other proposed developments and access needs. Servicing proposals appear to conflict, adversely affecting existing disabled car parking bays and resulting in vehicles waiting in the highway to enter the site. Provision for student drop-off and pick up also needs to be provided. Wind studies would need to demonstrate that the development would not result in danger to road users.
- 5.2 LCC Flood Risk Management (Drainage) – The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is not shown to be at risk of flooding from surface water. A Foul and Surface Water Drainage Strategy should be provided for the site and Yorkshire Water should be consulted at an early stage as such a large building will have the potential to generate a significant foul water discharge rate. The developer should look at options for reducing surface water runoff.
- Given that the adjacent public sewers are all designed for combined water a 30% reduction in total foul and surface water flows off-site, compared with the existing situation should be provided. It is likely that a storage tank and pumping station will be required in the basement of the building.
- 5.3 LCC Contaminated Land Team – the proposed development is sensitive. A minimum of a Phase I Desk Study is required.

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**

6.2.1 Relevant Core Strategy policies include:

Spatial Policy 1 prioritises 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.

Policy CC1(b) states that residential development will be encouraged within the City Centre and (c) that university facilities will be retained in the City Centre.

Policy H6B refers to proposals for purpose-built student accommodation. Development will be controlled to take the pressure off the need to use private housing; to avoid the loss of existing housing suitable for families; to avoid excessive concentrations of student accommodation; to avoid locations that would lead to detrimental impacts on residential amenity; and to provide satisfactory internal living accommodation for the students.

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 and its 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.

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.

6.3 **Natural Resources & Waste DPD 2013**

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, land contamination and tree replacement are relevant to this proposal.

6.4 **Saved Unitary Development Plan Review policies (UDPR)**

6.4.1 Relevant Saved Policies include:

GP5 - All relevant planning considerations to be resolved.

N19 states that all new buildings within or within the setting of Conservation Areas should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

BD2 states that new buildings should complement and enhance existing skylines, vistas and landmarks.

BD5 requires new buildings to consider both their own amenity and that of their surroundings including usable space, privacy and satisfactory daylight and sunlight.

6.5 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF recognises the presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 14). 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.

Section 7 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. 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;
- 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 **Supplementary guidance**

Tall Buildings SPD

Travel Plans SPD

Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

City Centre Urban Design Strategy SPG

Parking SPD

6.7 **Other material considerations**

- 6.7.1 The Leeds Standard was adopted by the Council's Executive Board on 17th September 2014 to ensure excellent quality in the delivery of new council homes. Through its actions the Council can also seek to influence quality in the private sector. Those aspects of the Standard concerned with design quality will be addressed through better and more consistent application of the Council's Neighbourhoods for Living guidance. The standard closely reflects the Government's Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard which seek to promote a good standard of internal amenity for all housing types and

tenures. Whilst neither of these documents has been adopted as formal planning policy and only limited weight can be attached to them, given their evidence base in determining the minimum space requirements, they are currently used to help inform decisions on the acceptability of development proposals.

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 site is located within the designated City Centre. Core Strategy Policy CC1(b) encourages residential development in city centre locations providing that the development does not prejudice the functions of the City Centre and that it provides a reasonable level of amenity for occupiers.

7.1.2 Policy H6B relates specifically to the provision of student housing. The policy was adopted following the Core Strategy Inspector's rejection of the Council's position that the policy should include a test for need when considering applications for new student housing. The proposal is therefore considered against the criteria set out within policy H6B within the adopted Core Strategy:

(i) *To help extend the supply of student accommodation taking pressure off the need for private housing to be used.*

The development of 750-800 student bedspaces would help to take pressure off the need to use private housing for student accommodation.

(ii) *To avoid the loss of existing housing suitable for family accommodation.*

The site currently accommodates a relatively small office building. The development would therefore meet the objective.

(iii) *To avoid excessive concentrations of student accommodation which would undermine the balance and wellbeing of communities.*

The proposed development involves 750-800 student bedspaces. The CLV (former Opal 3) student building is located immediately to the north of the site and contains approximately 560 bedspaces. There are also proposals for a 376 studios development at St Albans / Belgrave Gardens approximately 100m to the south-east (PREAPP/16/00093). Further west, beyond Clay Pit Lane, the Plaza and Sky Plaza developments contain in the region of 650 student bedspaces. Consequently, if all proposed developments were to be constructed, there would be approximately 2800 student bedspaces in close proximity to the arena.

In addition to the arena the area supports a mix of uses, including offices and a range of commercial uses, together with pockets of residential accommodation located primarily to the east side of Wade Lane / Lovell Park Road. However, it is not considered that these and other existing residents in the city centre would be adversely affected by student accommodation in the proposed location given the way in which the area is currently used. Similarly, it is not considered that the number of students proposed would result in an excessive concentration of students within the context of a busy, mixed use, city centre environment. Finally, routes from the development towards both the university campuses and the heart of the city

centre would typically be through commercial areas such that residential communities would be unlikely to be adversely affected by the student use.

