



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 29th AUGUST 2013

Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL FOR NEW STUDENT ACCOMMODATION BUILDINGS, CITY CAMPUS, CALVERLEY STREET, LEEDS (PREAPP/13/00656)

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 at this stage.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This presentation is intended to inform Members of the emerging proposals for the construction of two new student accommodation buildings on land at Leeds Metropolitan University's City Campus. The buildings would contain a total of 430 studios and a small retail unit. The buildings would sit in new hard and soft landscaped spaces arranged perpendicular to Calverley Street.
- 1.2 Downing, the developer of Broadcasting Place, acquired the north and western half of the Leeds Metropolitan University campus in 2010. The area comprised large, redundant university buildings, underused open space and had poor permeability. The first phase of regeneration was completed in Summer 2013 and the second phase for student residences, comprising a new tower adjacent to the Inner Ring Road, commenced earlier this year and is due to be ready for September 2014. This proposal represents the third phase of the developer's masterplan.

- 1.3 The proposal is brought to Plans Panel as the development involves major investment and construction of a significant site within the Education Quarter. A planning application is expected later in the year. It is intended to commence construction early in the 2014 to enable completion in time for student occupation in 2015.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) city campus is bounded by Calverley Street, Willow Terrace Road, Portland Way, Woodhouse Lane and the Inner Ring Road to the north of the city centre. It is characterised by denser built forms towards the eastern side and a more open setting containing protected trees on the northern and western edges. The southern portion of the site was cleared of redundant LMU buildings during 2007/8. The Inner Ring Road is situated in a cutting to the north. The earliest buildings on the campus were constructed in the late 1960's to the designs of Yorke, Rosenberg and Mardall Architects. Two of these buildings were refurbished as part of the first phase of the development.
- 2.2 The site encompasses land on the western side of the campus between Calverley Street and the University's Portland and Calverley Buildings. The land comprises a grassed area, hardsurfaced parking space and steps, and cleared land currently being used as a site compound. The site contains several trees, primarily adjacent to Calverley Street. Levels fall by 6 metres from the Calverley Building down to Calverley Street.
- 2.3 The surrounding area is mainly characterised by institutional and civic uses. Leeds General Infirmary is situated across Calverley Street to the west and the Civic Hall and the LMU Rosebowl building are located beyond Portland Way to the south. The University of Leeds campus is located directly to the north of the Inner Ring Road. A seven storey hotel was approved at the junction of Portland Way and Calverley Street in June 2012 but has yet to be commenced.
- 2.4 The campus is located between the University Conservation Area, the City Centre Conservation Area and Queen Square Conservation Area. The Civic Hall is grade II* listed. Trees around the site are protected by Tree Preservation Order (No.22) 2007.

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The scheme involves two buildings partly linked at lower ground floor level. The lowest level of the northern building would contain a small double height retail unit and support space for the student accommodation above, including a bike store. The front element of the building would have 5 storeys of student studios above the retail unit. The rear of the building would have 13 storeys of accommodation above the upper ground floor entrance level which primarily comprises a lobby area and a common room.
- 3.2 The southern building contains a large common room and study area at lower ground floor level. In common with the northern building, the front element of this building would contain 5 storeys of student studios above the common room. The

upper ground floor would also be used as the entrance level including lobby and social areas, in addition to studios. The rear of the southern building would have 9 storeys of accommodation above the entrance floor. The studios would be 20.8 square metres in area and the adaptable studios would be 40 per cent larger. In total there would be 407 standard studios and 23 adaptable studios.

