
Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

23rd November 2017

Pre-application presentation of the proposed redevelopment of existing podium building, to form one 15 storey and one 27 storey student accommodation building, incorporating an A4 unit and provision of new public realm, Merrion Way, Tower House Street and Brunswick Terrace, Leeds (PREAPP/16/00483)

Applicant – Unite Students

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

☐ Yes

Ward Members consulted

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 redevelopment of the existing two storey podium building located on the north side of Merrion Way between the First Direct Arena and the Merrion Centre. The proposals entail the demolition of the existing building and the construction of two new buildings, predominantly comprising student accommodation, together with new public realm and pedestrian routes between and around the buildings. The emerging proposals provide a significantly improved relationship with both the arena and Merrion Way and would help to realise aspirations for the area when the arena was located in this part of the city.

2.0 Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The site is located between Merrion Way, Brunswick Terrace and Tower House Street towards the northern edge of the city centre. Both the podium and the

neighbouring office block, Arena Point (formerly Tower North Central/Tower House), were constructed in the mid-1960's. Following the closure of the Grosvenor casino during 2016 the two storey podium building is now occupied solely by Wetherspoons' public house. A short-stay surface car park is currently operating in the rear yard.

- 2.2 Only the southern elevation of the building facing Merrion Way has an active frontage. The rear elevation, in particular, presents a very low quality appearance facing the arena. The building, and terrace to the front, sits over a basement car park used by occupiers of the Arena Point offices, accessed via two vehicular ramps down from Brunswick Terrace. The terraced area to the front of the building is used as an external seating area by Wetherspoons. At ground level there is a landscaped space to the east of the building enclosed by railings. The area of grass to the front of the terrace, in Council ownership, contains 5 trees and helps to give Merrion Way a green appearance. There is a gradual fall in levels from the west to the east.
- 2.3 The surrounding area is characterised by a number of large scale buildings. Arena Point is a 20 storey (77m) office building situated directly to the east of the site. The ground floor of the building is at the same level of the podium terrace. Beyond Tower House Street, Hume House is a part 2, part 5 storey vacant office building. The 26 storey (90m) clv Arena Village (formerly Opal 3) building containing student accommodation is situated to the north east. The Leeds First Direct Arena is a large building situated on the north side of Brunswick Terrace to the rear of the podium. Yorkshire Bank offices, located to the west of Brunswick Terrace, rises to 31m. The Merrion Centre, associated multi-storey car park and Merrion House, are located on the southern side of Merrion Way. To the north-west beyond the arena, Sky Plaza is the tallest building in the area (34 storeys / 106m).

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed to demolish the existing 2 storey podium building in its entirety. A basement parking area accessed from Brunswick Terrace adjacent to Arena Point would be reconfigured across the full width of the site providing parking for the occupiers Arena Point.
- 3.2 Two new buildings would be erected contemporaneously. The southern elevation of the buildings would be aligned with the front of Arena Point to the east with their principal axis arranged perpendicular to Merrion Way. The northern elevation of the buildings would project 1.8 metres closer to Brunswick Terrace than Arena Point. The west elevation of the western building (Tower A) would be located 9.9 metres further east than the end elevation of the existing podium building. The upper levels of Tower A would be 17 metres from Tower B to the east. Tower B would be situated 17.1 metres from the Arena Point tower.
- 3.3 The ground and first floor of Tower A would project 9 metres further to the east than the upper levels of the building, with a bridge link to Tower B at first floor level. The ground floor of Tower A, together with a small mezzanine area facilitated by generous floor to ceiling height, would be occupied by Wetherspoons. The premises would have its primary entrance on the elevation facing Merrion Way and be serviced from the west side, enabled by the removal of the existing basement access ramp and widening of the public realm on this side of the building. The proposals identify an active frontage around much of this building. Areas of external seating are intended around the south-west corner of the premises.