(iv) *To avoid locations which are not easily accessible to the universities.*

The site is located towards the north-eastern edge of the city centre and is well-placed with regard to access to both the University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University. Potential improvements to the public realm around the site, including Merrion Way, could improve accessibility further.

(v) *To provide satisfactory living accommodation.*

The internal arrangement of the building has yet to be fixed such that this matter, including room sizes and dedicated student facilities, will be reviewed in more detail at a later date. However, it is clear that the student rooms facing east and south would benefit from an open outlook with good daylighting. Those rooms facing west up to level 25 would not experience such good outlooks or daylighting due to the juxtaposition with Arena Point. However, a distance of 12.5m is achieved at the closest point between the buildings which is not considered unacceptable in respect of daylighting and outlook for the student rooms. Rooms above this level would enjoy uninterrupted views across the top of Arena Point. No rooms would face north.

7.1.2 Do Members consider that the proposed development is acceptable in principle?

7.2 Townscape considerations

7.2.1 The existing building and its curtilage is not considered to positively contribute to the character of the area. Therefore, the demolition and redevelopment of the site is acceptable in principle. Any new development must provide good design that is appropriate to its location, scale and function (Core Strategy Policy P10). Part (i) of the policy states that the size, scale, design and layout should be appropriate to its context and the development should protect and enhance skylines and views (ii). These policies accord with guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework which requires that development establishes a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit; to respond to local character and history; and to reflect the identity of local surroundings.

7.2.2 The Tall Buildings Design Guide, which pre-dated the construction of the arena but recognised the recent Sky Plaza and CLV (Opal 3) towers, identified that there could be the opportunity for a cluster of tall buildings in the area to the north of the Merrion Centre which includes the site. This “opportunity” overlaps with a potential string of tall buildings following the Inner Ring Road and also the potential for tall buildings to announce a northern gateway to the city centre.

7.2.3 The applicant has tested options ranging from a building the height of Arena Point (77m) up to a 155m high structure. It is suggested that the smaller of the options (a 22 storey structure (77m)) would produce a poor slenderness ratio which would be compromised by its context. Similarly, the architect argues that a 30 storey (90m) building, equivalent in height to the top of the clv tower, would have a poor-average slenderness ratio. It is suggested that a 40 storey building (126m) enables the building to become a dominant element within the cluster with elegant elevations and to achieve a successful slenderness ratio. Above 126m the economies of scale

diminish rapidly due to the requirements for additional lifts and services until a height of 155m is achieved. Consequently, a 126m (40 storey) building is proposed in order to have a transformative effect upon the site and the context.

- 7.2.4 Given the building's scale and the topography of the city it would typically be seen in longer distance city views as the taller element of a cluster of tall buildings grouped around the arena. This would be apparent in views such as those from Scott Hall Road / Scott Hall playing fields and along York Road. Further afield, the long elevation of the building would be clearly visible from Temple Newsam but its narrower profile would be seen in the context of the wider city centre when viewed from the south.
- 7.2.5 In local views along Merrion Way from Queen Square Conservation Area and Clay Pit Lane past the arena the building would step up from the scale of the Yorkshire Bank, the arena and Arena Point. However, from the conservation area, Merrion House would remain the dominant element. The lower scale of existing buildings along Lovell Park Road is such that the building would appear as a significant skyline feature although much of the mass would be situated behind the clv tower.
- 7.2.6 The building would be clearly visible in views along Mark Lane immediately to the south of St John's Church. The applicant suggests that the church tower would remain as the dominant element although the relationship, albeit a passing one, is considered unfortunate.
- 7.2.7 The gable end of the clv tower is clearly visible in views north up Briggate albeit the building is slightly off the axial view. The views of the existing clv tower diminish approaching the Headrow due to the intervening former Lewis's building. The proposed building would be located immediately to the south-west of the clv tower such that it would be situated slightly further to left of the axial view north up Briggate. However, the proposed building would obscure much of the view of the clv tower, particularly from the west side of Briggate. The orientation and extruded form of the building is such that the depth of the building would be far more apparent than that of the clv tower. Being 36m (40%) taller than the clv tower and forward of it, the new building would appear far more dominant when viewed up Briggate than the existing clv tower. The Tall Buildings Design Guide states that the view south down Briggate is one of the key views in the city that should be protected and that the introduction of tall buildings within the sky background is likely to have a negative impact upon the distinctive street scale and view. However, the guide is silent on the importance of the view north along Briggate.
- 7.2.8 The view across Park Square towards the Town Hall is one of the key views in the city centre. The top 10 storeys of the building would be visible from the south-west corner of the square, albeit set away from the Town Hall tower and in the background of chimneys to buildings within Park Square.
- 7.2.9 **Do Members consider that the scale of the proposed new building and its relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable?**
- 7.2.10 The form of the building is partially a response to the constraints of the site in terms of the alignment of neighbouring highways and the position of neighbouring tall buildings. The building is also heavily influenced by the desire to obscure views of the clv tower from Briggate as far as possible. Additionally, the set-backs at the top 6 levels of the building are intended to create a strong top to the building and to increase its verticality. More fundamentally, the scale of the building is intended to

create a step change in scale and to deliver a new, positive element in the skyline of the city.

