



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

PLANS PANEL EAST

Date: 9th August 2012

Subject: Pre-application presentation (PREAPP/11/01151) for the redevelopment of the balance of undeveloped land at Thorpe Park to provide 160,000m² of development (comprising of 121,300 m² of B1 offices, 22,100 m² of retail (including approximately 12,000m² in a single large format supermarket), 17,800m² of leisure uses (including hotels) and 3,200m² of food and drink uses. The laying out of the Manston Lane Link Road (MLLR) is also proposed as is the provision of a new public park

Electoral Wards Affected:

Crossgates and Whinmoor, Garforth and Swillington, Temple Newsham

No

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

RECOMMENDATION:

For Members to note the content of the report and presentation and to provide any comments on the proposals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 Under Policies E4:6 and E18:2 of the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDPR), 63 hectares of land, known as Thorpe Park, is allocated as employment land and identified as a key business park reserved for offices (Class B1). In 1995, planning permission was initially granted for 1.2million ft² (111,500m²) of office floorspace however the total quantum permitted was increased to 1.8million ft² (167,225m²) in 2004 when the relevant condition was varied. In the region of 600,000 ft² (55,742m²) of offices have been built out on almost half of the total available land. The main permissions which control the quantum of development permitted at Thorpe Park include a Section 106 agreement that requires the developer to undertake various off-site highway works to facilitate access into the site and to provide a new public park (known locally as Green Park) to the immediate west of the site. Delivery of the MLLR is also secured but only when 1million ft² of office development is occupied.

- 1.2 The applicant, Scarborough Development Group, is preparing an outline planning application for submission later this month and this presentation forms part of wider public consultation events that have been undertaken or are ongoing. The outline application will seek to secure the revised quantum of development on the balance of the Thorpe Park site and the alternative mix of uses. It is expected that a zonal masterplan will form part of the submission but full details relating to the MLLR are anticipated.
- 1.3 With respect to 'Green Park' the site is immediately west of Thorpe Park is a 47 hectare allocation of proposed open space within the UDPR (policy N5). Officers from Parks and Countryside are currently working up proposals and have also attended recent public consultation events. The new public park is anticipated to include playing pitches, a nature area (including utilisation of the half built newt ponds towards the northern end of the site) and a variety of further green infrastructure. These proposals would form part of a separate planning application submitted by the Council. As with the current S106 agreement, the developer will be contributing towards the cost of the new public park.

2.0 PROPOSAL:

- 2.1 There are two elements to these proposals. The first relates to the proposed uses and quantum of development within the remainder of the main Thorpe Park estate. The second relates to how the new public park (Green Park) is to be developed.

(a) Thorpe Park:

- 2.2 The proposal entails the provision of up to 160,000m² of development including up to 121,300m² of B1 offices, 22,100m² of retail (including a large supermarket of circa 12,000m²), 17,800 of leisure uses including hotels and 3,200m² of food and drink uses. A proposal of 160,000m² would increase the level of development at Thorpe Park by 48,517m² over the current permission of up to 167,225m². The table below provides a summary.

	Amount of office floor space currently built	Amount of development yet to be constructed or proposed	Total amount of floor space allowed or proposed
Current position	(circa) 55,742m ²	111,483m ² (offices)	167,225m²
Proposed position	(circa) 55,742m ²	121,300m ² (offices) 22,100m ² (retail) 17,800 m ² (leisure/hotel) 3,200m ² (food & drink)	220,142m²

- 2.3 The outline application will identify development zones supported by a design code. The proposals will also include a masterplan which provides a basic layout within which a framework for the provision of individual plots and buildings could be provided. Building heights would generally be higher than has been developed historically on Thorpe Park (up to six storeys) and a more urban grain of development is proposed whereby building would front onto streets rather than being centrally positioned within individual plots as has occurred elsewhere. A main feature of the masterplan is however to maintain a significant area of open space that would be publicly accessible and run through the site linking Green Park to the west and Brown Moor to the east.

2.4 The proposed MLLR would connect with the existing highway network at Thorpe Park and cross the railway line in the northeastern part of the site before linking with Manston Lane. A further roundabout is proposed within Thorpe Park just south of the railway line to serve the office development. The MLLR is also intended to connect to the proposed East Leeds Orbital Road (ELOR) in due course and on this basis provision is made for the road to be a duel carriageway. This would provide a strategic link to the M1 for traffic in east Leeds

(b) Green Park:

2.5 The Green Park proposals are to include playing pitches in the southeastern area adjacent to Thorpe Park that would be served via access roads and car parking provided within Thorpe Park itself. The Green Park proposals would also include new woodlands, public footpaths, cycleways, bridleways, picnic areas, play equipment, a nature area (including newt ponds), orchard and the 2007 Chelsea Garden.

