



---

**Report of the Chief Planning Officer**

**CITY PLANS PANEL**

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> MAY 2013**

**Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION BUILDINGS AND NEW EXTERNAL SPACE ON LAND BETWEEN BELGRAVE STREET AND ST ALBAN'S PLACE, LEEDS (PREAPP/12/00494).**

---

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

City and Hunslet

No

**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.**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This presentation is intended to inform Members of the emerging proposals for new student accommodation and reconfigured external space on land between St Alban's Place and Belgrave Street in advance of a planning application later in the year.

**2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

2.1 The site comprises a soft landscaped space extending over 0.25 hectares and public pay and display parking (37 spaces). Pedestrian routes traverse and run along the periphery of the open space which rises from Cross Belgrave Street towards the north and west. The area accommodates 67 primarily semi-mature trees which make a significant contribution to the local treescape and positively contribute to the amenity of the area, including to views from New Briggate and from York Road. At the same time the close proximity of some of the trees, along with the mounded nature of the ground, reduce the usability and quality of the space. There is a footpath on the eastern edge of the site abutting the Inner Ring Road retaining wall which connects New Briggate with Wade Lane and thereafter the new pedestrian

route on the north side of the arena. The site provides panoramic views towards East Leeds and conversely the site is visible on approaches along York Road.

- 2.2 The surrounding area is predominantly in office use. Taller buildings, such as Brunswick Point, are situated at higher levels to the north and north-west. These include existing student accommodation in the 25 storey Opal 3 tower on Wade Lane. Belgrave House is one of four similar office buildings forming a courtyard constructed on the west edge of the public space. Towards the city centre to the south the scale of buildings reduces and Belgrave Hall and The Wrens accommodate food and drink uses. The south eastern fringe of the site is visible from, and forms part of, the New Briggate character area.

### **3.0 PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 Pre-application discussions regarding the current scheme commenced during 2012 although enquiries regarding the development of this area go back to 2008.

### **4.0 PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The current proposals identify 3 separate buildings ranging in height from 5 storeys at the southern end to the east of Cross Belgrave Street, up to 12 storeys in the north-east corner close to the eastern end of St Alban's Place. The buildings themselves step up in height towards the tallest building. The lowest buildings relate to the height of Belgrave Hall and the tallest building, in the north-east corner, is similar in height to Brunswick Point. Suggested materials comprise multi-red bricks with soldier course details and copper coloured metal cladding. Full-height double-glazed windows would be vertically proportioned and set in deep window reveals. Around 300 student bedrooms would be provided in a mix of cluster sizes. Ground level communal functions include a gym, laundry and bike store. It is also proposed to provide a retail unit and a café fronting the new square; and a bar/retail unit situated at the southern entrance to the development.
- 4.2 The two northern buildings would be arranged at right angles to form two sides of a new square in a similar position to, but including the northern and eastern edges of, the existing open space. The existing greenspace covers around 0.24 hectares whereas the new public space is around 60 per cent of this. To enable the development the majority of existing trees would be removed. A new soft landscaped space is proposed, allowing the opportunity for some new tree planting. The square, itself, would be configured to enable access for all people through it, together with access to the buildings. An area between the buildings and the Inner Ring Road would be landscaped for use by the student accommodation. The existing footpath alongside the Inner Ring Road is to be resurfaced and the route widened incorporating new tree planting and street furniture. The applicant has also confirmed that a contribution would be made towards improving surrounding routes, including those extending from the site towards the arena.
- 4.3 A new short stay lay-by is proposed on Belgrave Street for servicing. No parking is to be provided for occupants of the development. Secure cycle parking is intended beneath the buildings with some visitor cycle stands proposed within the landscaped square. Refuse would be stored in areas beneath the buildings, linked by an underground route, accessed from street level via louvered doors.

