



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 16 March 2017

Subject: Preapplication reference PREAPP/17/00047 for the erection of an extension to the side and front of the existing theatre building to create a new front entrance to the theatre at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, St Peters Street, Leeds, LS2 7UP.

Applicant – Leeds City Council

Electoral Wards Affected:

City & 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 Plans Panel for information. The Developer will present the details of the emerging 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 at an early stage of the emerging proposals for an extension to the side and front of the West Yorkshire Playhouse to create a new entrance with accompanying reconfiguration of the internal spaces, to what is an important performing arts building in the designated City Centre. The proposal is brought to City Plans Panel as the development involves major investment in an important cultural destination within Leeds City Centre.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

2.1 The site is a 1980s built theatre on the eastern side of St. Peters Street, in the Quarry Hill area of Leeds City Centre. The building is a 2/3 storey building constructed of beige and red bricks with a partially glazed tower. The existing main entrance to the theatre is accessed from the upper level of the site on Quarry Hill and is reached by a series of steps and ramps from St Peters Street.

2.2 The Playhouse is positioned within the Quarry Hill area of the City Centre in which a variety of leisure, entertainment and cultural uses, which would enhance the

national and regional role of the City and would complement the Playhouse are encouraged. The site is within the setting of the Grade II listed former petrol filling station that sits on the roundabout at the eastern end of Eastgate.

3.0 PROPOSAL:

3.1 The proposed development seeks to create a stronger presence and identity for the Playhouse by the erection of an extension running down the northern side of the building which would terminate in a new entrance to the building's St Peters Street frontage. Thus the proposal aims to create a new more dynamic face to the City which would activate the host building along its northern façade as well as where it meets St Peters Street. In addition, the Playhouse recognises the need to be fully accessible. Therefore a number of internal reconfigurations of the floor space at the various levels of the building are proposed, many of which would then link in to the new extension. The aim of these works would be to make the building more legible and accessible to all.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

4.1 Approval granted for alterations including an enlarged entrance and replacement roller shutters to the loading dock to rear of the theatre on 25 May 2006, planning reference 06/02316/FU.

4.2 Approval granted for the addition of a canopy with acoustic curtain to the loading bay to the theatre on 30 January 2007, planning reference 06/07146/FU.

5.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS:

5.1 The proposals have been the subject of pre-application discussions between the Developers, their Architects, and Local Authority Officers since June 2016. These discussions have focused on scale, massing and design, context and relationships to other buildings and spaces in the vicinity, flood risk, landscaping and sustainable transport. The preapplication presentation is a response to these discussions.

5.2 Ward Members were consulted on 6 February 2017.

6.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES:

6.1 The Development Plan for Leeds currently comprises the following documents:

1. The Leeds Core Strategy (Adopted November 2014)
2. Saved Leeds Unitary Development Plan Policies (Reviewed 2006), included as Appendix 1 of the Core Strategy
3. The Natural Resources & Waste Local Plan (NRWLP, Adopted January 2013) including revised policies Minerals 13 and 14 (Adopted September 2015).
4. Any Neighbourhood Plan, once Adopted

6.2 Leeds Core Strategy

6.3 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.

6.4 Policy CC1: City Centre Development

The City Centre will be planned to accommodate at least the following:

c) Hospital, university, college, and cultural facilities to be retained in the City Centre.

6.5 Policy P10: Design states that: New development for buildings and spaces, and alterations to existing, should be based on a thorough contextual analysis to provide good design appropriate to its scale and function.

New development will be expected to deliver high quality innovative design that has evolved, where appropriate, through community consultation and which respects and enhances the variety of existing landscapes, streets, spaces and buildings according to the particular local distinctiveness and wider setting of the place, contributing positively towards place making and quality of life and be accessible to all.

6.6 Policy T1: Transport Management states that support will be given to the following management priorities:

c) To support wider transport strategy objectives for sustainable travel and to minimise congestion during peak periods.