3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

3.1 The proposals to expand Thorpe Park relate to the northern half of the employment allocation that totalled 63 hectares. The site is located to the south of the Leeds-York railway line and Manston Lane, west of the M1, north of A63 Selby Road and existing Thorpe Park buildings, Austhorpe Lane is to the west.

3.2 In terms of the wider area, Cross Gates centre is located to the west, Garforth to the east and Colton Retail Park is located across the A63 to the south. A number of residential properties are nevertheless located between the northern side of the A63 and the built component of Thorpe Park (namely the Barrowbys – Lane, Road, Drive, Avenue etc and the Austhorpes – Lane, Avenue, Drive etc. In addition to existing development, the East Leeds Extension housing allocation (UDPR policy H3-3A.33) is positioned across the railway line to the north. A planning application has recently been submitted for 2,000 houses on part of this allocation.

3.3 The proposed Green Park is located to the west of Thorpe Park with Austhorpe Lane on its western boundary. The land is mostly undeveloped and includes a variety of landscape features including the presence of old field boundaries with associated vegetation. Part of the site is still used for agriculture and livestock also graze areas on occasion. A cricket pitch exists towards the northern part of the site (accessed from Austhorpe Lane) and further east substantial earthworks were undertaken to construct three newt ponds. These works remain unfinished following intervention by the Council but the ponds do hold water and are understood to be now colonised by Great Crested Newts (which are protected species). In addition, Grims Ditch, a prehistoric ditch and Scheduled Ancient Monument, is located on the eastern edge of the Green Park land but there is little or no visible evidence of its existence.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

4.1 32/199/94/OT – Outline application to layout business park, green park and access roads - Granted 04/10/95. This relates to the original outline permission and allows for up to 1.2million ft² (111,500m²).of office floorspace.

4.2 32/140/96/FU – Variation of condition application to allow up to 1.8m ft² (167,225m²) of office floorspace to be provided – Granted 31/03/04

Connected to the above permissions is a Section 106 agreement which requires the applicant to undertake various off-site highway improvement works to achieve satisfactory points of access from the A63 and M1 motorway (these works have been

completed), to provide Green Park (via a series of trigger points) and the delivery of the MLLR which is triggered following occupation of 1million ft² of office accommodation.

- 4.3 06/05310/FU – Application to vary various conditions attached to the MLLR scheme so as to allow details to be agreed as and when phases come forward rather than everything at the outset – Granted 21/11/06

The above application is the latest permission relating to the provision of the MLLR and was submitted in recognition that part of the road had already been constructed (i.e. the section that links Thorpe Park with junction 46 of the M1.

- 4.4 08/00298/OT – Outline application for residential development at Optare, Manston Lane, Crossgates – approved in principle and subject to Section 106 agreement for phased development linked to the provision of the Manston Lane Link Road
- 4.5 08/03440/OT – Outline application for mainly residential development at former Barnbow site for Threadneedle – approved as a phased development subject to a Section 106 agreement linked to the provision of the Manston Lane Link Road. First detailed phase of development submitted by Bellways now approved and under construction.

5.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS:

- 5.1 The applicant has been engaged in pre-application discussions with the applicant since November 2011. A series of public consultation events have also taken place which have included the proposals for both Thorpe Park itself and also Green Park.

6.0 PLANNING POLICIES:

- 6.1 The development plan includes the Regional Spatial Strategy to 2026 (RSS) and the adopted Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDPR) along with relevant supplementary planning guidance and documents. The Local Development Framework will eventually replace the UDP but at the moment this is still undergoing production with the Core Strategy still being at the draft stage. Nevertheless, the Core Strategy does adopt the centres first approach to all uses which are considered to be main town centre uses. The RSS was issued in May 2008 and includes a broad development strategy for the region, setting out regional priorities in terms of location and scale of development. The site is allocated for employment purposes under policy H4:6 and identified as a key business park under policy E18:2 of the UDPR, these policies state that:

‘E4: Land for employment uses is allocated at the following locations:

.....6. Austhorpe (63.8 HA).’