- 3.4 The first floor of Tower A, extending across the bridge link to Tower B, would contain a combination of dedicated communal / amenity space for the students and the first level of student accommodation which includes a mix of studios (30m²) and cluster flats. This building would be 15 storeys (approximately 46 metres) in height. Levels 2 to 14 would comprise 4, 6, 8 and 10 bedroom cluster flats, each cluster served by a 23m² kitchen/amenity space located at the corners of the building.
- 3.5 The student accommodation would be accessed from a reception area in the southern portion of Tower B to the east. The remainder of the ground floor of this building would accommodate bicycle storage facilities and back of house functions. Additional student facilities would be provided at mezzanine level in the northern part of the building. First floor level would comprise a mix of dedicated student amenity space, linked by bridge to Tower A, together with studios and cluster flats. Levels 2 to 14 would be a mirror of the accommodation in Tower A. Above this level the proportion of studios on each floor rises, providing 7 studios and 2 clusters on Levels 15 to 20 and 9 studios and 2 clusters at levels 21 to 26. This 27 storey building would be approximately 78m tall.
- 3.6 Across Tower A and Tower B there would be a total of 100 studios and 232 cluster flats of which there would be 34, four bedroom clusters; 32, six bedroom clusters; 34, eight bedroom clusters and 32, ten bedroom clusters.
- 3.7 In response to the materiality of the arena, Arena Point, Arena Village and the Merrion Centre new front, emerging proposals identify the use of metallic cladding as the principal building material. The main grid of the buildings would be articulated with chamfered returns to the secondary plane comprising curtain walling, spandrel panels and louvred panels with inward-opening windows located behind.
- 3.8 Illustrative proposals for the public realm identify new hardsurfacing extending across the entirety of the site. As such, the existing ramp at the western end of the podium building would be removed and infilled and would form part of a widened pedestrian approach along Brunswick Terrace from Merrion Way towards the arena. Similarly, the remaining area to the north of the new buildings would be resurfaced as part of an extended area of public realm between the towers and the arena.
- 3.9 A new north-south public, pedestrian, route would be formed through the centre of the site between Towers A and B directly linking Merrion Way with Brunswick Terrace and the arena. The 9 metre wide route would extend southwards through the existing strip of greenspace via new steps that would be formed on the southern edge of the terrace.

4.0 Relevant planning history

- 4.1 Planning permission for alterations and extensions to form two A3 units and the erection of a 14 storey hotel to the side and rear of the podium was granted on 15th November 2013 (11/03655/FU). During pre-application discussion regarding those proposals (PREAPP/10/00296) on 10th February 2011 following a Panel site visit Plans Panel stated the preference for redevelopment of the site and the desirability of fragmenting the podium to create a new route to and from the arena.

5.0 Consultation responses

- 5.1 LCC Transport Development Services (Highways) - no objection in principle to a student residential development subject to:

- Further information on vehicle access for deliveries and servicing;
- Details of management of the student drop-off and pick-up at the start and end of terms;
- The provision of long and short stay cycle and motorcycle parking, together with provision of disabled parking spaces and electric vehicle charging points within the basement car park;
- The provision of a construction management plan;
- Confirmation of the effect of wind on surrounding streets;
- Proposals to take into account counter terrorism requirements for the arena.

- 5.2 LCC Flood Risk Management (Drainage) – The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is not shown to be at risk of flooding from surface water although the presence of public sewers should be considered. The developer should look at options for significantly reducing surface water runoff. A surface water attenuation/ flow control system, may be required to reduce the rate of discharge from the site, post development.
- 5.3 LCC Contaminated Land Team – the proposed development is sensitive. A minimum of a Phase I Desk Study is required to support the application. Depending on the outcome of the phase 1 study a phase 2 site investigation and remediation statement may also be required.
- 5.4 SDU Landscape - support the principle of positive redevelopment proposals for this location. The idea of a link through between buildings, linking from Merrion Way through to the Arena, is encouraging. The potential to provide active frontages to both Merrion Way and the arena is welcomed. The creative use of lighting can encourage use of the area through longer periods and add to the legibility of the scheme in its wider and more immediate contexts. Proposed A3/4 uses may well encourage this.

The existing, off-site, mature trees provide significant visual amenity to the Merrion Way corridor. Gaining access through these trees would need to be carefully considered, in order to avoid unnecessary damage. A survey and appraisal of existing and proposed spaces, and how people will use these, could allow the development of an integrated overall scheme. A comprehensive landscape scheme could provide new tree planting to establish to early maturity before the current trees reach their useful lifespan. This might allow for a managed change over a longer time period, in order to ensure continuity in the landscape and retain the visual amenity (and nature conservation/biodiversity) benefits of the existing trees.