- 3.3 Initial indications are that the buildings would have an expressed concrete grid, with large concrete panels on the gable ends. The lower ground floor level would comprise full height glazing.
- 3.4 The buildings would have a linear footprint arranged parallel to the proposed hotel building and perpendicular to the University's Portland and Calverley buildings. The gable ends of the buildings would be 9 metres from the Portland and Calverley buildings beyond a newly landscaped footway. The footway, which is intended to provide the north-south pedestrian route through the campus, will include a slope down towards Portland Way so as to provide level access.
- 3.5 The area between the two new buildings would be primarily hardsurfaced including a striking cascade of steps up towards the Calverley Building in a similar location to those existing. The front of the buildings would be set back 6 to 13 metres from Calverley Street. The new level frontage would provide access into the new retail unit and the southern building's common and study areas as an extension to the existing pedestrian footpath. Areas of soft landscaping would be formed to the front of buildings to enable retention of as many of the existing roadside trees as possible.
- 3.6 Space to the north of the northern building and to the south of the southern building would be laid out as greenspace. Undulating lawns are proposed in response to the changing levels. New tree and ornamental planting would be arranged in a geometric fashion relating to the wider site layout and architectural treatment.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Since construction in the late 1960's the wider site remained largely unchanged until the late 1990's when the Leslie Silver building was constructed adjacent to Woodhouse Lane. Following demolition of buildings to the north of the junction of Portland Way and Calverley Street pre-application proposals for the wider site were considered by Plans Panel in March 2008. The site was acquired by Downing in 2010.
- 4.2 Plans Panel considered the application for the first phase of Downing's proposed development across the northern half of the campus site in February 2011. At that time an illustrative masterplan was presented identifying principles of building layout; future pedestrian connections and showing how the development could be integrated with the landscape. The second phase, a 21 storey tower on the northern edge, was approved in April 2012 and is currently under construction. A hotel was approved on the southern fringe of the site in June 2012 but has yet to be commenced.
- 4.3 Discussions regarding the current scheme commenced in June 2013. The discussions are being conducted in accordance with the Major Applications Protocol and a Planning Performance Agreement has been completed.

5.0 POLICY OVERVIEW

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Unitary Development Plan Review
- 5.2.1 The area forms part of the designated Education Quarter in the adopted Unitary Development Plan Review (UDPR). The main objective of the designation is to facilitate the University's main functional requirements on site, enhance its character and reinforce its distinct sense of place, improve linkages with the rest of the city centre, encourage the provision of extra student housing, and resolve vehicular access and circulation. Proposals for other uses in the quarter will be encouraged which service the quarter; add variety in land use and contribute to the vitality of the city centre; and support the attractiveness of the area for the principal use (CC27).
- 5.2.2 Policy H15A promotes student housing in areas beyond the Area of Housing Mix such as this. 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".
- 5.2.3 The existing parking area and footway into the site is allocated as public space. The Calverley Street edge identifies an aspiration for an enhanced pedestrian route. Other relevant UDPR policies include GP5 (detailed planning considerations to be resolved and should seek to avoid loss of amenity); N12 (priorities for urban design); N13 (All new buildings should be designed to a high quality and have regard to the surroundings); Policy N19 states that new buildings within or adjacent to conservation areas should preserve or enhance the character of the area; N23 (space around new development should provide a visually attractive setting and existing features which make a positive contribution should be retained); 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). In the city centre character will be maintained by encouraging good design of buildings and spaces and upgrading the environment (CC3); and development in conservation areas or its immediate setting must preserve or enhance the character of the area (CC5).
- 5.3 Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan 2013 (NRWLP)
- 5.3.1 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.

- 5.3.2 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.
- 5.4 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 Relevant supplementary guidance includes the Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions SPD; Travel Plans SPD; Building for Tomorrow Today – Sustainable Design and Construction; and SPG 14 Leeds City Centre Urban Design Strategy (September 2000). This guide refers to the need to retain and enhance space in the area; encourages appropriate ancillary uses at all times of the day and to provide active uses in holiday periods; to realise opportunities for increased soft landscape; to enhance pedestrian movement; and to enhance the existing variety of buildings.
- 5.6 Draft Core Strategy (DCS)
- 5.6.1 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. 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.
- 5.6.2 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.
- 5.6.3 DCS 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.
- 5.6.4 DCS 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. DCS Policies T1 and T2 identify transport management and accessibility requirements for new development. Specific accessibility standards are included in DCS Appendix 2.

