



## Report of the Chief Planning Officer

### *CITY PLANS PANEL*

Date: 29 AUGUST 2013

**Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL FOR 10 STOREY HOTEL BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED PUBLIC REALM WORKS ON LAND AT GREEK STREET, LEEDS ( PREAPP/13/00578)**

#### Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

Yes

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

**RECOMMENDATION: This report is brought to Panel for information. The developer's representative 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 pre-application presentation relates to the proposed development of the former mechanical stacker car park and single storey Akbar's restaurant situated between Russell Street and Greek Street. The car park has been recently decommissioned and is no longer fit for purpose which has brought forward the proposal for redevelopment. The buildings are both owned by Evans of Leeds (EoL) who also own a number of other surrounding buildings including Minerva House to the west and Capitol House to the south. EoL are currently in the process of refurbishing Minerva House and are due to commence the refurbishment of Capitol House in September 2013. They are also looking to improve the servicing of their buildings and how they can enhance the external areas.
- 1.2 The proposals will be presented to Panel by EoL and their architects, Kilmartin Plowman and Partners, to allow Members to comment on the evolving scheme and raise any issues, prior to the intended submission of a planning application

## **2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:**

- 2.1 The site consists of the former car park (220 spaces) and the single storey Akbar's restaurant, which are both located between Russell St and Greek St. This site is embedded within the Prime Office Quarter with the surrounding buildings all being of a similar height to the car park and currently in either office use or vacant. Pennine House is to the east and this has been the subject of a recent planning approval for change of use to student accommodation. The remainder of Greek St consists of a terrace of properties set back from the back edge of footpath to reduce the overbearing nature of the scale of development. The only break in this is Akbar's restaurant which is single storey with flat roof and stepped access on to Greek St. This is one of the few remaining parts of the city centre-wide upper-level pedestrian walkway proposal put forward in the 1970's and 80's.
- 2.2 The car park is accessed from Russell St via a length of highway which terminates in a vehicle turning and manoeuvring area. To the south is Bond Court, which was landscaped in the mid 1990's. Whilst this space provides a welcome area of openness in the city centre, the quality of the treatment is poor and pedestrian use occurs here despite the current layout rather than because of it.

## **3.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS AND PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 At the time of writing this report, one design development meeting had been held with the applicant and other design development has been conducted through e-mails and telephone conversations. There is no relevant planning history for either of these buildings. Pennine House has recently received planning permission for change of use to student accommodation (app. ref. 12/04154/FU) and Minerva House has planning permission for refurbishment and elevational changes (app ref. 13/00779/FU). The entrance into Capital House also has planning permission for its relocation to the leading, more prominent, corner.
- 3.2 A part of Bond Court is the subject of a refurbishment scheme being developed through a public/private partnership. This will commence the upgrading of the public realm. This proposal would continue the theme of public/private working together to create a better environment for the buildings and passing pedestrians.
- 3.3 Local Ward Members have been informed of this pre-application proposal. Any comments received as a result of this process will be reported verbally to Members at Panel.

## **4.0 PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The proposal is to demolish the stacker car park and the single storey restaurant and construct a new ten storey, 90 bedroom hotel with basement, to include restaurant, bar and meeting rooms.
- 4.2 Layout  
The ground floor has two primary entrances, the hotel on to Bond Court with a bar entry on Greek Street. The ground floor would contain primarily bar, with access to the basement restaurant and upper floor hotel. The first floor would contain the reception, meeting rooms with external terrace fronting Greek St and staff areas. The second to ninth floors would contain the 90 no. bedrooms. These are a mixture of standard rooms and suites with the ninth floor suites each have terraces overlooking the city. The basement will contain the hotel restaurant, kitchen and some staffing areas.

#### 4.3 Building Massing

The general massing has been determined by the heights and profiles of surrounding buildings and the heights of the existing car park that is to be demolished. The building follows the line of the neighbouring Pennine House at ground level and above where a step back has been introduced. At the time of writing this report this aspect of the scheme and its interface with its neighbours were still under discussion with the architect.

A new pedestrian route between the proposal and the neighbouring Minerva House would be created which would be open 24 hours a day. This would increase the level of pedestrian permeability and connectivity in the area and be curved to respond to the perceived natural flow of pedestrians. A small extension to Minerva House is also proposed on this route which would provide an elevation to the area of the building exposed by the demolition of the existing restaurant.

#### 4.4 External Areas

The new external walkway between Greek Street and Bond Court would link the two external terraces, one to Greek Street in front of the bar entrance with the other facing south over Bond Court. The public realm works to Bond Court would create a high quality, pedestrian friendly, external space. The proposed resurfacing is to be carried out in the same materials to increase the sense of space and indicate pedestrian priority despite vehicles still being required to access the space. The scheme would also include tree planting, seating and bollards. The use of high quality external materials would tie in to the scheme which is being rolled out across the other parts of Bond Court.