‘E18: The following employment sites allocated under E4 are identified as key business park sites, and reserved for B1 use:

.....2. Austhorpe (E4:6: 63.8 HA)’

- 6.2 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (adopted May 2008):

The vision of the RSS is to create a world-class region, where the economic, environmental and social well-being of all people is advancing more rapidly and more

sustainably than its competitors. Particular emphasis is placed on the Leeds City Region.

6.3 Leeds Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review:

GP5: General planning considerations.

GP7: Use of planning obligations.

GP11: Sustainable development.

N10: Protection of existing public rights of way.

N8: Urban Green Corridor

N23/N25: Landscape design and boundary treatment.

N29: Archaeology.

N38b: Flood Risk Assessments.

N39a: Sustainable drainage.

BD5: Design considerations for new build.

T2 (b, c, d): Accessibility issues.

T5: Consideration of pedestrian and cyclists needs.

T7/T7A: Cycle routes and parking.

T18: Strategic highway network.

T24: Parking guidelines.

E4, E18: Employment sites.

LD1: Landscape schemes.

SA5: Shops should be accessible by a choice of means of transport.

SP7: Priority is given to the maintenance and enhancement of the City Centre and Town Centres.

S5: Retail development outside centres.

6.4 National Planning Guidance:

National Planning Policy Framework

7.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

1. Principle of development
2. Policy Issues
3. Urban Design issues
4. Landscape issues
5. Highway issues
6. Green Park

7.1 Principle of development

7.2 The Thorpe Park site is identified in the UDPR as employment land and a key business park. There is a partially implemented extant approval for office use on the site. The principle of the development of employment use on the site is therefore established and still considered appropriate. However, as identified below, many of the proposed alternative uses are contrary to both local and national planning policy so would have to be fully justified in order to be supported.

7.3 Planning Policy issues

7.4 The principle of B1 office use on the site has been established and accords with UDPR policies E4 and E18. Leisure uses, cafes, restaurants and even small scale retail uses that would clearly perform an ancillary function to the main office use could also be considered acceptable depending on the detail and how they fit into the wider masterplan.

7.5 The current proposals are however noted to include a significant amount of retail floorspace that would clearly be located within an out of centre location and so conflicts with the centre first approach advocated in the current UDPR and the more recent guidance provided in NPPF and the Council's own Core Strategy.. UDPR policy S5 refers to major retail development outside designated centres stating such development would not normally be permitted unless:

- It is of a type that cannot be accommodated in existing centres.
- It is demonstrated there will be no adverse effect on vitality and viability of existing centres.
- It addresses qualitative and/or quantitative deficiencies and in the case of food shopping would create a new centre to meet the needs of local residents.
- It is readily accessible.
- It does not entail use of land designated for housing or employment.

7.6 The NPPF and indeed the Core Strategy also seek to focus retail and other main town centres uses such hotels and leisure uses in designated centres with out of centre sites only being considered suitable if more central locations are not available. A sequential approach should be applied and impact assessments are therefore necessary to fully understand the impact on existing centres. The applicant is aware many of the uses proposed represent a significant policy challenge for the Council and is currently completing the necessary documentation to support the quantum identified within the outline application.

7.7 What are Members thoughts regarding the provision of a significant amount of retail and other main town centre uses at Thorpe Park?

7.8 Urban Design issues

7.9 The Thorpe Park application will be in outline only but with full details provided for the MLLR. The application will be supported by concept and parameter plans highlighting key development areas, hierarchy of routes, heights, open space, levels and will be accompanied by a design code that sets the future design principles for the site. To allow further understanding of the potential layout of the site, an indicative masterplan will also be submitted. All the above plans are still under discussion with consideration given to good design practice, the topography of the site, views into and out of the site, retention of trees (including TPO'd trees), provision of open spaces, provision of and enhancement of public rights of way across the site.

7.10 A number of design workshops have been held with officers. Officers currently believe that whereas some of the office layout could be considered acceptable, the large scale footprints of the retail units fail to successfully integrate into the grain of either the existing or proposed Thorpe Park. The inevitable parking and servicing associated with such retailers also makes proper integration even more difficult.

7.11 In addition to the above, there are major concerns with the location of the large supermarket being provided in a detached location from the rest of Thorpe Park to the east of the proposed MLLR. The proposed raising up of the building to provide undercroft car parking and the prospect of substantial remodelling works to Brown Moor in order to provide a level development plateau are also a serious concern.

