



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 11 DECEMBER 2014

Subject: PRE-APPLICATION Reference PREAPP/14/00934 – Proposal for residential development at Low Fold, East Street, Leeds 9 by Citu.

Electoral Wards Affected:

**City and Hunslet
Burmantofts and Richmond Hill**

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 Plans Panel for information. The developer's representatives will be asked to present the emerging scheme to allow Members to consider and comment on the proposals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 This pre-application presentation relates to the proposed major development at Low Fold, which lies between East Street and the River Aire, at the edge of Leeds City Centre. The initial proposals will be presented to Panel by the landowner and developer Citu to allow Members to comment on the evolving scheme and raise any issues, prior to the intended submission of a full planning application next year.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

2.1 The 6-acre brownfield vacant site sits on the eastern fringe of Leeds city centre, within the Aire Valley regeneration area. The site is bounded by the River Aire to the south and the Inner Ring Road to the north. Beyond the road network lies traditional housing at Richmond Hill. The majority of the site lies in flood risk zone 1, but parts of the site lie in flood risk zones 2 and 3. To the north lies the recent Echo residential development (14 storeys). Local heritage assets include the Grade I listed St. Saviours Church, Grade II listed Boyds Mill, and the Grade II listed St.

Hilda's Church. To the north west lies the Rose Wharf (Grade II listed) offices and its car park. To the south east lies the cleared former Morris Properties site at the junction with South Accommodation Road and the A63 Pontefract Lane, currently in use as unauthorised external storage, but has previously benefited from planning permission for a 13 storey residential development for 229 flats (ref. 20/526/05/FU), now expired.

- 2.2 Over the last ten years, new residential apartments and listed building conversions have been built along East Street, such as Robert's Wharf, East Street Mills and Echo. Offices at Rose Wharf also add to the mix of uses and activity along East Street. To the north, residential refurbishment projects at Saxton by Urban Splash have taken place. Uses on the opposite side of the River Aire consist of warehousing units, Vickers Oils, and the Allied Glass glassworks. The site also faces the now cleared former Hydro Aluminium site, which was the subject of planning permission reference 06/02364/FU for a mixed use flats and offices scheme, which has now expired. The applicant is aware that they need to take account of local industrial and road noise, odour and air quality in their scheme design proposal, in order to protect the amenities of future residents without adversely affecting the operation of existing local businesses.
- 2.3 The nearest primary school is Richmond Hill and the closest secondary schools are Mount St. Mary's and the Co-operative Academy in Burmantofts.
- 2.4 The site lies within the designated Aire Valley Leeds Urban Eco-Settlement. The scheme has potential to contribute to the planned new housing provision (over 6500 homes) and place-making opportunities for this area. The site also has potential to connect to the South Bank by linking over the River Aire to the Trans Pennine Trail.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Citu delivered the Greenhouse project in Beeston in 2010. Their aim at Low Fold would be to create sustainable family living in a City Centre environment. The dwellings would be available for purchase on long leases, with the energy and utilities systems and public realm managed by a community interest company owned by the residents themselves. An on-site caretaker would manage the day-to-day running of the site, such as landscape and communal area maintenance, the issuing of visitor parking permits and arrangement of the communal refuse and recycling bins for collection.
- 3.2 The proposed dwellings would be constructed to a zero-carbon standard which means that they would not require conventional heating. The ambient heat given off in the house would be retained through a highly insulated air tight structure. Developer Citu have experience of delivering this type of house from their current construction site for 250 dwellings at Little Kelham in Sheffield. The electricity would be generated on-site through solar PV panels which would feed power into a private grid around the development. This would all be controlled through an energy monitoring app via resident's smart phones. Residents would also benefit from free solar energy to heat their hot water or charge their electric cars. The homes would be cost effective to live in, and would be a demonstrator project for sustainable low carbon living for Leeds.
- 3.3 The scheme proposal at Low Fold would consist of 309 homes made up of 41 one-bed apartments, 116 two-bed apartments, 100 three-bed houses and 52 four-bed houses. Almost half the houses would be 3 or 4 storey townhouses, with the

apartment blocks being 7, 8 and 9 storeys. These aim to provide a buffer from the road network to the north, and frame gateway views into the City Centre from the east. 95% of the dwellings would be generally south facing. All the townhouses would feature rooftop gardens, and some would also feature covered glazed atrium-style courtyards.