6.0 Policy

6.1 Development Plan

- 6.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of decision making, the Development Plan for Leeds currently comprises the following documents:

- The Leeds Core Strategy (Adopted November 2014)
- Saved UDP Policies (2006), included as Appendix 1 of the Core Strategy
- The Natural Resources & Waste Local Plan (NRWLP, Adopted January 2013) including revised policies Minerals 13 and 14 (Adopted September 2015).
- Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan (Adopted November 2017)

- Any Neighbourhood Plan, once Adopted

6.2 **Core Strategy**

6.2.1 Relevant Core Strategy policies include:

Spatial Policy 1 prioritises the redevelopment of previously developed land within the Main Urban Area, in a way that respects and enhances the local character and identity of places and neighbourhoods.

Spatial Policy 3 seeks to maintain and enhance the role of the City Centre as an economic driver for the District and City Region, including by expanding city living.

Spatial Policy 11 includes a priority related to improved facilities for pedestrians to promote safety and accessibility.

Policy CC1(b) states that residential development will be encouraged within the City Centre providing that it does not prejudice town centre functions and provides a reasonable level of amenity for occupiers.

Policy H6B refers to proposals for purpose-built student accommodation. Development will be controlled to take the pressure off the need to use private housing; to avoid the loss of existing housing suitable for families; to avoid excessive concentrations of student accommodation; to avoid locations that would lead to detrimental impacts on residential amenity; and to provide satisfactory living accommodation for the students.

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 that development protects and enhance the district's historic assets in particular, historically and locally important buildings, skylines and views.

Policies T1 and T2 identify transport management and accessibility requirements to ensure new development is adequately served by highways and public transport, and with safe and secure access for pedestrians, cyclists and people with impaired mobility.

Policy G9 states that development will need to demonstrate biodiversity improvements.

Policies EN1 and EN2 set targets for CO² reduction and sustainable design and construction, and at least 10% low or zero carbon energy production on-site.

6.3 **Saved Unitary Development Plan Review policies (UDPR)**

6.3.1 Relevant Saved Policies include:

Policy GP5 states that all relevant planning considerations should be resolved.

BD2 states that new buildings should complement and enhance existing skylines, vistas and landmarks.

BD5 requires new buildings to consider both their own amenity and that of their surroundings including usable space, privacy and satisfactory daylight and sunlight.

Policy LD1 sets out the criteria for landscape schemes. The Proposals Map identifies areas of the site not occupied by buildings, including the space between the podium and Arena Point, as public space.

6.4 Site Allocations Plan Submission Draft (SAP)

The site is not specifically identified in the SAP. The area between the existing podium building and the Yorkshire Bank building is identified as Civic Space (CVC23).

6.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 6.5.1 The NPPF recognises the presumption in favour of sustainable development. 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).

Section 7 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. 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;
- 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.

6.6 Supplementary guidance

Tall Buildings Design Guide SPD

Travel Plans SPD

Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

City Centre Urban Design Strategy SPG

Parking SPD

6.7 Other material considerations

- 6.7.1 The Leeds Standard was adopted by the Council's Executive Board on 17th September 2014 to ensure excellent quality in the delivery of new council homes. 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 standard closely reflects the Government's Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard which seek to promote a good standard of internal amenity for all housing types and tenures. Whilst neither of these documents has been adopted as formal planning policy and only limited weight can be attached to them, given their evidence base in

determining the minimum space requirements, they are currently used to help inform decisions on the acceptability of development proposals.

7.0 Issues

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

7.1 Principle of the development

7.1.1 In approving the arena on the northern fringe of the city centre it was envisaged that it would act as a catalyst for investment and regeneration of the area. This has occurred, in part, along the southern side of Merrion Way with the Merrion Centre New Front, refurbished multi-storey car park and redevelopment of Merrion House. However, to date, despite a number of schemes previously coming forward the area between Merrion Way and the arena remains largely unimproved. Earlier proposals for extensions to the existing podium building would have enhanced its appearance and that of its surroundings, but would have failed to provide meaningful changes in the permeability of the area or the extent of public realm. Consequently, the current scheme will help to realise aspirations for the area when the arena was proposed in this part of the city.

