Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 16\textsuperscript{th} JANUARY 2014

Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE OF USE OF OFFICES AND ROOF-TOP EXTENSION TO FORM 63 APARTMENTS, BROTHERTON HOUSE, WESTGATE, LEEDS (PREAPP/13/01034)

Electoral Wards Affected: City and Hunslet

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 change of use and extension of Brotherton House, the former Leeds Police headquarters at Westgate, Leeds. 63 apartments are proposed. The offices have been vacant for almost two years.

1.2 The proposal is brought to City Plans Panel as the development involves the re-use and major investment in a significant site in the Office Quarter. A planning application is expected early next year.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 Brotherton House is a six-storey building on the south side of Westgate. The building was built in 1956 as headquarters for Leeds chemicals and dyestuffs firm Brotherton and Co. after whom the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds, and the LGI Brotherton Wing are named. The building became the Leeds City Police
Headquarters in 1965 until 1976 when they moved to the purpose built Millgarth Police Station, retaining Brotherton House for offices.

2.2 The building is faced with brick, Portland stone, Cumberland slate and Italian quartzite. It was constructed with an underground car park complete with a turntable, automatic ventilation and central heating, and a top floor including a restaurant and a roof garden/terrace. The northern and southern elevations incorporate projecting semi-circular staircase towers.

2.3 There is a circular area of surface car parking situated to the south-west of the building which forms part of the site. Grace Street, which is partially pedestrianised, runs along the east side of the building. Between Brotherton House and Westgate there is an area of lawn, bounded by a number of trees. Westgate joins the Inner Ring Road nearby. The building once enjoyed a prominent, gateway, location at the entrance to Westgate and the Headrow. However, the reorganisation of highways to form the nearby Inner Ring Road significantly downgrading its setting.

2.3 The surrounding area is mainly characterised by large, commercial buildings, primarily used as offices. The undeveloped former Olympic Pool site is located to the south of Brotherton House.

3.0 PROPOSALS

3.1 The exterior of the building remains in a good condition such that few alterations are proposed to the existing external fabric other than cleaning and localised repair. If possible, it is also proposed to retain and refurbish the original windows adding secondary glazing to provide additional acoustic control to mitigate the impact of road traffic noise.

3.2 Although the building has entrance points on 4 sides it is likely that the primary entrance would be on the east elevation, fronting Grace Street. This provides more direct access to the city centre and also the best opportunities for level access into the building.

3.3 63 apartments are proposed in the building. The smallest studio is 30 square metres, although the studios are typically 45-50 square metres. Additionally, there is a mix of 1 bedroom (50 square metres) and 2 bedroom apartments (75-105 square metres).

3.4 Two new levels are proposed at roof level, in part, replacing an earlier rooftop extension on the west side of the building. It is intended that the extension complements the architecture below using glass facades framed by limestone and green slate detailing. The apartments at these levels would have terraces facing east and west.

3.5 The basement of the building would be retained with vehicular access maintained from Grace Street. The basement would accommodate car parking, cycle storage, plant and a laundry for residents.

3.6 The scheme proposes to increase soft landscaping through the introduction of a new pocket park to the west of the building. Proposals also identify the provision of additional tree planting alongside the A58(M). The external car park would be resurfaced and localised landscaping is proposed along Grace Street.
4.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND CONSULTATION

4.1 Since it became vacant the property has been subject of several tentative enquiries for a variety of uses which have not progressed to application stage.

4.2 Discussions regarding the current scheme commenced in October 2013. The discussions are being conducted in accordance with the Major Applications Protocol and a Planning Performance Agreement has been completed.

5.0 POLICY

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 building is located within the City Centre Prime Office Quarter. Proposals for non-office uses which service the quarter; add variety in land use; contribute to the life and vitality of the city centre; and do not prejudice the functioning of the principal use, are encouraged in the area (CC27). Paragraph 13.6.15 states that within the city centre, housing in vacant upper floors could provide an important source to meet housing need as well as helping bring back life into the city centre.

5.2.2 Policy H4 allows for residential development on unidentified, brownfield sites subject to the proposals being compatible with the area and all other normal development control considerations. Policy H9 of the UDPR states that the Council will seek to ensure that a balanced provision in terms of size and type of dwelling is made in housing development. UDPR policies H11-H13 set out the requirement for the provision of affordable housing. The Interim Affordable Housing policy states that 5 per cent of dwellings should be provided as affordable housing if the development is implemented in two years.

5.2.3 Other relevant UDPR policies include GP5 (detailed planning considerations to be resolved); GP11 (sustainable design principles to be met); N12, CC3 and BD6 identify priorities for urban design; and policy T2 states that development should not create or materially add to problems of safety or efficiency on the highway network. Policies T5 and T6 require satisfactory provision for disabled people, pedestrians and cyclists.

5.2.4 The UDPR Proposals Map identifies Grace Street as a Protected Public Space and the pedestrian routes north and south of the building should be enhanced.

5.3 Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan 2013 (NRWLP)

5.3.1 One of the strategic objectives of the NRWLP is the efficient use of previously developed land. General Policy 1 is that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
5.3.2 Policy AIR 1 refers to the management of air quality. All applications for major
development will be required to incorporate low emission measures to ensure that
the overall impact of proposals on air quality is mitigated.