3.4 The typical dwelling sizes would be as follows:

- Four bed Town House 126sqm
- Three bed Town House North facing 109sqm
- Three bed Town House South facing 98sqm
- Three bed Town House South facing 107sqm
- Three bed Town House stacked 109sqm
- Two bed Town House North facing 87sqm
- Four bed "drum stacked" house 124sqm & 136sqm
- One bed apartment 48sqm
- Two bed apartment 70sqm

3.5 Low Fold has an existing site access directly off the signalised A61/ A63 gyratory. This would provide the single vehicle access to the site. Car parking would be hidden under the housing and the scheme design would provide clutter free landscaped public realm, with a sustainable drainage system. There would be provision for 240 parking spaces (including electric charging provision) across the development. Cycle parking would meet policy standards.

3.6 The site would have a long landscaped riverside frontage, and pedestrian and cycle access through the site from East Street. This river frontage would need to incorporate public access and inaccessible areas for biodiversity reasons, including the safeguarding of wildlife corridors for protected species such as otters. The applicant would like to explore the provision of a new pedestrian/cycle bridge link over the River Aire, which would improve connectivity to the existing and proposed facilities on the South Bank.

3.7 The residents would access site-specific real-time public transport information and local car share opportunities via smartphone apps, a sustainable travel initiative which has been successful at Citu's other developments such as Greenhouse and is due to be rolled out at Little Kelham in Sheffield.

4.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS AND PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 Officers have had two pre-application meetings with Citu and their professional team in late 2014.

4.2 City and Hunslet Ward and Burmantofts and Richmond Hill Ward Members were consulted by email on 20 November 2014 regarding this new pre-application. Councillor Maureen Ingham (Burmantofts and Richmond Hill) would welcome more details regarding the proposed bridge link over the River Aire.

4.3 20/132/05/OT Outline application to layout access and erect 842 flats, offices and A1/A2/A3/A4 uses with 1067 car parking spaces. The application was approved in principle at Plans Panel (City Centre) 26 April 2007 subject to the completion of the Section 106 agreement. The agreement was not signed by the applicant, and therefore the application was finally disposed of on 29 June 2009

- 4.4 20/133/05/OT Outline application to layout access and erect 747 flats offices and a1/a3 retail space with 781 car parking spaces. The application was finally disposed of on 03 June 2008.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into force in March 2012 and represents the government's commitment to sustainable development, through its intention to make the planning system more streamlined, localised and less restrictive. It aims to do this by reducing regulatory burdens and by placing sustainability at the heart of development process. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so.

The NPPF identifies 12 core planning principles (para 17) which include that planning should:

- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes...
- Seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupants.
- Encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings.
- Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.

The NPPF states that LPA's should 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). LPA's should normally approve applications for change to residential use where there is an identified need for additional housing in the area (para 50).

Planning should proactively support sustainable economic development and seek to secure high quality design. It encourages the effective use of land and achieves standards of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings. One of the core principles is the reuse of land that has previously been developed. 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).

On 6 March 2014 the Government launched the National Planning Practice Guidance, which brought together most national planning guidance and circulars under one web-based resource.

5.2 Development Plan

- 5.2.1 The Leeds Core Strategy was adopted by the Council on 12th November 2014. This now forms the development plan for Leeds together with the Natural Resources & Waste Plan and saved policies from the UDP. A number of former UDP saved

policies have been superseded by Core Strategy policies and have been deleted as a result of its adoption. Appendix 1 of the Core Strategy provides a full list of 'deleted' UDP policies and policies that continue to be 'saved' (including most land use allocations). Relevant Saved Policies would include

GP5 all relevant planning considerations
BD2 new buildings
T7A cycle parking
T7B motorcycle parking
T24 Car parking provision
LD1 landscaping

The Low Fold site is currently allocated for employment uses under Saved UDPR Policy EC3:C.

