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## Report of the Chief Planning Officer

### *CITY PLANS PANEL*

Date: 27 SEPTEMBER 2012

Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PREAPP/11/01185 - Proposed Undergraduate Library Building at the University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds.

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Hyde Park & Woodhouse

No

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

This scheme is brought to Plans 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 The University of Leeds have requested to present this scheme to Members for their consideration and comments. The proposal is for an undergraduate library (up to 6 storeys high) and associated landscaping.
- 1.2 The building is to be positioned on one of the 27 development proposals sites put forward by the University as part of their overall Strategic Development Framework (May 2008 Revision C) for the campus, which was presented to Members on 28 February 2008.

#### 2.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS

- 2.1 The proposal has been the subject of pre-application discussions between the Developers, their Architects and Local Authority Officers since November 2011. These discussions have focused on the proposed use of the site as an undergraduate's library, the massing, form and height of the development, the

historical context of the site and the relationship of the proposal to a number of neighbouring listed buildings, the loss of car parking on the site, details of the elevational design and materials, key views, pedestrian routes and connectivity through the site and wider campus, the sustainability credentials of the proposal, and the proposed hard and soft landscaping scheme.

### **3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:**

- 3.1 The Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDP) defines this location as being within the Education Quarter. The site has been in use for some years as a surface car park. There are landscaped edges to the site to its northern and southern ends with a small number of trees of varying maturity and species. On street car parking bays are also laid out along Hillary Place. A section of the proposed New Generation Transport route is proposed to run to the north of the site along Woodhouse Lane.
- 3.2 The site is accessed by vehicles from Hillary Place and the land falls across the site from Woodhouse Lane to Hillary Place. Pedestrian access is available from both the north and south of the site. To the north-west corner there is an unlisted former bank building which currently houses some of the University's Security facilities.
- 3.3 The site is set within the boundary of the Woodhouse Lane - University Precinct Conservation Area. In addition the existing car park is flanked by the Grade II Listed former Emmanuel Church and former Trinity St David's Church. In addition there are further Grade II Listed buildings facing the site to the south along Hillary Place and to the north along Blenheim Terrace. The nearby Parkinson Building is also a Grade II Listed building.

### **4.0 BRIEF POLICY BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and the Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and Humber 2008 are likely to be of relevance in considering this pre-application proposal
- 4.2 A wide range of Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDPR 2006) policies are likely to be applicable in the appraisal of the amended scheme. These would cover such matters as urban design, the heritage context in respect of the listed buildings and conservation area, transport, economy, urban regeneration, access, waste, archaeology and landscaping.
- 4.3 Further planning guidance is given in the Supplementary Planning Documents - The Leeds City Centre Urban Design Strategy (September 2000) and Tall Buildings Design Guide (April 2010).

### **5.0 PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 The University has stated that there is a requirement for them to provide a dedicated undergraduate's library to allow them to provide the modern learning facilities required by students. The proposal would allow the existing two libraries (Edward Boyle and Brotherton) to focus on special collections and postgraduate studies. Thus the University's aim is to create a trinity of libraries within 5 minutes walking distance of each other, which act as entry/welcome point into the campus.

- 5.2 The proposal would be for a contemporary library building housing designated areas including a reading room, book stack rooms, study areas, training rooms, staff offices, an internal bicycle store and an ancillary café space. The gross floor space would be in the region of 6,500 metres<sup>2</sup>.
- 5.3 The historical context of the site is a key element which has informed the design and layout of the proposal. The site is surrounded by Grade II Listed Buildings, including the former Emmanuel Church and former Trinity St David's Church, and is within the boundary of a conservation area. The relationship of the two former churches to each other and to the nearby listed Parkinson Building, and their detailed facades mean that close and distance views of how the scheme would integrate with these important building have been required.
- 5.4 The proposed library building has been designed to respond to these key views and to the sensitive context in which it would be sited. As such the massing is distributed such that building is stepped, rising from 2 storeys to a maximum of 6 storeys. This means that the areas of the building with the greater volume are positioned closer to Hillary Place, in the context of the campus, where a mixture of building types, designs and massing can be found, including larger scale new build schemes such as the nearby Ziff Welcome Building. The smaller scale elements of the proposal are therefore positioned towards the more sensitive Woodhouse Lane end of the site.
- 5.5 With regard to the design principles, the approach would be high quality and modern. The detailing of the design would reference, in a contemporary manner, the proposal's relationship with the historically and architecturally fine neighbouring buildings. The palette of materials would reflect calmness and strength, and be of a quality appropriate to a site within such a rich historical context.
- 5.6 The landscaping scheme would be a mix of hard and soft landscaped features with the principal aim being one of connection to the building. As such the landscaping concept will be looking to create space that visually and physically link with the functioning of the building as a library.
- 5.7 The proposal would involve the loss of the existing surface car parking on the site. In addition, there may also be need to reconfigure some of the on street parking spaces on the adjacent Hillary Place. The University's strategy for transportation was put before Members in February 2008, in their Transport Summary Statement which accompanies the Strategic Development Framework (May 2008 Revision C) for the campus.
- 5.8 The transport strategy aims at an overall reduction in the reliance on travel to and from the campus via car, and the encouragement of more sustainable means of transport. As such the strategy looks to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The strategy also seeks to rationalise the existing and future car parking provision and avoid any increases in car parking levels. However, to ensure that the development of the 27 proposals sites (which includes the proposed library site) does not result in an under provision of car parking, approval was granted for a 10 storey multi-storey car park housing 607 spaces, on 30 March 2010 (planning reference 09/03060/FU, on an area of the campus adjacent to the Inner Ring Road.