## 5.0 POLICY OVERVIEW

### Unitary Development Plan Review (UDPR)

- 5.1 The policies in the development plan must now accord with the NPPF. Whilst the Core Strategy is at an advanced stage it is intended to carry forward a number of the UDPR policies which are in conformity with the NPPF.
- 5.1.1 The site is located within the City Centre boundary. It falls within a Prestige Development Area (PDA) identified as a high profile location next to the Inner Ring Road where a range of city centre related uses are appropriate. The strategy for PDA's is to promote sites for large scale prestige developments; to encourage high quality developments and the creation of public spaces; to achieve environmental and social benefits including mixed and supporting uses; and to ensure satisfactory access with pedestrian linkages into the city centre being particularly important.
- 5.1.2 The UDPR also identifies the majority of the site (that part not used as parking) as protected public space. Development of these areas is not normally supported unless there is appropriate mitigation. Policies CC3, CC9, CC11, CC13 and CC31 seek improvements and enhancements to existing public spaces and improved accessibility to them.
- 5.1.3 Policy H15A promotes student housing in areas beyond the Area of Housing Mix. Paragraph 7.5.35 states that "significant potential exists for further student housing in the City Centre and in locations elsewhere. To be successful, such provision will need to be well served by public transport connections to the Universities, have the potential to appeal to students and be capable of being assimilated into the existing neighbourhood without nuisance. The City Council will encourage and support pioneer developments in such locations to help establish a critical mass of student presence and, ultimately, generate alternative popular locations for students to live, other than the wider Headingley area".
- 5.1.4 Other relevant UDPR policies include GP5 (detailed planning considerations to be resolved); N12 (priorities for urban design); T2 (development should not create or materially add to problems of safety or efficiency on the highway network); and A4 (design of safe and secure environments, including access arrangements, public space, servicing and maintenance, materials and lighting).

### Draft Core Strategy (DCS)

- 5.2.1 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 Council submitted the Publication Draft Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for examination on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and an Inspector has been appointed. It is expected that the examination will commence in September 2013.
- 5.2.2 As the Council has submitted the Publication Draft Core Strategy for independent examination some weight can now be attached to the document and its contents recognising that the weight to be attached may be limited by outstanding representations which have been made which will be considered at the future examination.

- 5.2.3 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. P12 states that landscapes will be conserved and enhanced. Policy G6 states that open space in the city centre will be protected unless (ii) the space is replaced by an area of at least equal size and quality or (iii) redevelopment proposals demonstrate a clear relationship to improvements to existing greenspace quality in the same locality. Policy CC3 states that development in appropriate locations is required to help and improve routes connecting the City Centre with adjoining neighbourhoods, and improve connections within the City Centre. Policies EN1 and EN2 identify sustainable development criteria including achieving a BREEAM standard of Excellent from 2013 onwards.
- 5.2.4 Paragraph 5.1.14 states that “The City Centre remains a good location for purpose built student housing, but excessive concentrations in one area should be avoided in line with Policy H6”. Policy H6B considers proposals for purpose built student accommodation. Developments should extend the supply to take pressure off the use of private housing; avoid excessive concentrations of student accommodation; and avoid locations which are not easily accessible to the Universities by foot or public transport.

#### Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan 2013 (NRWLP)

- 5.3 The Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan was adopted by Leeds City Council on 16th January 2013. The NRWLP is part of the Local Development Framework.
- 5.3.1 Policy Land 1 states that trees should be conserved wherever possible and new planting should be introduced to create high quality environments for development. Where removal of existing trees is agreed in order to facilitate development tree replacement should be provided on a minimum three for one replacement to loss. Such planting will normally be expected to be on site as part of an overall landscape scheme. Where on-site planting cannot be achieved off-site planting will be sought or an agreed financial contribution will be required for tree planting elsewhere.

#### National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.4.1 Planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development; and seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings (para. 17). Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) should recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and support their vitality and viability; and recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres (para. 23). Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development (para. 49).

#### 5.5 Supplementary guidance

- 5.5.1 Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions SPD identifies where development will need to make a contribution towards public transport improvements or enhancements.
- 5.5.2 Building for Tomorrow Today – Sustainable Design and Construction identifies sustainable development requirements.