5.2.2 Relevant Core Strategy Policies include:

Spatial Policy 4 – Identifies the Aire Valley Leeds as a Regeneration Priority Programme Area. Priority will be given to developments that include housing quality, affordability and choice, improve access to employment and skills development, enhance green infrastructure and greenspace, upgrade the local business environment and improve local facilities and services.

Spatial Policy 5 – Sets out the broad principles for development in the Aire Valley Regeneration Priority Programme Area including targets for housing (6,500 units) and employment land (250 ha) specific to the area.

Spatial Policy 7 – Sets out the spatial distribution of the district wide housing requirement between Housing Market Characteristic Area. The Low Fold site is in the Inner Area with a requirement to provide 10,000 units (2012-28)

Spatial Policy 8 states that training/skills and job creation initiatives would be supported by planning agreements linked to the implementation of appropriate developments given planning permission.

Spatial Policy 9 – Sets out district-wide requirements for office and industrial/distribution development

Spatial Policy 11 – Transport Investment Priorities – includes a priority related to improved facilities for pedestrians to promote safety and accessibility, particularly connectivity between the edges of the City Centre and the City Centre itself.

Policy CC3: Improving connectivity between the City Centre and neighbouring communities – provide and improve routes connecting the City Centre with adjoining neighbourhoods to improve access and make walking and cycling easier.

Spatial Policy 13 – Strategic Green Infrastructure – The River Aire corridor is part of the GI network described in the policy. The applicant will also need to address Policy G1 (green infrastructure) and G9 (biodiversity).

Policy H2 – New housing development on non-allocated sites & Policy T2 accessibility requirements – refers the capacity of infrastructure and accessibility standards in Appendix 3. Links to local shops, primary schools, secondary schools, parks and employment locations are important. Proposed bridge provides link to South Bank including facilities at Leeds Dock, with potential a secondary school and City Centre Park in the longer term). The current nearest primary school is

Richmond Hill, and the nearest secondary school is Mount St Marys. The applicant needs to consider connections across East Street and into Richmond Hill for links to schools and local facilities.

Policy H3 – Density of development. The proposal is above 65 dwellings per hectare target set for edge of centre locations.

Policy H4 – Housing Mix. The proposal provides a good mix of dwellings including family sized units, which would meet the aims of Policy H4. The applicant will need to submit a Housing Needs Assessment to support the application proposal

Policy H5 – Affordable Housing. The site lies within Affordable Housing Zone 3 on Map 12 of the Core Strategy. According to the policy, the affordable housing requirement would be 5% of the total number of units, with 40% for households on lower quartile earnings and 60% for households on lower decile earnings

Policy EC3 Safeguarding existing employment land and industrial areas.

Policy G4 – Open space requirements. Outside the City Centre the normal requirement is 80 sqm per dwelling. On a dense development such as that proposed this would not be deliverable in full on site, and in these circumstances it may be acceptable to deliver the required greenspace on- and off-site .

Policy G9 Biodiversity improvements

Policies EN1 & EN2. Policy set targets for CO2 reduction and sustainable design & construction, including Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 and at least 10% low or zero carbon energy production on-site, which the developer expects to exceed with this scheme.

Policies EN4 District Heating. This site is not within the areas identified as having most potential in the Aire Valley & City Centre Energy Masterplan. The design of the scheme presents an alternative low carbon energy source.

Policy EN5 – flood risk. A flood risk assessment and sequential test would be required as some of site lies in Flood Zones 2 and 3. Housing is proposed in Zone 3 and therefore the exceptions test would also be required. The applicant would need to consider the layout of site and potential for locating green space in the in higher flood risk zones in accordance with NPPG advice.