7.1.2 The scheme is located in a key location between the arena and the Merrion Centre such that the proposals form a crucial component in the regeneration of the arena quarter. The existing podium building is of limited architectural merit and it presents only a limited amount of active frontage onto Merrion Way. Side and rear elevations are blank and unsightly. Similarly, the space to the side and rear of the building detracts from the wider appearance of the area. Further, the linear arrangement of the building presents an obstacle to permeability without making best use of the land. The demolition of the existing building offers opportunities to address each of these issues and positively responds to Panel comments when earlier schemes were considered.

7.2 The proposed uses

7.2.1 The site is located within the designated City Centre. Core Strategy Policy CC1(b) encourages residential development in city centre locations providing that the development does not prejudice the functions of the City Centre and that it provides a reasonable level of amenity for occupiers.

7.2.2 Policy H6B relates specifically to the provision of student housing. The policy was adopted following the Core Strategy Inspector's rejection of the Council's position that the policy should include a test for need when considering applications for new student housing. Elsewhere, it has been established that there are 38,496 university students in the city presently without access to purpose-built student accommodation suggesting that additional provision is unlikely to result in an over-supply of purpose-built student accommodation in the near future.

7.2.3 The proposal is therefore considered against the criteria set out within the adopted policy Core Strategy (identified below in italics):

(i) *To help extend the supply of student accommodation taking pressure off the need for private housing to be used.*

The development of 1020 student bed-spaces (comprising 100 studios and 232 clusters) would help to take pressure off the need to use private housing for student accommodation.

(ii) *To avoid the loss of existing housing suitable for family accommodation.*

The site currently accommodates a building occupied by a public house which would be replaced as part of the scheme. The development would therefore meet the objective.

(iv) *To avoid locations which are not easily accessible to the universities.*

The site is located towards the north-eastern edge of the city centre and is well-placed with regard to access to both the University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University. Potential improvements to the public realm around the site, including Merrion Way, could improve accessibility further.

Criteria (iii) and (v) of the policy are considered in the amenity section, paragraph 7.3

7.2.4 **Do Members consider that the proposed use of the buildings for student accommodation is acceptable in principle?**

7.3 Amenity considerations

7.3.1 Criteria (iii) of Core Strategy policy H6B aims *to avoid excessive concentrations of student accommodation which would undermine the balance and wellbeing of communities.*

7.3.2 The proposed development involves 1020 student bed-spaces, comprising a mix of studios (100) and cluster flats (232). The Arena Village student building is located close to the north east of the site and contains approximately 560 bedspaces. Beyond Clay Pit Lane, the Plaza and Sky Plaza developments contain in the region of 650 student bedspaces. The area is also a focus for additional new purpose-built student accommodation. The St Alban's Place scheme presently being constructed on Belgrave Street will deliver 376 studios; the "Walkabout" development on Cookridge Street will provide 96 studios; a planning application to construct 353 studios at Symons House, Belgrave Street is currently under consideration (17/06605/FU); and there are also proposals 312 studios in the Portland Crescent site on this agenda (PREAPP/17/00489). Consequently, if all proposed developments were to be constructed, there would be approximately 3,350 student bed-spaces within a radius of 250 metres of the site.

7.3.3 In addition to the arena the area supports a mix of uses, including retail and offices and a range of commercial uses, together with pockets of residential accommodation located primarily to the east side of Wade Lane / Lovell Park Road. However, it is not considered that these and other existing residents in the city centre would be adversely affected by purpose-built student accommodation in the proposed location given the way in which the area is currently used. Similarly, it is not considered that the number of students proposed would result in an excessive concentration of students within the context of a busy, mixed use, city centre environment. Finally, routes from the development towards both the university campuses and the heart of the city centre would be through commercial areas such that residential communities would be unlikely to be adversely affected by the student use.