6.7 **Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 - Retained Policies**

Policy BD6 All alterations and extensions should respect the scale, form, detailing and materials of the original building)

Policy GP5 (All planning considerations)

6.8 **Leeds Natural Resources and Waste DPD 2013 including revised policies Minerals 13 and 14 (Adopted September 2015).**

6.9 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 land use, energy, drainage and waste will be relevant to this proposal.

6.10 **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

6.11 Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (August 2011).

6.12 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

6.13 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and sets out the Government's planning policies and how they expect them to be applied.

6.14 Paragraph 6 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and paragraph 14 goes on to state that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6.15 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out the Core Planning Principles for plan making and decision taking. The 4th principle listed states that planning should always seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

7.0 **KEY ISSUES**

7.1 Principle of the Proposed Development

- 7.2 The proposals principal aim is to create a new entrance and presence to the St Peters Street face of the existing building, via the siting of an extension that would sit along the length of the north and partly west sides of the host building. The extension would also occupy an area currently used as surface car parking for 18 spaces by the Playhouse staff. The loss of the 18 parking spaces is acceptable as other car parking provision and sustainable transport modes are available in the wider area. As such the loss of the car parking would not have a detrimental impact on transportation for the Playhouse.
- 7.3 In addition, the theatre is currently a difficult building to navigate and as such it is proposed to undertake internal works to reconfigure the layout to improve legibility and accessibility. These works will be complex and varied and to avoid disruption to the theatre operation it is likely that development will be implemented in a phased manner. It is estimated that the full works (internal and external) would take approximately 12 months to complete.
- 7.4 The new extension and reconfigured spaces would be largely extending ancillary spaces and uses, such as café and theatre information area/s, focused on supporting the principle role of the building as a theatrical venue. As such Officers consider that the proposals would support and enhance the offer provided by the Playhouse and would enhance its vibrancy and presence in the streetscene. The proposals would support the Playhouse's role within the City Centre allowing it to extend its contribution to the culture and economy of Leeds.
- 7.5 Design, Massing, Scale and Layout
- 7.6 The extension would be designed as a series of bays which would alternate between being clear glazed panels and elevated solid ceramic patterned panels above clear glazing. The option of adding metal clad panels to assist the management of solar gain is also being considered. The solid panels could contain art and signage to add visually interesting and it is likely that the building would be up lit to pick up the patterning in the proposed ceramic panels. The extent of the glazing and the pulling back off the new floor slab internally would result in double and triple height spaces in the new foyer area of the extension. The new extension would conceal the existing service access to the north of the Barber Studio which fronts St Peters Street and as such will provide a new more aesthetically appealing façade to this part of the Playhouse. The new foyer would house a coffee shop, lifts and possibly a ticket collection and information point. Officers consider that the emerging design has the potential to create a visually exciting, high quality new 'front door' to the Playhouse which would enhance and enliven its appearance in the streetscene.
- 7.7 In addition to creating a new 'front door' to the theatre building the proposal would allow for a route through the extension that would be fully accessible and give users of the theatre options in the manner in which they arrive at the building and progress through it.
- 7.8 In addition, the existing Quarry Hill Playhouse Square entrance would be enhanced and made more visually welcoming and a third entrance would be created at the mid-tier level of the building which has the potential to connect with aspirations for a new public space adjacent to the site between the Playhouse and the nearby Leeds College site.
- 7.9 The existing signage and flood lighting to the fly tower is to be removed to reduce its visual impact. However, as stated above new lighting is proposed to the extension.

The lighting and signage to the existing entrance to Playhouse Square will also be upgraded. For these existing and proposed areas the lighting scheme will be designed to take account of 3 main conditions, these being daytime, evenings during a performance and out of hours to ensure the Playhouse has presence at these times. The lighting scheme will be designed to take account of the amenity of nearby residential dwellings as well as the safe use of the adjacent public highway.