#### 4.5 Elevational Treatment

The ground floor would be clad in granite reconstituted stone panels and powder coated aluminium curtain wall glazing taking reference from other buildings in Greek St. The first to eighth floors would be clad in light coloured reconstituted stone panels and powder coated aluminium curtain wall glazing and windows, with zinc fin walls and spandrel panels. The ninth floor deck would be clad in zinc panels, with full height glazing. The elevation to Minerva House would be curved to allow space between the buildings with the minimum distance between the buildings being approx. 7m. This elevation would not contain any hotel windows given the proximity of the adjacent office building, Minerva house. Windows to the rooms at this end of the hotel would face north and south and utilise the curved plan form. This will be clearly explained in the presentation.

#### 4.6 Servicing/Drop-off

The hotel and its bar and restaurant will all be serviced solely from Greek Street. There will be no requirement for service vehicles to access the hotel via Russell Street. However, there would be a requirement for a vehicular drop-off area adjacent the hotel entrance on Russell St. A loading bay will remain on Russell Street to service the other buildings within the area that are not owned by EoL. To accommodate these requirements a discreet turning area has been integrated into the landscape proposal which has been the subject of discussions with colleagues in Highways Services. It is important to ensure that all highways considerations are accounted for and accommodated within the design whilst at the same time ensuring a high quality design of the new public realm.

A full application would be supported by the submission of a number of documents which in this case would include a wind study. This proposal is also expected to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good'.

## 5.0 POLICY

### 5.1 Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDPR)

Leeds UDPR policies require that matters such as good urban design principles, sustainability, highways and transportation issues, public realm, landscaping, biodiversity and access for all are addressed through the planning application process. The site lies within the designated City Centre and as part of the Prime Office Quarter where the primary office use is expected to be supported by secondary uses including hotels. This provides life and vitality outside normal office hours without prejudicing the functioning or character of the office area

Other relevant policies include:

GP5 all relevant planning considerations

GP7 planning obligations

GP11 sustainability

GP12 sustainability

A1 improving access for all

A4 safety and security provision

N12 urban design

N13 design and new buildings

N29 archaeology

BD2 design and new buildings

BD4 all mechanical plant

BD5 amenity and new buildings

CC1 City Centre and planning obligations

CC3 City Centre character

CC10 public space and level of provision

CC11 streets and pedestrian corridors

CC12 public space and connectivity

CC13 public spaces and design criteria

CC27 Prime Office Quarter

T2 transport provision for development

T2D public transport provision for development

T5 pedestrian and cycle provision

T6 provision for the disabled

T7A cycle parking

T7B motorcycle parking

LD1 landscaping

R5 employment and training for local residents associated with the construction and subsequent use of developments

### 5.2 Leeds Natural Resources and Waste DPD 2013

The Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan was adopted by Leeds City Council on 16th January 2013 and is part of the Local Development Framework. The plan sets out where land is needed to enable the City to manage resources, like 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 including coal recovery and drainage are applicable to this proposal.

### 5.3 Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance includes:

SPD5 Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions

SPD Sustainable Design and Construction

Leeds City Centre Urban Design Guide

#### 5.4 Draft Core Strategy

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. On 26th April 2013 the Council submitted the Publication Draft Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for examination and an Inspector has been appointed. It is expected that the examination will commence in September 2013. 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. Spatial Policies 1 Location of Development and 2 Hierarchy of Centres aim to concentrate the development of visitor facilities in Leeds City Centre, and Spatial Policy 3 Role of Leeds City Centre seeks to maintain and enhance the role of the City Centre as an economic driver for the District and City Region, by promoting the City Centre's role as the regional capital for major new hotel development.

#### 5.5 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF includes policy guidance on sustainable development, economic growth, transport, design, and climate change. The introduction of the NPPF has not changed the legal requirement that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The policy guidance in Annex 1 to the NPPF is that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given. The NPPF advocates a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and a "centres first" approach to main town centre uses such as hotels. The location of hotel development within the City Centre, close to the railway station meets this requirement to locate such uses in sustainable locations. The NPPF also promotes economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. It is considered that the proposed use would meet the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of meeting the objectives of sustainable development, and promoting the economic growth of the City.

Section 7 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. 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;
- Optimising the potential of the site to accommodate development;
- 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.

## **6.0 ISSUES**

Members are asked to consider the following matters:

- 6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework, Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review, and the Draft Leeds Core Strategy would support a hotel use in this City Centre location.

**Do Members agree that the proposed use of the site as a hotel is appropriate?**

- 6.2 The proposal is of a height and form which is broadly in line with the existing buildings in the area. This retains the character of the street which is clearly of a city centre scale but is not oppressive or overbearing in its character. This building would also be seen from many different locations along Greek St, Russell St, from within Bond Court, approaching from Infirmary St and even from East Parade where it will be seen between Minerva House and Capitol House.

**Do Members agree that the appearance of the building in the various street views is acceptable?**

- 6.3 The proposal closes the gap which currently exists between Minerva House and its nearest neighbour to a distance of approximately 7m at its closest point. This is a distance which is relatively constricted in the context of Leeds city centre. However, Minerva House is in the same ownership as the future application site and the owner considers this relationship to be acceptable whilst still enabling a suitable level of amenity to exist for the office occupiers.