- 7.3.4 Criteria (v) of policy H6B requires that *the proposed accommodation provides satisfactory internal living accommodation in terms of daylight, outlook and juxtaposition of living rooms and bedrooms.*
- 7.3.5 The Leeds Standard sets a minimum target of 37sqm for a self-contained studio flat. This standard closely reflects the Government's Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard which seeks to promote a good standard of internal amenity for all housing types and tenures. No distinction is drawn within these documents between open market and student accommodation. Whilst neither of these documents has been adopted as formal planning policy in Leeds given their evidence base in determining the minimum space requirements they are currently used to help inform decisions on the acceptability of development proposals.
- 7.3.6 Members have visited several student housing schemes to review the level of amenity provided for occupiers. These include the Fresh Student Living at Darley Bank in Derby (April 2014) where the studio was 22sqm; Downing's Cityside, Calverley Street, Leeds (May 2016) where the student showflat was also 22sqm; and Vita Student's Telephone House, Sheffield (September 2016) where the average studio size was 20sqm, supported by a large area of dedicated, internal, amenity space. Planning permission for Vita's Leeds scheme at St Alban's Place in which the smallest 78% of studios would be just over 20sqm was granted April 2017 (16/07741/FU). In approving the scheme it was recognised that the size of the majority of the studios would be restricted, providing little or no opportunity for socialising, but that each studio would benefit from a good outlook, natural daylighting and a suitable noise environment. Critically, the additional "hub" facilities providing dedicated amenity spaces within the building, together with opportunities to use the neighbouring public space, would provide acceptable levels of amenity for the occupiers of the development. More recently, in September 2017, City Plans Panel received a pre-application presentation in relation to the proposed redevelopment of Symons House, Belgrave Street where the proposed studio size ranged from 21.3sqm to 44.2sqm, supported by areas of dedicated amenity space.
- 7.3.7 The proposed internal arrangement of the student accommodation identifies a mix of studios and cluster flats. The studios would be 30m² and being of a regular, rectangular, shape would provide a usable and unrestricted space for occupants. The 11m² cluster flats would be organised in groups of 4, 6, 8 and 10 bedroom clusters. Each of the clusters, regardless of size, would be served by a 23m² kitchen/amenity space located at the corners of the building. Larger clusters may warrant larger amenity spaces to provide satisfactory internal living accommodation. All of the occupiers of the two buildings would also benefit from dedicated communal spaces comprising uses such as meeting rooms, games area, tv room, study rooms and common spaces at ground, mezzanine and first floor levels of the buildings extending to 830m² in total, in addition to a 141m² reception / lobby area.
- 7.3.8 A minimum separation distance of 17 metres between buildings would ensure that occupants in rooms facing east or west would experience acceptable outlooks and daylighting. A limited number of rooms would face north towards the arena. Those in Tower A would have views towards the front elevation of the arena and more oblique views over the expanse of the open space to the front of the arena. North-facing rooms in the lower element of Tower B would face the side elevation of the arena. However, at a distance of 14 metres the relationship with the arena would not be unacceptable.
- 7.3.9 The commercial space at the lowest levels of Tower A is largely required to replace the existing Wetherspoon's public house who would remain the principal occupiers

of the space. Additionally, the new arrangement would help to animate the area surrounding the buildings and help to deliver a critical mass of development required to ensure that the area attracts people on days when the arena is not in use.

7.3.10 Do Members consider that the living conditions within the student accommodation would be acceptable?

7.4 Townscape considerations

7.4.1 The existing building and its immediate curtilage does not contribute positively to the character of the area. Therefore, the demolition and redevelopment of the site is acceptable in principle. Demolition also provides the opportunity to bring forward a more efficient use of the land alongside improvements to permeability suggested by Panel when considering earlier proposals for the site.

7.4.2 Any new development must provide good design that is appropriate to its location, scale and function (Core Strategy Policy P10). Part (i) of the policy states that the size, scale, design and layout should be appropriate to its context and the development should protect and enhance skylines and views (ii). These policies accord with guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework which requires that development establishes a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit; to respond to local character and history; and to reflect the identity of local surroundings.

7.4.3 As noted at paragraph 2.3 the area is characterised by a number of large buildings. The Tall Buildings Design Guide, which pre-dated the construction of the arena but recognised the more recent Sky Plaza and Arena Village towers, identified that there could be the opportunity for a cluster of tall buildings in the area to the north of the Merrion Centre which includes the site. This opportunity overlaps with a potential string of tall buildings following the Inner Ring Road and also the potential for tall buildings to announce a northern gateway to the city centre. Members will be aware of initial proposals for a tower at Hume House to the east such that its potential development has been considered when reviewing the current proposals.

7.4.4 The applicant reviewed a number of options with officers prior to arriving at the proposed scheme. The height of the proposed buildings is such that, in the absence of a redeveloped Hume House, buildings along the northern side of Merrion Way would rise incrementally from both ends to a peak mid-way along the street at Tower B. Should Hume House be re-developed the new buildings would sit within a general context of buildings increasing in height from west to east. Either scenario is considered acceptable but clearly the wider impact is partly dependent upon the context in which the buildings come forward.