## 6.0 ISSUES

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

- 6.1 The site is located in a Prestige Development Area and the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review supports the principle of student accommodation in this city centre location. Emerging Core Strategy policies also recognise that the city centre is a good location for student housing providing that excessive concentrations are avoided. There is existing student accommodation nearby (Opal 3) but it is not considered that the scheme would result in an excessive concentration of students. Access can be gained to both the city centre and the universities without passing through established residential communities such that the impact on residential amenity would be limited. Recent studies have suggested that the majority of purpose-built student accommodation schemes with planning permission are under construction, or due to be commenced shortly, such that in itself the development is not likely to lead to over-provision.

**Do Members agree that the proposed location of the site for student accommodation is acceptable in principle?**

- 6.2 Although the existing public space would benefit from improvement it provides a valuable amenity for local office workers and a wider visual amenity particularly on eastern approaches to the city centre. The UDPR identifies the majority of the site as protected public space. Development of these areas is not normally supported unless there is appropriate mitigation (DCS policy G6). The NRWLP states that trees should be conserved wherever possible and new planting should be introduced to create high quality environments for development. Where removal of existing trees is agreed in order to facilitate development tree replacement should be provided on a minimum three for one replacement to loss or where this cannot be achieved on site off-site planting will be sought.

- 6.2.1 The proposals identify the formation of a new soft landscaped public space, bounded by new buildings on its northern and eastern edges. The buildings help to deliver a formal public space protected from Inner Ring Road noise by the intended layout. However, the extent of existing public space (2445 square metres) is significantly reduced to deliver the proposed scheme (1485 square metres). Although new tree planting is proposed within the development, enabling a greater variety but smaller species, there is also likely to be a significant loss of tree coverage.

**Do Members agree that any development proposals need to fully mitigate for building on protected open space and for the loss of existing trees?**

- 6.3 Existing footpaths across the centre and eastern edge of the site act as a route between eastern and northern areas of the city centre. The route will become more important with the opening of the arena and the future development of the Eastgate and Harewood Quarter. Policies in the UDPR (CC12, CC13, CC31) and the DCS (C3) seek to improve pedestrian linkages, connectivity and to ensure accessibility for all.
- 6.3.1 A range of uses have been introduced facing into the proposed public space that will help to activate the space. The proposed route across the space enables the space to be used by all. However, as the route across it becomes less direct it reinforces the need to improve surrounding routes, including that alongside the Inner Ring Road and along St Albans Place.

**Do Members agree that existing pedestrian routes both within and around the site which connect with the city and surrounding areas need to be improved as part of the development and that levels need to enable access for all users?**

- 6.4 The site is located within a Prestige Development Area where large scale development is expected, alongside the creation of high quality environments. The scale and massing of the buildings have been designed to relate to their neighbours, essentially, stepping up in height from Victorian buildings at the southern end to towards more contemporary taller buildings at the northern end of the site.

**Do Members agree that the scale and massing of buildings respond well to their context and are appropriate?**

- 6.5 Local and national policies seek high quality design both with regard to buildings and spaces. Surrounding buildings are predominantly red brick with slate or flat roofs. Belgrave House is the most positive feature at the northern edge of the New Briggate character area and abutting the southern edge of the site. The proposed buildings, utilising multi-red bricks, copper-coloured metal cladding and deep window reveals set in a vertically proportioned façade, seeks to respect Belgrave House and the surrounding context.