5.4 Draft Core Strategy (DCS)

5.4.1 The draft 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. The Inspector examined the Strategy during October 2013. The
weight to be attached is limited where representations have been made.

5.4.2 Policy CC1 identifies the intent to provide 10,200 dwellings in the city centre,
including changes of use, providing that it does not prejudice the town centre
functions and provide a reasonable level of amenity for occupiers. 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. Policy H2 supports the principle of new housing
development on non-allocated land. H4 says that developments should include an
appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes to address needs measured over the
long-term taking into account the nature of the development and character of the
location. Policy H5 states that the Council will seek affordable housing from all
developments of new developments either on-site, off-site, or by way of a financial
contribution if it is not possible on site.

5.4.3 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. Development should protects and enhance locally
important buildings, skylines and views. P12 states that landscapes will be
conserved and enhanced. Policies EN1 and EN2 identify sustainable development
criteria including achieving a BREEAM standard of Excellent from 2013 onwards.
Policies T1 and T2 identify transport management and accessibility requirements for
new development. Specific accessibility standards are included in DCS Appendix 2.

5.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.5.1 One of the core planning principles in the NPPF encourages the effective use of land
by reusing land that has previously been developed. 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). Paragraph 49 states that housing applications
should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable
development. The NPPF states that local authorities should deliver a wide choice of
homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive
and mixed communities (para 50). LPA’s should normally approve applications for
change of use to residential use from commercial buildings where there is an
identified need for additional housing in the area providing there are not strong
economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate (para 51).
5.6 Supplementary guidance

5.6.1 Relevant supplementary guidance includes the Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions SPD; Travel Plans SPD; Building for Tomorrow Today – Sustainable Design and Construction; SPG3 Affordable Housing; and SPG13 Neighbourhoods for Living (2003).

6.0 ISSUES

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

6.1 Proposals for non-office uses which add variety in land use; contribute to the life and vitality of the city centre; and do not prejudice the functioning of the principal use, are encouraged in the defined Prime Office Quarter (CC27). Draft Core Strategy Policy also identifies the intent to provide 10,200 dwellings in the city centre, including by change of use, providing that it does not prejudice the town centre functions and provide a reasonable level of amenity for occupiers. Residential accommodation has been developed in a variety of locations throughout the Prime Office Quarter both as new build developments and changes of use of office accommodation since policy CC27 was adopted without prejudicing the functioning of the Quarter.

6.1.1 Around 55 per cent of annual office space take-up is typically in the Grade B/C market. It is therefore important that a variety of office space is available in the city centre, including smaller and lower cost space. The relocation of businesses from more dated stock into large office developments with large floorspace provides a supply of grade B and C. Additionally, there is the natural turnover of office space, in addition to city centre office space beyond the Prime Office Quarter. There remains a significant amount of grade B and C office space currently available reflected by the significant number of To Let boards still displayed around the Prime Office Quarter and beyond. It is not considered that the loss of Brotherton House as office space would have a significant impact upon the current or future availability of office space in the city centre. Conversely, the building has been vacant for nearly two years and its residential use would contribute to the vitality and the vibrancy of the area.

6.1.2 Do Members consider that the principle of the use of this site for residential use is acceptable?

6.2 The property would comprise a mix of apartment types ranging from studios to 2 bedroom duplex apartments in accordance with UDPR policy H9 and DCS policy H4. The apartments are typically generously sized compared with city centre apartments and each would benefit from good levels of natural lighting. Apartments at the uppermost levels would also benefit from external balcony space.

6.2.1 Given the proximity of the Inner Ring Road a study of existing noise levels would be used to ascertain whether improvements to existing windows would be required to provide a suitable acoustic environment for the residents of the apartments. Similarly, some basic air quality monitoring should be undertaken to confirm whether any mitigation is necessary.

6.2.2 Do Members agree that acoustic and air quality monitoring is necessary to provide confirmation as to whether any mitigation is required as part of the development?
6.3 The refurbishment of this building at a gateway to the city centre is welcomed. It is also intended to add two storeys to the existing building, in part replacing an earlier rooftop extension. The maximum height of the extended building would be lower than the top of the existing lift and plant room. Nearby buildings are a similar scale to Brotherton House and principal views of the extended building would be from the west where the building is seen in the context of major highway infrastructure (Inner Ring Road and Westgate).

6.3.1 Initial designs of the rooftop extension to the building suggest an approach referencing the architecture and materials of the original building utilising glass facades framed by limestone and green slate detailing and glazed balconies.

6.3.2 Do Members agree that the principle of the proposed rooftop extension and its emerging design is acceptable?

6.4 The spaces and pedestrian routes around Brotherton House have a tired, unwelcoming appearance and feel disjointed. In part, the introduction of residential use would help to activate the area and provide additional surveillance of routes. Evolving proposals identify the provision of a pocket park on Leeds City Council land directly to the west of the building although it is unclear whether it is intended to semi-privatise this space. Additional trees are proposed to help provide a stronger screen to the Inner Ring Road. Planting to the east side of the building is also intended to be refreshed. The safety of pedestrians using this area and the footbridge needs to be taken into account in any landscape design.

6.4.1 Do Members agree that the spaces and routes around the building need to be improved to meet the needs of both the intended occupiers of the building and also the general public as recognised by the UDP Proposals Map, UDP policy A4 and to accord with policies CC3 and P12 of the Draft Core Strategy?