7.4.5 Tower A would be some 20 metres taller than the highest point of the Yorkshire Bank building. Given the distance between the two it would not appear out of scale and in views from Queen Square conservation area to the west it would not be very visible such that it would have a negligible impact upon its setting. Similarly, although Tower A would be 10 metres taller than the arena, when viewed across the arena plaza it would appear as a very much smaller building by reason of the mass of the arena and the position of Tower A in the background. It is considered that the relationship between Tower A and its neighbours is suitable.

7.4.6 Tower B would be 32 metres taller than Tower A and 16 metres taller than Arena Point. As noted, the building would represent a high point along Merrion Way. However, the building would not appear out of scale with its neighbours and would

sit within a cluster of existing taller buildings in the locality including Arena Village, Arena Point and Sky Plaza. From Queen Square conservation area to the west the building would be seen as a background building screening those taller existing buildings behind but Merrion House would remain most prominent in the foreground. As such, the building would have a limited but acceptable impact upon the setting of the conservation area. The scale of the building, and that of Tower A, would be more apparent when viewed from the east end of Merrion Way but the impact in this area of tall and large buildings, combined with suitably sized spaces around them, would not be harmful. The relative scale of Tower B to the arena also appears appropriate when viewed across the arena plaza, appearing as a narrow point of height in the background of the building which, in combination with Tower A, would prevent the leakage of the space and reinforce the urban fabric.

7.4.7 The existing podium building limits views of the lower parts of the arena when viewed from Merrion Way, including when emerging from the Merrion Centre northern mall. Whilst Tower A would screen more of the side elevation of the arena from this location as it would be located almost 10 metres further to the east than the podium building it would enable meaningfully wider views of the arena frontage than is currently achievable.

7.4.8 The separation of the two towers (9 metres at ground and first floor and 17 metres above) enables new full height views of the side of the arena to be opened up, midway along Merrion Way.

7.4.9 **Do Members consider that the scale of the proposed new buildings and their relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable?**

7.5 Public realm and permeability

7.5.1 The existing environment around the site is of limited quality and that to the rear of the existing podium building detracts from the appearance of the area. The linear form of the existing building also reduces permeability around the area. The proposed placement of the buildings enables new and enhanced pedestrian routes to be provided around the site, to and from the arena and likewise, to and from the Merrion Centre. The new space between the two towers would be 9 metres in width at pedestrian level. Through the removal of the ramp and the setting back of the building the usable width of Brunswick Terrace between Yorkshire Bank and proposed Tower A would double compared to the existing situation. This new public realm would compensate for the loss of public space resulting from construction on part of an area of protected space at the eastern end of the development.

7.5.2 The scale of the new buildings would be complemented by the rhythm of space created along the northern side of Merrion Way which would also represent a foil to the continuous Merrion Centre development on the southern side of the street.

7.5.3 The proposed public realm is in the early stages of development albeit it is clear that the arrangement of buildings would enable and encourage additional north-south movements through the site. In doing so care needs to be taken when developing a comprehensive and integrated landscape strategy to ensure that the intended route through the trees limits any harm to them and improves the amenities of the area.

7.5.4 **Do Members support the emerging approach to the public realm?**

7.6 Transport and connectivity

7.6.1 The site is located in a highly sustainable location close to the many amenities offered by the City Centre. It is also located in a position constrained by the proximity to the arena, the servicing requirements of neighbouring buildings including Arena Point, and by the existing use of Merrion Way which provides access to the Merrion Centre car park and other users.

7.6.2 A servicing strategy is presently being developed intended to illustrate how the proposed development would operate without unduly affecting the activities of surrounding businesses or harming traffic or pedestrian safety. Further information is needed to support the planning application identifying how student drop-off and pick-up at the start and end of terms would be managed; confirming servicing arrangements for the buildings, including ad hoc deliveries; how car parking provision in the basement would be allocated and managed; and travel planning measures including the facilities to be provided for cyclists.