**Do Members consider that, in this particular situation, the 7m distance between the two buildings is acceptable?**

- 6.4 The resurfacing of large parts of the public realm and inclusion of tree planting will improve the appearance of the street scene and enable a pedestrian dominated use of the space.

**Are there any issues which Members would like to see explored further in the provision of this public realm which have not so far been considered?**

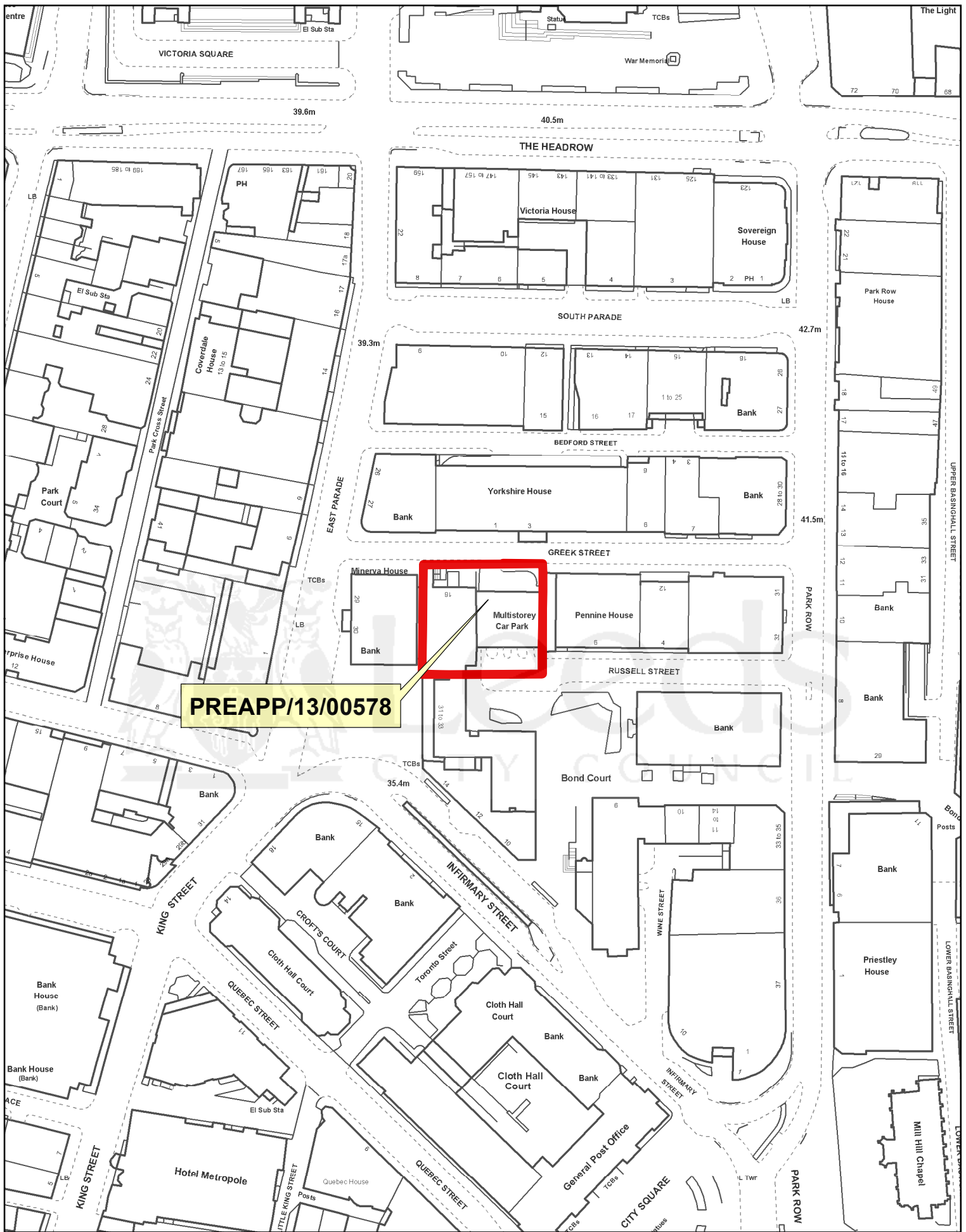
- 6.5 The site represents the redevelopment of a brownfield site, sustainably located within walking distance of key public transport nodes including Leeds Central Railway Station and bus interchange, as well as additional bus services situated on Infirmary Street and Park Row. The 220 spaces in the stacker car park have already effectively been removed and the proposal is for a scheme which has no car parking at all. This will ensure that the number of vehicle trips in this area is reduced, as well as increasing the reliance on public transport modes. Officers consider that this supports sustainable transport objectives.

**Do Members agree that this revised balance in favour of sustainable transport modes is acceptable?**

### **Background Papers:**

Application file 12/04154/FU Pennine House

Application File 13/00779/FU Minerva House



**PREAPP/13/00578**

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