7.12 What are Members thoughts on the approach of the concept/parameter plans and indicative masterplan for the site?

7.13 Landscape issues

7.14 The western boundary of Thorpe Park is defined by a large group of TPO'd trees which follow the old fly line and there is a line of TPO's trees within the proposed public green space within Thorpe Park. There is also a young woodland on Brown Moor and a number of self seeded trees throughout the site.

7.15 The proposals seek to retain and protect most existing trees along the boundary and large sections of the emerging woodland on Brown Moor. A number of other trees will be removed but a detailed site survey will identify the most important of these and retention will be sought where possible.

7.16 A main feature of the masterplan is to provide a large area of publicly accessible open space toward the northern part of the site that will form an extension to the adjacent Green Park and provide a link to Brown Moor and public rights of way extending eastward.

7.17 **What are Members thoughts on the nature and location of the open space on site and how this links into Green Park?**

7.18 Highway issues including the MLLR

7.19 The proposed development will link to the existing roundabouts at Thorpe Park that serve the development and access junction 46 of the M1 and the A63 to the south. A new road (the MLLR) proposed to be a dual carriageway, will extend northward from the existing roundabout and bridge over the railway line on the northern boundary and linking into Manston Lane. Under the existing agreement with Network rail the rail crossing needs to be commenced by 2015. This new road will not only serve as a central spine road for Thorpe Park itself (as another roundabout is proposed to the south of the railway line) but it also is also anticipated to form the southern end of the proposed ELOR. The developer is proposing that the delivery of the MLLR is brought forward. This will help to unlock the remaining housing potential of the Barnbow and Optare sites in Crossgates for development. Those sites should make a financial contribution to the delivery of the Manston Lane Link road, and Members may wish to seek clarification as to how the applicant is proposing to secure the road and the financial contributions.

7.20 A number of meetings have been held with officers to discuss the scope of the necessary transport studies that will be required in support of the application. Highways officers are awaiting a Transport Assessment that will provide full details regarding the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding highway network, the alignment of the new road and its connection to Manston Lane, the number of roundabouts proposed and their impact and timescales/implications for delivery.

7.21 Highways officers are seeking to ensure Travel Planning measures and access to public transport are enhanced at the site. Early delivery of the MLLR will help in achieving improved public transport links.

7.22 **What are Members thoughts about the impact of the additional development on the existing highway network, the location, specification, method of delivery and financial contributions from adjoining sites and timescales for delivery of the proposed MLLR and public transport provision serving Thorpe Park?**

7.23 Green Park

- 7.24 The extant approval at Thorpe Park through its associated Section 106 agreement secures a new public park which is to include the delivery of sport pitches and a changing room/pavilion building. It is envisaged the current proposals will also deliver these facilities plus further improvements. Officers from Parks and Countryside are currently drafting proposals for the park and local communities have recently been consulted on these proposals.
- 7.25 In response to previous concerns raised by local residents and Ward Members involving an earlier application the proposals include new sport pitches on the southeast of the site to be accessed through Thorpe Park. The main features of the park e.g. the Woodlands, an orchard, picnic and play areas, footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes and a location for the 2007 Chelsea Garden are also sited well away from surrounding residential properties. Allotments are also being considered plus other formal planting areas although it is anticipated that a small car park to serve the existing cricket club in the northwest of the site will be provided off Austhorpe Lane.
- 7.26 Parking within Thorpe Park that is closest to the proposed sport pitches will be made available for those using the pitches to avoid the need for further parking areas in Green Park and to avoid parking on Austhorpe Lane.
- 7.27 **What are Members thoughts on the proposed layout and facilities at Green Park, in particular the intention to provide the main vehicular access points and parking areas for the playing pitches from within Thorpe Park and the timescale for its delivery?**

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and the presentation, and are invited to provide feedback on the issues outlined below:
- **What are Members thoughts regarding the provision of a significant amount of retail at Thorpe Park?**
 - **What are Members thoughts on the approach of the concept/parameter plans and indicative masterplan for the site?**
 - **What are Members thoughts on the nature and location of the open space on site and how this links into Green Park?**
 - **What are Members thoughts about the impact on the existing highway network, the nature of the proposed MLLR and importantly how it will be delivered and the timescale for doing so?**
 - **What are Members thoughts on the proposed layout and facilities at Green Park, the parking/access arrangements and the timescale for its delivery?**
 - **Are there any other issues Members would like to raise?**