- 7.2.11 The variation in footplates, together with differing functions and architecture, helps to define the base, middle and top of the building. The ground and first floor would be set back behind slender columns supporting and accentuating the upper layers. These levels would be taller than the levels above helping to create a clear base and also setting a rhythm of scale for the levels above. The principal frame to the facades from level 2 upwards would repeat every 3 storeys. This device continues to the top of the building which becomes more slender as the top 6 floors step back every 3 storeys.
- 7.2.12 Within the frame each storey would be highlighted by recessed spandrel panels and floor to ceiling openings reflecting a human scale. A variety of different options for materials have been tested. Subject to costing it is presently intended that the main frame would be clad in Yorkshire Gritstone with insulated glazed infill panels used for the inset cladding.
- 7.2.13 **Do Members have any comments regarding the emerging architectural approach?**

7.3 Impact on neighbouring properties

- 7.3.1 Hume House is a part two and part five storey building constructed at a similar time to Arena Point (Tower House). The clv tower was constructed 6-7 metres to the north, with living room and bedroom windows located directly facing the gable end of Hume House, albeit given the relative heights only 3 levels in the south-west corner are affected. The northern elevation of the proposed building would be situated an almost identical distance from the clv building to that existing. This elevation would not contain any windows so no issues of overlooking would arise. Further, the width of the new gable is not dissimilar to that of the existing building at its closest point such that its tapered profile helps to mitigate the impact of the much taller proposed building upon the living conditions of occupiers of the clv building. Any issues involving Right to Light are not material planning considerations.
- 7.3.2 Arena Point is situated on the west side of Tower House Street 11-17m from Hume House. The proposed building would be a metre further away from Arena Point at its closest dimension although the main mass of the building would vary between 12.5-15m from Arena Point. The west elevation of the proposed building would contain a number of windows but it is noted that Arena point is presently occupied as offices.
- 7.3.3 The Q One (previously Brunswick Point) building across Wade Lane was converted to residential accommodation earlier this year. The buildings would be a minimum of 25m apart at the closest point. Overlooking is not considered to be an issue at this distance although the new building to the north west could potentially result in a small amount of overshadowing.
- 7.3.4 The Merrion Centre is located to the south-west of the building beyond Merrion Way. Given the use of the building, the distances involved and the orientation of the proposed tower to the Merrion Centre there is unlikely to be any adverse impact.
- 7.3.5 **Do Members consider that the proposed building would have an acceptable relationship with neighbouring properties.**

7.4 Public realm and servicing

- 7.4.1 The site is heavily constrained by surrounding highways which serve uses including the arena, the clv tower, offices in Arena Point and the wide range of uses within the Merrion Centre. Initial details identify a proposed loading bay on Tower House Street together with an access point to a car lift and hoist into the basement servicing area. Further details are required to illustrate in detail how these arrangements would work without unduly affecting the operations of surrounding businesses or harming traffic or pedestrian safety.
- 7.4.2 The reduced footprint of the building at ground level helps to increase the visual width of the public realm. The remainder of the periphery of the building would be hard-surfaced with street trees located within the footway. The applicant also comments that the redevelopment of the site with a 40 storey building would enable the development to generate a value that would provide the opportunity to significantly enhance the public realm in the area. This could involve pedestrian priority zones in Merrion Way and Wade Lane. It is important that such a large building with a significant zone of influence is located in a suitably, high quality setting. Consequently, further details of what could be realised and how these works would integrate with other proposals within the Arena Quarter need to be produced.
- 7.4.3 **Do Members consider that the development should deliver improvements to the public realm in the area beyond the immediate periphery of the site?**

7.5 Wind

- 7.5.1 The intended height of the building is such that wind issues need to be considered in detail in the design of the development. The applicant is fully committed to undertake the necessary assessments and has appointed WSP as wind engineers to study the potential impacts. A phased approach has been identified that will involve the following processes: a desktop review; preliminary study using Computational Fluid Dynamics covering an area with a radius of 500m from the site; and finally Wind Tunnel testing. The studies will need to take into account the implications of any proposals for tall buildings that may come forward concurrently on the podium site to the west of Arena Point.