6.0 ISSUES

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

- 6.1 The site is situated within the city centre immediately adjacent to two universities and would involve efficient redevelopment of previously developed university land. The use for student accommodation would be entirely in accordance with the objectives identified for the Education Quarter (UDPR policies CC27 and H15A) and largely as proposed by the Draft Core Strategy.
 - 6.1.1 Despite the decline in the number of undergraduates for the 2012-2013 in-take, analysis from UCAS suggests there was a 3.5% increase in student applications in comparison to the same point last year. The figures suggest that the impact of fees may not be as great as thought and that the number of young people applying to university may increase gradually. At the same time the growth in supply of student accommodation is continuing in Leeds. Excluding Trinity in Horsforth planning permission is in place to construct developments providing an additional 3325 new student bedspaces. There are a similar number of bedspaces proposed in schemes at the pre-application stage. Evidence suggests that the majority of bedspaces with approval in the city are continuing to be developed as purpose-built accommodation continues to present a relatively attractive property investment. The position regarding purpose built student accommodation is currently being looked at through a Working Group given growing concerns that there may be a surplus of bedspaces in the City. Possibilities are also being explored of making changes to policy H6b in the Draft Core Strategy which would require applicants to either demonstrate a need or have an accommodation arrangement with the Universities and this would have to be addressed in any future planning application.
 - 6.1.2 **Do Members agree that additional student development in this area is appropriate having regard to local and national policies, the supply of other consented schemes and the proximity to the universities?**
- 6.2 The proposed layout reflects the ordered arrangement originally advocated when the initial masterplan for the site was developed. In doing so, a pattern of new buildings and spaces is created along Calverley Street supplementing those which were originally constructed as part of the 1960's polytechnic development.
 - 6.2.1 The development includes two new buildings varying in height from 7 to 15 storeys in height. The buildings would step down in scale from existing buildings to the north and east and respond to the scale of the approved hotel to the south. The eastern gable ends of the buildings would be 9 metres from the Portland and Calverley LMU buildings to the east. The spaces, both between the new buildings themselves and

between the buildings and highway, provide an appropriate response to their scale and provide opportunities for improved permeability and high quality landscaping.

6.2.2 Do Members agree that the proposed layout and overall massing of the development is acceptable?

6.3 At the time the report was drafted the detailed façade treatment was being developed. Buildings on the campus have simple, serial elevations presenting large robust structures. As with existing buildings it is currently intended to utilise concrete and glass as the primary external building materials to deliver simple but elegant structures that respond positively to their context.

6.3.1 Do Members consider that the proposed use of materials and the overall architectural approach is appropriate subject to a high quality appearance being delivered?