- 7.10 Internal reconfiguration are proposed to aid users movements around the building and make it more apparent where the theatres and other uses are within the Playhouse. These include new lifts and staircases, a new route through and a new additional internal entrances in to the Quarry Theatre, the opening up of areas of floorspace in front of the current box office, between levels, to increase views around the interior of the building and improved routes to other parts of the wider building. In addition it is proposed to distribute the toilet provision more widely across the building so that all areas are better served. A new interval bar will be created in the space left near the Quarry Theatre by this distribution and a new hospitality space is to be created within the proposed extension with views out over the existing internal dining area below. This hospitality space would also have a glazed screen and balcony that overlooks St Peters Street. Existing office space will be refurbished and better connected via internal routes through the building.
- 7.11 The creation of a third flexible theatre/studio space in one of the voids in the bedrock of the building at the basement level of the Playhouse forms part of the proposals. Whilst this is at basement level, because of the sloping topography of the site this space would actually be on the same level as St Peters Street, but would only be accessible from the interior of the building.
- 7.12 In the Courtyard Theatre it is proposed to reconfigure the seating to allow 3 additional rows to be added to the central bank of seats.
- 7.13 Further works would be undertaken to move an existing substation to a more concealed location within an existing servicing well.
- 7.14 The scheme is within the setting of the Grade II listed former petrol filling station which is positioned on the roundabout where Eastgate meets St Peters Street. The existing Playhouse is visible when along Eastgate in the context of this listed structure and this will remain the case with the new extension. The filling station is on an island site in the centre of the roundabout and views of it from most angles included other buildings and structure from more contemporary eras. The addition of the extension, which will wrap around the side of the Playhouse building would not result in any diminishment in the presence of the listed building in the streetscene and or cause any significant harm to its character or visual amenity.
- 7.15 What are Members views on the emerging scale, massing and design of the proposals?**
- 7.16 Landscaped Areas
- 7.17 Externally the areas around the existing entrance have been subject to subsidence. As such this area and that proposed around the new entrances (to St Peters Street and part way up the side of the new extension) will be re-graded and set with new high quality paving, to ensure they are level, and that they meet with a minimal change in internal floor levels that is required as a result of the internal reconfigurations.

7.18 The existing soft/green landscape edge to the building is important as this screens blank areas of the building that cannot be activated due to the levels changes. This landscape scheme will be refreshed and replanted with appropriate species. In addition, new external lighting will be installed to enhance key features of the building and spaces around it.

7.19 What are Members views on the emerging landscape proposals?

7.20 Sustainable Transport

7.21 The scale of the proposals means that it falls below the threshold for requiring a Travel Plan. However the Playhouse are keen to promote sustainable means of transport to their staff. As such the current 18 staff car parking spaces to the St Peters Street side of the building, which will be removed for the development, will not be replaced elsewhere. In addition, the Playhouse has just created a new secure cycle parking facility for its staff which is sited adjacent to the existing Production Studio. Further to this some 6 cycle hoops, giving 12 cycle spaces, are proposed to be installed, as part of the proposal for the extension. These would be positioned adjacent to the existing entrance off Playhouse Square where they would be afforded some weather protection by the existing building's overhang.

7.22 The existing access arrangements for deliveries will be retained with these to be at the retained entrance to the Production Studios and Scene Dock areas to the south of the newly proposed extension.

7.23 In addition do Members have any other comments on the emerging proposals?

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 The key questions asked in the report above are as following:

7.15 What are Members views on the emerging scale, massing and design of the proposals?

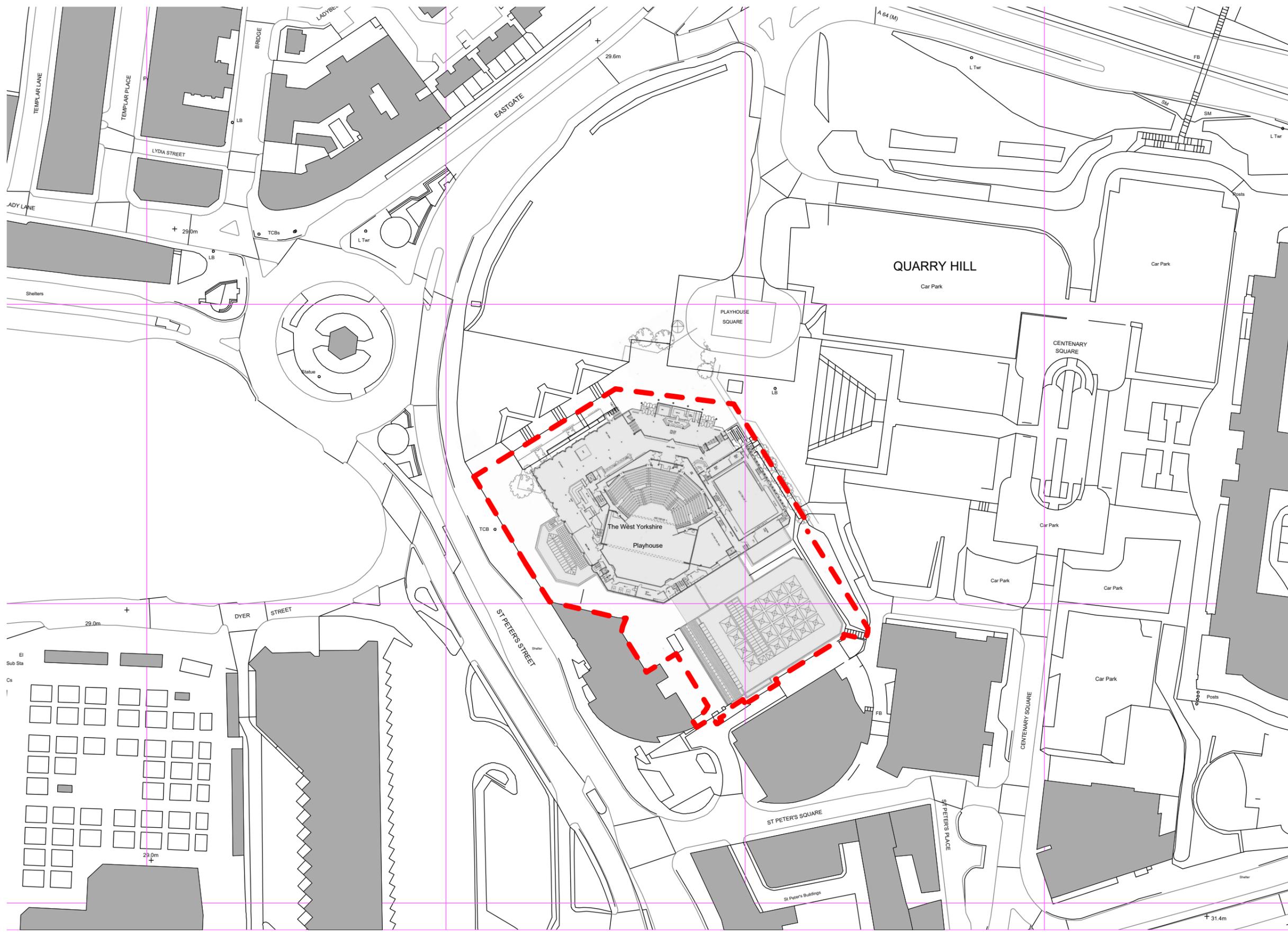
7.19 What are Members views on the emerging landscape proposals?

7.23 In addition do Members have any other comments on the emerging proposals?

Background Papers:
PREAPP/17/00047



Do not scale from drawing. Use figured dimensions only.
All dimensions to be checked on site by the contractor and any discrepancies to be notified to the architect prior to works being carried out.