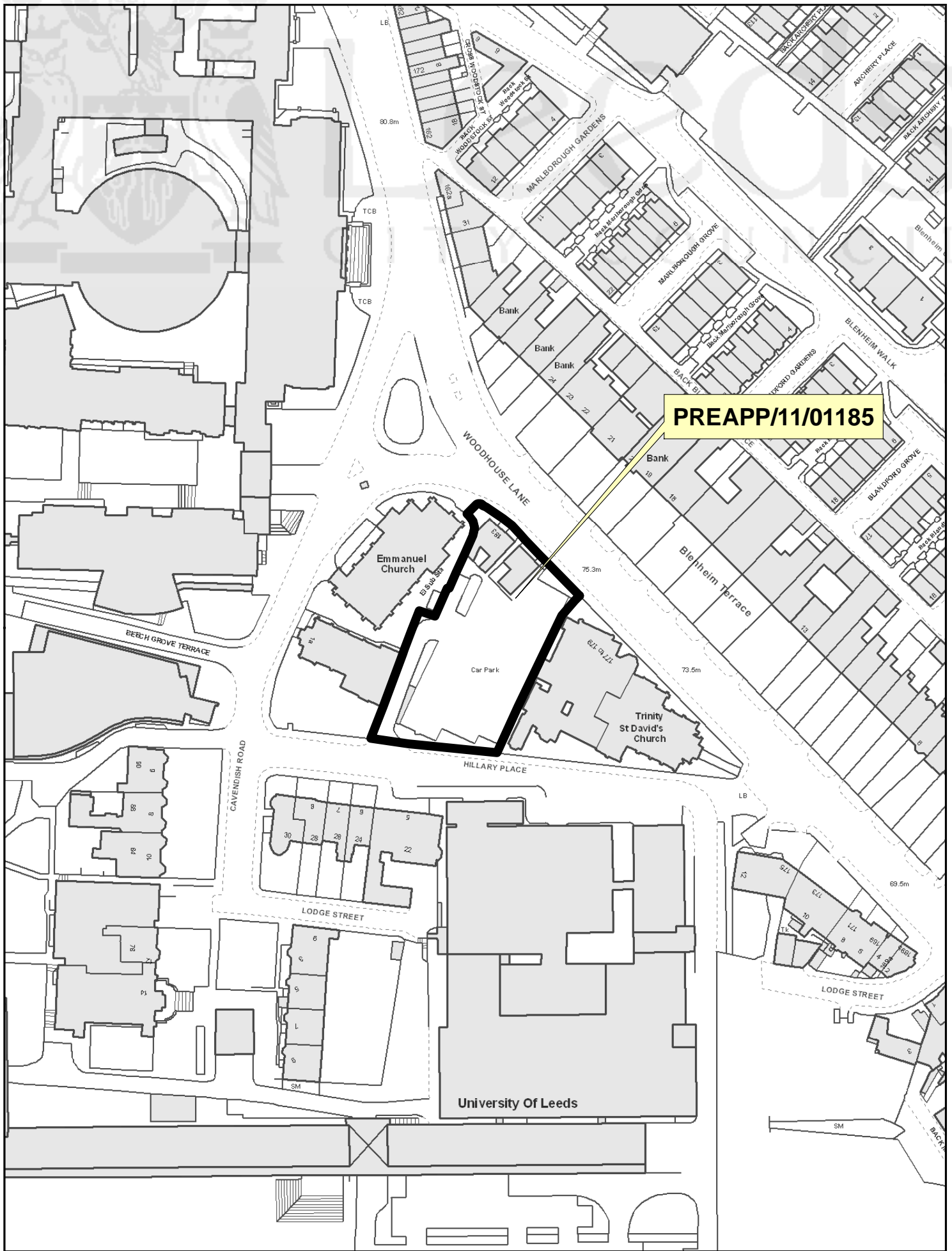
## **6.0 ISSUES**

Members are asked to consider the following matters:

1. Are the height, form and massing of the building acceptable?
2. Does the scheme respond well to the historical (particularly in respect of neighbouring listed buildings and the conservation area) and campus context?
3. Are the design and appearance principles of the scheme acceptable?
4. Is the removal of the unlisted former bank building acceptable?
5. Are the landscaping scheme proposals appropriate and acceptable?
6. Is the loss of car parking on site and the proposed mitigation for this acceptable?

**Background Papers:**

University of Leeds Strategic Development Framework (May 2008 Revision C)  
Strategic Development Framework - Transport Summary Statement (December 2007)  
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