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.

Policy P12 states that landscapes will be conserved and enhanced.

Policies T1 and T2 identify transport management and accessibility requirements for new development.

5.3 **Natural Resources & Waste Plan**

The Natural Resources and Waste Development Plan Document (Local Plan) 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 regarding flood risk, drainage, air quality,

trees, and land contamination are relevant to this proposal. The site is within the Minerals Safeguarding Area for Coal (Minerals 3) and partly within Minerals Safeguarding Area for Sand & Gravel (Minerals 2).

5.4 **Emerging Aire Valley Area Action Plan**

The site is located within the Aire Valley Leeds Regeneration Programme Area for which an Area Action Plan is being prepared. This will form part of the development plan when adopted and make allocations within the area (replacing or renewing existing UDP land use allocations). It has limited weight in decision making currently but signals the Council's aspirations and priorities for the future development of the area.

5.5 **Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance includes:**

SPD Street Design Guide

SPD Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions

SPD Travel Plans

SPD Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction

SPD Biodiversity and Waterfront Development

SPG Neighbourhoods for Living

SPG Leeds Waterfront Strategy

5.6 **Other material considerations**

5.6.1 **Best Council Plan**

The Plan identifies 6 objectives in order to achieve the best council outcomes identified between 2014-2017. One of the three best Council outcomes (Best Council Plan 2013-17) is to "improve the quality of life for our residents", and the priority "Maximising housing growth to meet the needs of the city in line with the Core strategy" within the Best Council objective "Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth" which gives a strong foundation to improving the quality of housing and 'liveability' of places delivered under this ambitious programme for the city. Also, the objective "Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth" is of relevance to this proposal. This would be achieved by improving the economic wellbeing of local people and businesses, meeting the skills needs of business to support growth, boosting the local economy, creating 'more jobs, better jobs' by working with employers and businesses, and continuing to secure local training and recruitment schemes.

5.6.2 **Vision for Leeds 2011-2030**

One of the aims is that by 2030 Leeds' economy will be more prosperous and sustainable. This includes having a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the local economy, and creating significant job opportunities. The vision also states that Leeds will be a great place to live, where local people benefit from regeneration investment, and there is sufficient housing, including affordable housing, that meets the need of the community.

5.6.3 **City Priority Plan 2011-2015**

The Plan states that Leeds will be the best city to live in. The City Priority Plan includes an objective to maximise investment to increase housing choice and affordability. The sustainable growth of a prosperous Leeds' economy is also a priority. The key headline indicators relevant to this proposal would be the creation of more jobs, more skills, and the growth of the local economy, and an increase in the number of hectares of vacant brownfield land under redevelopment.

5.6.4 **The Leeds Standard**

The Leeds Standard was adopted by the Council's Executive Board on 17 September 2014. The introduction of a Leeds Standard to ensure excellent quality in the delivery of new council homes under three themes: Design Quality, Space Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards. It sets out how the Council can use the Leeds Standard in its role as Council landlord through its delivery and procurement approaches. Through its actions the Council can also seek to influence quality in the private sector. Those aspects of the Standard concerned with design quality will be addressed through better and more consistent application of the Council's Neighbourhoods for Living guidance. The Leeds Standard sets out the importance of excellent quality housing in supporting the economic growth ambitions of the council.

6.0 **ISSUES**

Members are asked to consider the following matters in particular:

- 6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework, Leeds Core Strategy, and the emerging Aire Valley Area Action Plan would support a residential development in this edge of City Centre location, as a major contribution to the Aire Valley Urban Eco-Settlement. Policy EC3 safeguards existing employment land and industrial areas unless specific criteria are met. As the site is allocated for employment, the criteria set out in Part A of the policy would need to be addressed. This is not a site where office development would be specifically encouraged as it is not in a designated centre. This would leave industrial/warehousing development as the only potential alternative use for the site. Given the number of planning permissions / allocations for employment in the wider Aire Valley Urban Eco-Settlement area on large sites, this site is not considered necessary to meeting the overall employment targets, but can make a valuable contribution to meeting housing targets in the Aire Valley. The site is not in an area of employment shortfall so part B of the policy does not apply. The proposal is for a mix of 1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom dwellings, which is considered to meet the objectives of Policy H4 for a balanced provision of house types.