INFORMATION

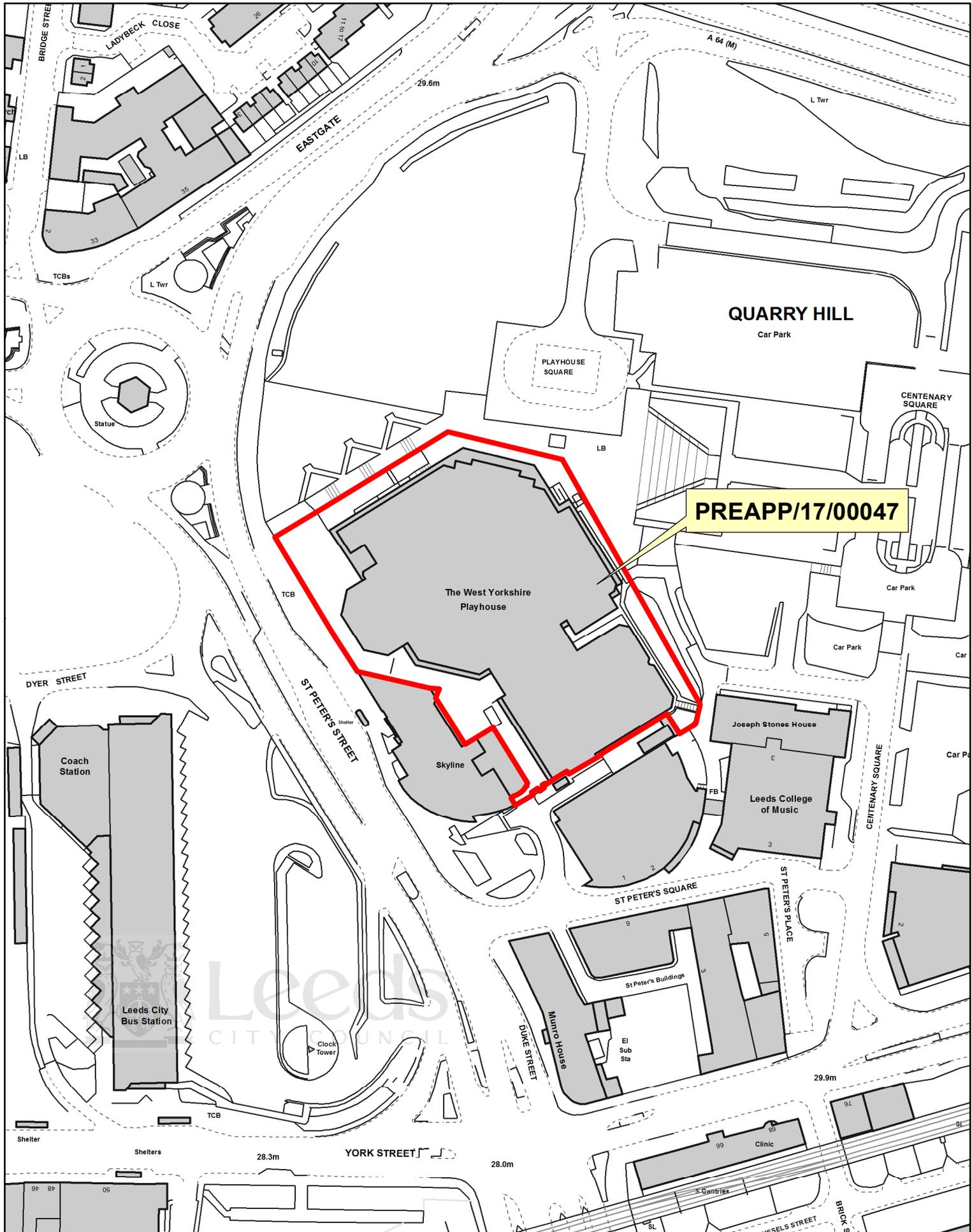
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Title: Red Line Boundary Plan
Project: G1626
Client: West Yorkshire Playhouse
CAD Ref: G1626 WYP GA.vwx

Revisions:

Drawing No: G1626 L(2)-08
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CITY PLANS PANEL

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