7.6 Conclusion

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

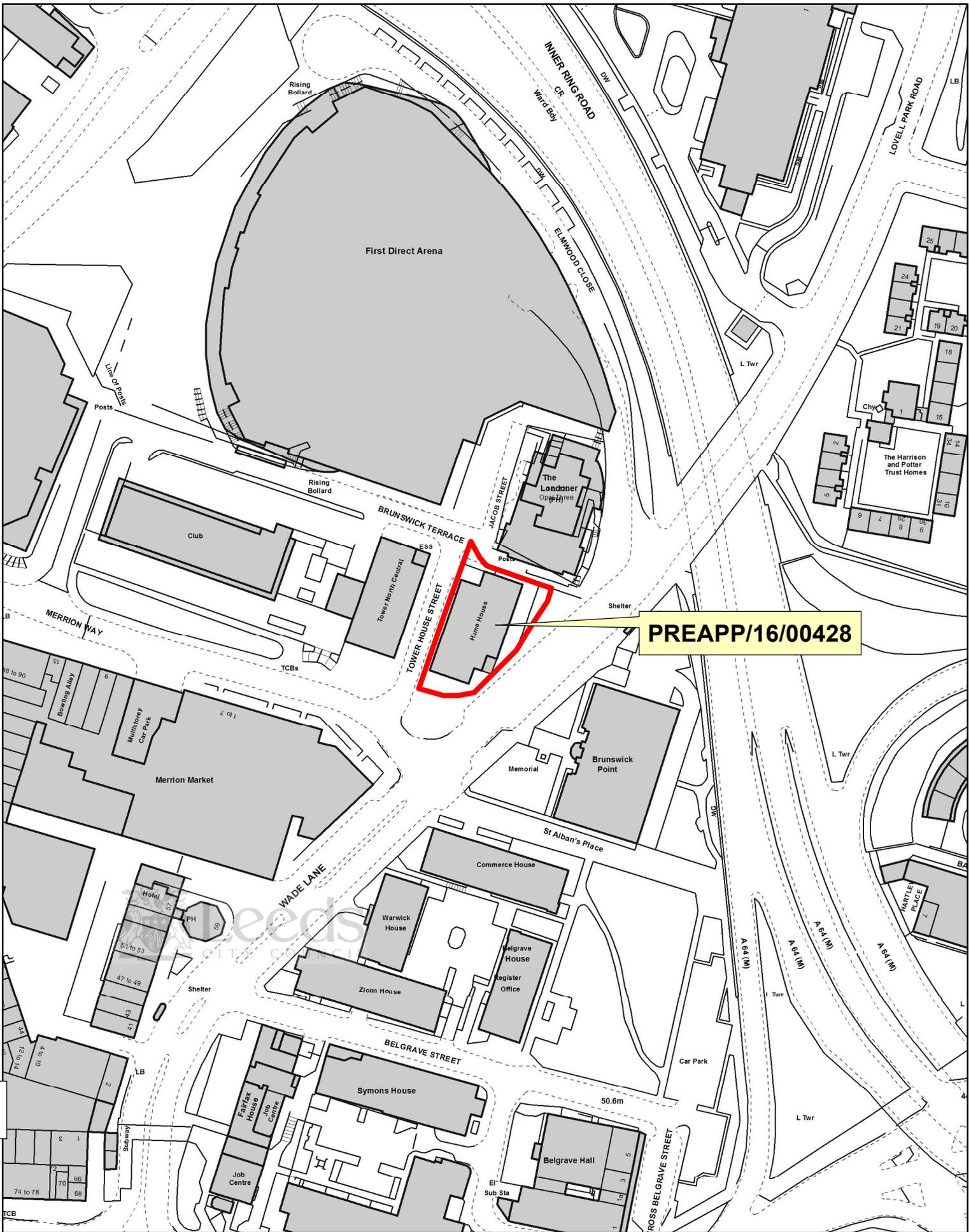
Do Members consider that the proposed development is acceptable in principle? (7.1.2)

Do Members consider that the scale of the proposed new building and its relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable? (7.2.9)

Do Members have any comments regarding the emerging architectural approach? (7.2.13)

Do Members consider that the proposed building would have an acceptable relationship with neighbouring properties? (7.3.5)

**Do Members consider that the development should deliver improvements to the public realm in the area beyond the immediate periphery of the site?
(7.4.3)**



PREAPP/16/00428

CITY PLANS PANEL



4.6 PROPOSED SITE PLAN

PROPOSED SITE LOCATION PLAN

Plot Area: 0.104 ha
0.257 acres

Key

-  Site Boundary
-  Proposed Development
-  Sun Path
-  Primary Aspect
-  Secondary Aspect
-  Vehicular Routes
-  Pedestrian Routes



4.29 ELEVATIONAL STUDIES

