

Report of the Chief Planning Officer

Report to Outer East Area Committee

Date: 15th May 2013

Subject: Thorpe Park

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Crossgates and Whinmoor, Garforth and Swillington, Temple Newsham |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary of main issues

1. This report highlights the current position regarding the planning applications (five in total) submitted by Scarborough Developments for undeveloped land at Thorpe Park, the associated highway infrastructure and the provision of a new public park (Green Park). The Thorpe Park location plan, masterplan drawing and Green Park proposals are appended to this report.
2. In brief, the submitted proposals comprise;
 - 121,300 m² of B1 offices (almost 10,000m² than currently approved).
 - 22,100 m² of retail (including approximately 12,000m² in a single large format supermarket),
 - 17,800m² of leisure uses (including hotels),
 - 3,200m² of food and drink uses.
 - The proposals also include the delivery of the Manston Lane Link Road (MLLR).
 - The proposals to create a public park on land to the west of Thorpe Park.

Recommendations

3. Area Committee is requested to:

- Note the report and associated presentation and provide any comments.

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report and presentation gives Members an opportunity to understand and comment on a proposal which will have major implications for their area.

2 Background information

2.1 In 1995 outline consent was given for up to 1.2m ft² (111,500m²) of office floorspace. In 2004 this permission was amended to permit up to 1.8million ft² (167,225m²). Approximately 600,000 ft² (55,742m²) of offices have currently been built.

2.2 The applicant, Scarborough Development Group, has submitted an outline planning application for a new business park and three full applications for the associated highways infrastructure. Colleagues in Parks and Countryside have also submitted an application for a new public park on land to the west of Thorpe Park (to be funded by and subject to a new S106 agreement).

2.3 Thorpe Park is identified in Leeds' UDPR (Unitary Development Plan Review) as employment land and a key business park. The principle of employment use on the site is established and still considered appropriate; however, many of the other uses now proposed conflict with local and national planning policy and accordingly need to be fully justified if they are to be supported.

2.4 Position statements relating to the planning applications have been presented to City Plans Panel in March 2013. Panel Members raised concerns regarding the retail content and impact on other centres but did indicate some retail may be acceptable. Members also stated the highway infrastructure was essential and were supportive of the alternative proposals put forward by officers.

3 Main issues

3.1 The principle of a major business park, Manston Lane Link Road (MLLR) and the creation of a public park have been established by previous permissions relating to the existing Thorpe Park development. The current applications propose enhanced developments that raise a number of new issues due to the type of uses proposed, scale of retail and office development and the association with other, primarily residential, developments proposed within East Leeds. These issues are briefly highlighted below.

3.2 There is a significant retail content currently proposed that is contrary to planning policy. These policies seek to protect the role of designated centres such as Cross Gates, Seacroft, Garforth, Rothwell and the City Centre. Officers have raised concerns regarding the potential impact on the vitality and viability of local centres such as Cross Gates, Seacroft and Garforth and the planned investment

in the City Centre through the Victoria Gate development. Whereas the current proposal may help provide for new jobs within Thorpe Park, this may be at the expense of jobs elsewhere in the area if existing businesses are adversely affected. The applicant has responded positively to the concerns raised regarding the quantum of retail and its impact and discussions are on going to further understand the impact.

- 3.3 The traffic levels generated by the Thorpe Park proposals would be significant therefore the MLLR (incorporating a bridge link over the railway lines) is intended to alleviate the impact on the local highway network. The introduction of the MLLR and the increased capacity it brings will also permit the construction of additional housing on Manston Lane. The section of the MLLR that runs through Thorpe Park will link into the southern section of ELOR. Further studies are on going to fully assess the impact on the local highway network and junction 46 of the M1. The early provision of the MLLR (within the scope of the existing network rail agreement) remains an important objective.
- 3.4 The proposed food superstore is located in the eastern part of the site on 'Brown Moor'. As currently proposed this superstore has a large footprint and therefore requires a significant land take that would substantially reduce the extent of Brown Moor and therefore raises significant urban design, landscape and ecological concerns.
- 3.5 Officers are still in discussions with the applicant regarding the issues highlighted above and further information is being sought from the applicant.
- 3.6 In response to some of the issues highlighted above officers have put forward alternative proposals for the applicant to consider. These alternatives would reduce the amount of retail proposed and replace some of the office content with residential accommodation, it is considered a significant number of new houses could be delivered on part of the site. These alternatives would be expected to reduce the highways impact (or at least reduce peak time (commuter) traffic, reduce the impact on existing retail centres, reduce the impact on Brown Moor and help address housing land supply. These proposals would still ensure the highway infrastructure and public park are delivered. Officers are keen to ensure a major international business park is still delivered on this site and that significant numbers of new jobs are created but to ensure better integration with the surrounding uses and communities it is felt the introduction of residential accommodation would allow for greater integration and provide more justification for incorporating retail into the scheme. The applicant is in the process of considering these alternative proposals.
- 3.7 The applicant has stressed that there is a quantum and type of development that is required to fund the highway infrastructure and the increased specification for the public park. To fully appreciate the implications of the current proposal and the alternatives, officers have requested a viability report to help understand the applicant's position. The applicant's ability to deliver the sought after infrastructure could be helped by contributions from other third parties seeking to develop land along Manston Lane.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 A series of public consultation events were held locally prior to the applications being submitted and the applications have been advertised by way of site notices around the site and an advert in the Yorkshire Evening Post. Representations have been made by local residents, commercial operators and Leeds Civic Trust.
- 4.1.2 Letters of objection have been received on behalf of Crown Point Retail Park and the Victoria Gate developer. These letters raised concern about the inclusion of retail development within the proposals that may impact upon the vitality and viability of Crown Point Retail Park and the planned investment in the City Centre. Leeds Civic Trust also object to the retail content.
- 4.1.3 Local residents have raised concerns regarding the traffic impact, lack of a need for the superstore, impact on local retail centres, loss of woodland at Brown Moor, the proposed layout and impact on ecology, flooding, footpaths and the visual impact from the adjacent countryside. One resident on Manston Lane objects to the proposed new road citing highway safety issues and impact on amenity and their kennels/cattery business.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The submitted proposals will help create a significant number of jobs and help integrate Thorpe Park into the highway network.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 As highlighted above, there are potential conflicts with the Council's planning policies as they relate to the location of key town centre uses and also some aspects of the design approach which has been adopted.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 N/A.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 N/A

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 N/A

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The proposed investment in Thorpe Park is welcomed as is its potential to create new jobs and a new link road to the area. However, aspects of the application, in particular those relating to introduction of a significant retail offer, are in direct contravention of local and national guidelines. The highway implications and the timescales for delivery of the MLLR also require further consideration as does the overall design approach. Alternative suggestions and uses, which aim to protect existing centres and deliver the required infrastructure investment and create new

jobs are being considered by the applicant. The application will be presented to City Plans Panel later this summer for determination.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Note the report and associated presentation and provide any comments.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 Position statements presented to City Plans Panel 26th March 2013.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.