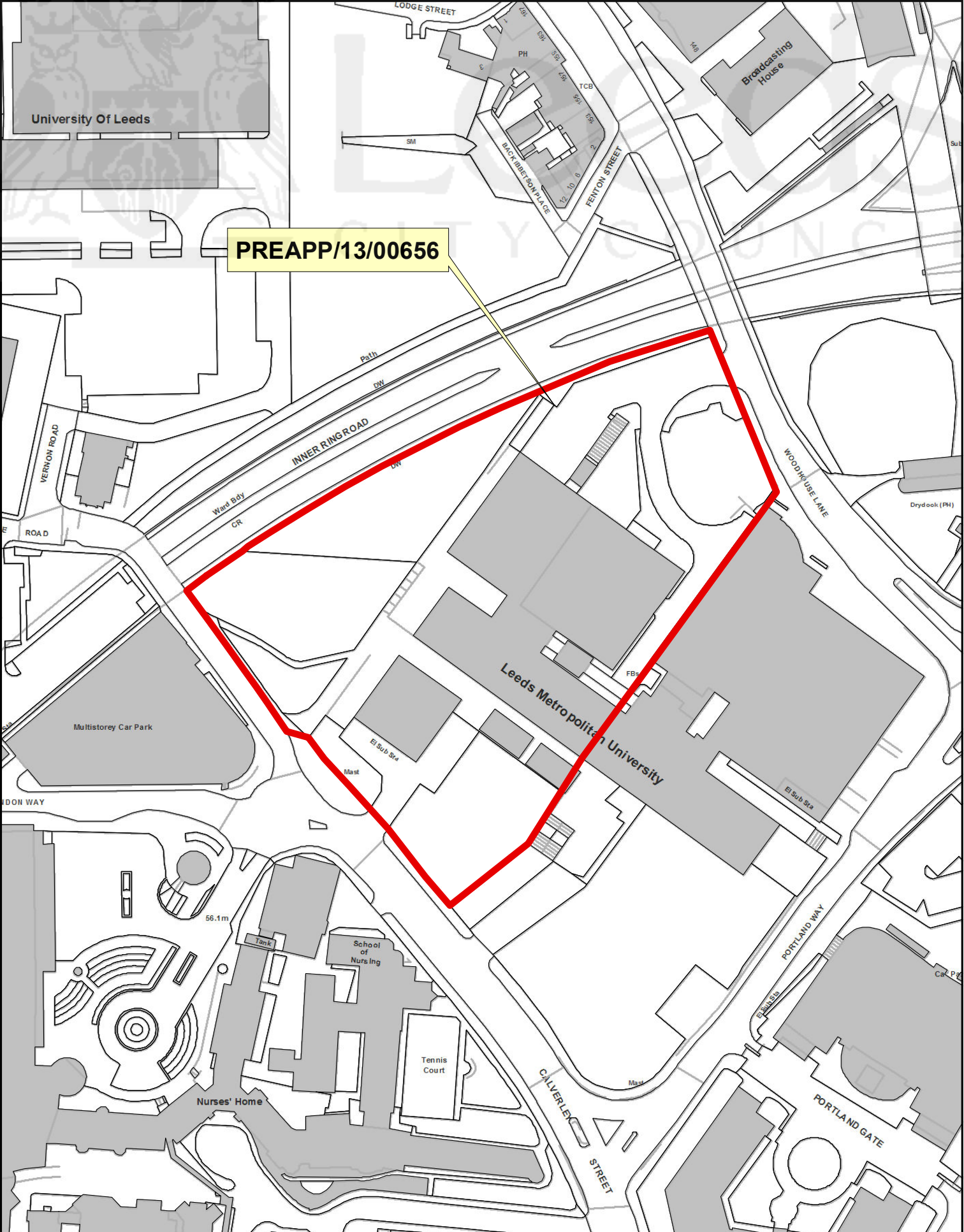
6.4 The existing site comprises three distinct parcels of land. At the northern end there is a sloping lawned area; the area towards the middle is hardsurfaced whilst the southern portion is cleared land. The development would necessitate the loss of some of the lawned space but would involve additional re-provision on the southern side of the development. At the same time spaces between and to the front of the new buildings would be significantly enhanced, creating an integrated landscaped approach.

6.4.1 Mature trees, primarily along the site frontage, enhance the appearance of the site and the streetscene. As many of the roadside trees as possible will be retained but it is inevitable that some of these trees would need to be removed to enable the development. New tree planting will be provided with the ratio of 3 new trees for each existing one removed.

6.4.2 Do Members agree that the general approach to landscaping is acceptable and that new trees should be planted in suitable ground conditions that will ensure that the trees will thrive and be positive additions to the landscape?

6.5 The site is located in a highly sustainable city centre location and the development would have a sustainable approach to travel. At the same time the sloping topography presents challenges for pedestrian movement around the site. The scheme delivers improvements to pedestrian permeability and connectivity, reinforcing previously created routes. The network of routes provided will be enhanced by the provision of a sloping path from Portland Way along the north-south axis of the campus. This would deliver a new accessible route supplementing the accessible east-west route provided by the first phase of the development.

6.5.1 Do Members agree that the development produces an acceptable and appropriate response to issues of connectivity and accessibility?



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