Do Members agree that the proposed use of the site for a residential scheme, and the mix of dwellings proposed would be appropriate?

- 6.2 In the context of the recent Executive Board adoption of the "Leeds Standard" for the Council's own housing schemes, it is strongly encouraged that private developers also meet our aspirations for high quality, liveable homes in the City, particularly in relation to design quality, space standards and energy efficiency standards. This includes meeting Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, and the minimum Homes and Community Agency (HCA) internal space standards. This scheme would exceed the minimum space and energy/efficiency sustainability standards encouraged by the Council under the Leeds Standard.

Although the townhouses are single aspect, they would each have access to a covered glazed courtyard and a private external rooftop garden. It is considered that this arrangement along with the mix of 16m gaps to the main street aspect or open views across the river, combined with the proposed internal space standards, would provide acceptable amenities for future occupiers.

What are Members' views on the quality of the homes proposed, in terms of design, space standards, energy efficiency and sustainable construction?

- 6.3 The townhouses would be built above a concealed undercroft parking deck built into the change in levels across the site. Habitable accommodation would be at street level to give outlook, activity and surveillance to pedestrian routes. The townhouses would be single aspect, with private 5-8m long glazed covered courtyards to the rear, and a rooftop terrace. The covered glazed roofs to the rear of the properties would allow light into the rear of the dwellings and provide private all-weather amenity space, in addition to private outdoor space on the roof of each house. The central public street would be some 16-18m wide between the apartment blocks and the townhouses, and would be designed to prioritise pedestrian use with only limited access for service vehicles. There would be an approximately 16m wide by 300m long public riverside space.

Do Members consider that the balance of private amenity space, communal residents' amenity space, and public realm provision, is appropriate for the mix of dwellings proposed?

What are Members' views on the general siting of the buildings and the spaces between them, including the distances between facing windows for privacy and overlooking?

- 6.4 The townhouses would be three storeys along the riverside, rising to four storeys within the site. The tallest elements of the proposal would be the apartment blocks along East Street at 7, 8 and 9 storeys respectively.

Given the wide road infrastructure between the site and the scale of the nearby 14 storey Echo flats, is the scale of the proposed development considered appropriate at this gateway location?

- 6.5 In terms of wider connectivity to the surrounding area, the potential river bridge is important in delivering better connectivity to the South Bank. The applicant has also considered links through the site towards Richmond Hill, which currently has poor access to the South Bank. The applicant is in discussions with the Canals and River Trust and the Environment Agency regarding the provision of the bridge. Local off-site highways works may be necessary to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity, such as improvements to the cycle route around the edge of the site on East Street/South Accommodation Road. Local bus stop improvements may be required to improve the public transport accessibility to/from the site.

What are Members' views on the improvements necessary to connect the development to surrounding communities and facilities?

- 6.6 The scheme proposes one car parking space per house and 60% parking provision for the flat units. Car parking spaces would be rented rather than purchased, so residents could have more than one space if they require. The developer is also proposing travel plan measures in order to encourage future residents to rely less on private car use, such as providing real-time public transport information and car sharing apps for each household to access. Secure cycle storage would be provided for each dwelling. The applicant is also exploring car club options as part of their travel plan preparation.