7.7 Wind

7.7.1 The scale of the proposed buildings and proposed changes in the way in which it is intended that people use and traverse the area is such that the impacts of wind should be addressed through the forthcoming application. A detailed wind study is required to demonstrate the likely wind environment such that, if necessary, any wind mitigation measures can be built into the proposals. The study will need to take into account the implications of any other proposals for tall buildings that may come forward concurrently.

7.8 Conclusion

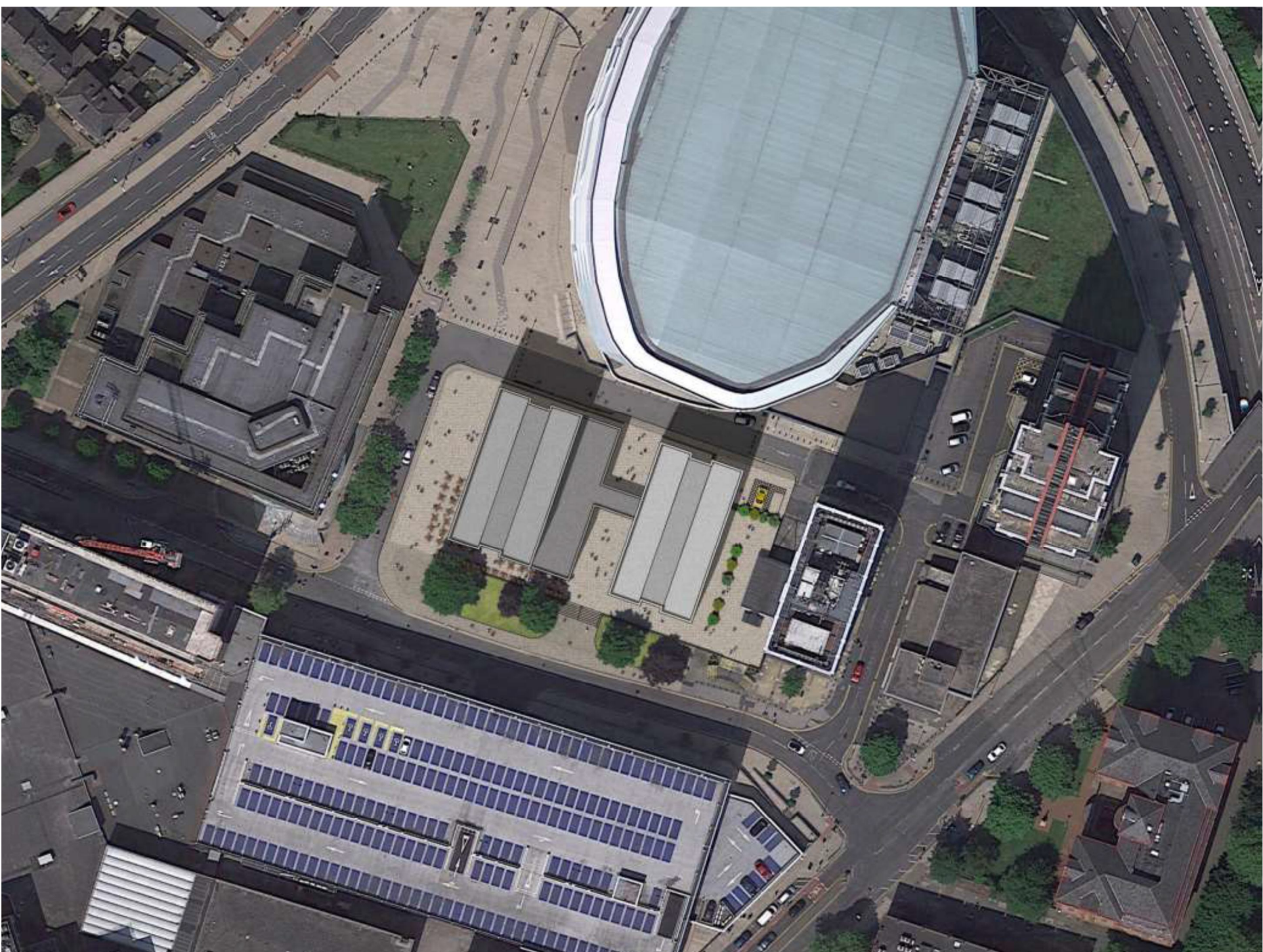
7.8.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and the presentation, and are invited to provide feedback, in particular, on the issues outlined below:

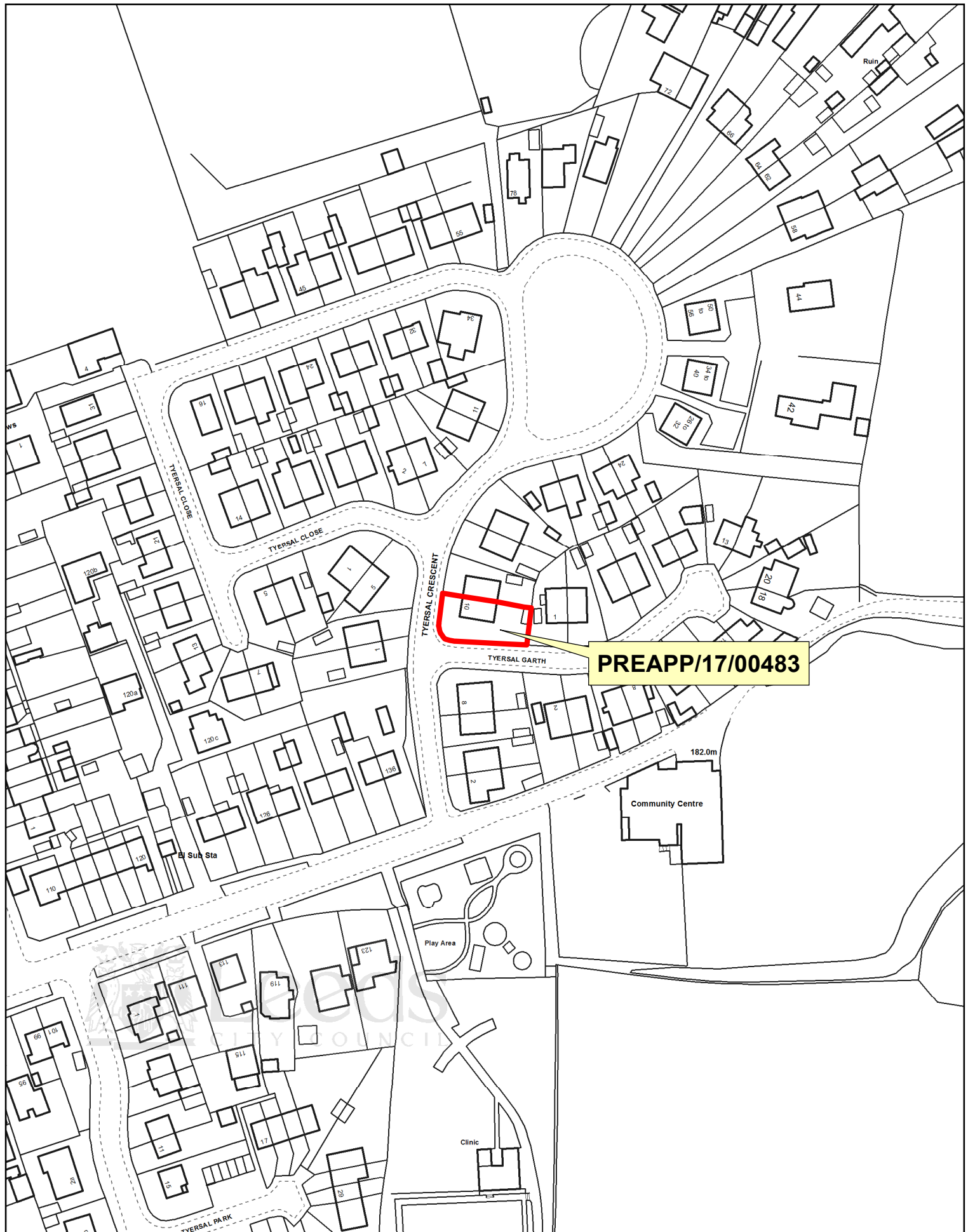
Do Members consider that the proposed use of the buildings for student accommodation is acceptable in principle? (7.2.4)

Do Members consider that the living conditions within the student accommodation would be acceptable? (7.3.10)

Do Members consider that the scale of the proposed new buildings and their relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable? (7.4.9)

Do Members support the emerging approach to the public realm? (7.5.4)





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SCALE : 1/1500