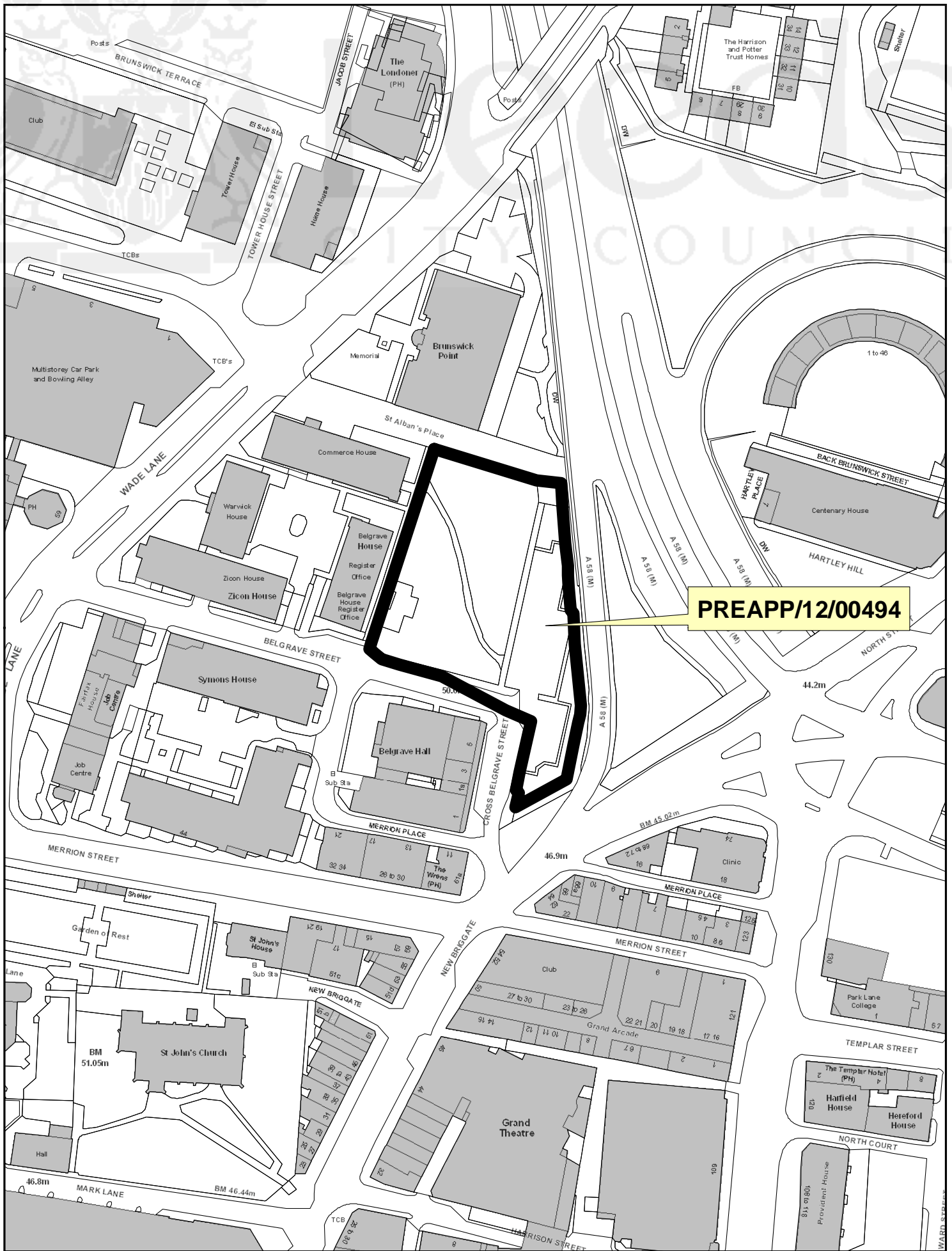
**Do Members agree that the design of buildings is of a suitably high quality and that materials need to be of an equally high quality?**

- 6.6 The site is located in the city centre in an area where it is hoped and intended that pedestrian flows will increase. Consequently, it is particularly important to avoid creating dead frontages at ground level that would be detrimental to pedestrian use, public safety and to visual amenity. A range of uses have been introduced facing into the proposed public space that will help to activate it. The peripheral route alongside the Inner Ring Road and along St Alban's Place has fewer such uses but includes a number of windows to ensure that it is overlooked.

**Do Members agree that the general arrangement of proposed uses is appropriate to the site's location and future use?**

- 6.7 The development necessitates the loss of the existing pay and display spaces. There would be no parking provision for the development other than for a small lay-by on Belgrave Street. Suitable measures for the servicing of the proposed buildings, together with management of vehicles expected at the start and end of terms will need to be developed.

**Do Members agree to the removal of the pay and display spaces and for the need to provide a strategy for the management of student vehicles at changeover times?**



**PREAPP/12/00494**

# CITY PLANS PANEL