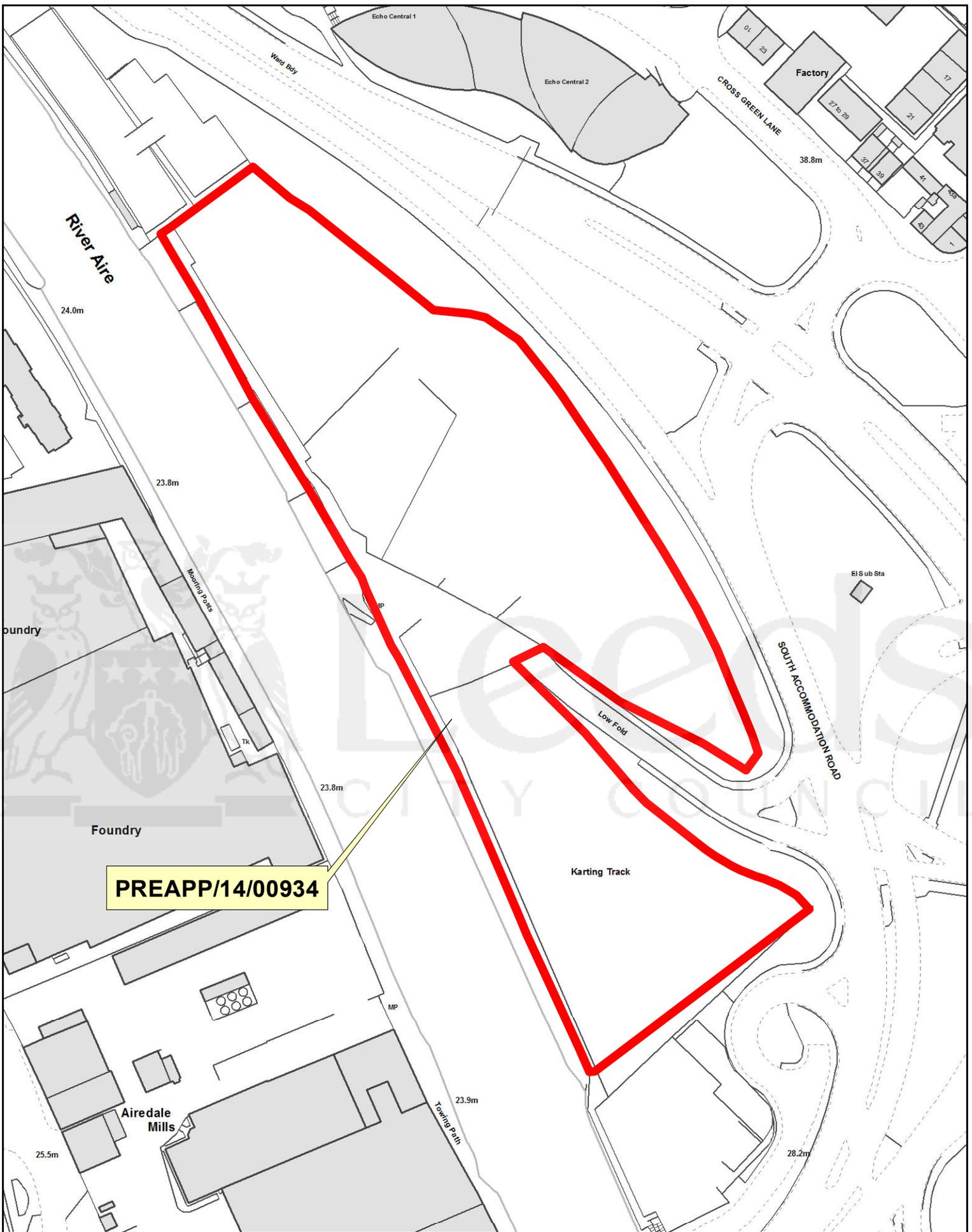
Subject to the agreement of Transport Development Services (to ensure there would be no adverse impact on highways safety or amenities) would the proposed level of car parking be considered acceptable?

- 6.7 The proposal would be subject to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and adopted policies would result in the following necessary Section 106 matters:
- Affordable Housing 5% on-site
 - Specific travel plan measures contributions
 - Travel plan monitoring fee
 - Public access through the site
 - Cooperation with local jobs and skills initiatives

Do Members have any comments to make about this range of likely Section 106 contributions?

Background Papers:

None



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