



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

Originator: Jane Cash

Tel:

Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

Date: 23rd November 2017

Subject: Quarry Hill – Gateway Court and Playhouse Square landscape proposals

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

☐ No

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.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 The success of recent capital investments in our spaces and cultural venues such as the delivery of the new green space at Sovereign Square, Little Neville Street and the redevelopment of Bond Court, The Carriageworks Theatre, the City Museum, the refurbishment of both the Leeds Grand Theatre and the City Varieties, the development of new headquarters for Northern Ballet and the opening of the First Direct Arena have emphasised the importance of continued investment in the cultural fabric of the city centre and the direct benefits it brings to the city as the regional capital of the city region.
- 1.2 The proposed landscape improvement works at Quarry Hill are an integral part of this investment strategy. It is a key gateway location and strategically important as an area of city centre public realm, whose redevelopment will add significant value from a place making perspective but also bring a new identity and profile to Quarry Hill as a new city centre destination.

- 1.3 The proposed improvements will help to support the redevelopment proposals agreed by City Plans Panel for the Caddick, West Yorkshire Playhouse and Leeds City College sites at Quarry Hill. The proposals were presented to the Council's Executive Board on 20th September 2017 where they were welcomed and obtained approval to spend £1.926m from the Capital Scheme.
- 1.4 The Council has the benefit of permitted development rights to carry out the landscaping works pursuant to Class A (a), Part 12, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. The proposals are therefore brought to City Plans Panel for information and comment only.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 Quarry Hill is located in the east side of the city centre adjacent to Eastgate Roundabout and is bounded by the A61 St. Peter's Street and Regent Street to the west, York Street to the south, Marsh Lane to the East and the A64, New York Road to the North. It is one of the city's key cultural destinations, home to West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds College of Music, Stanley and Audrey Burton Theatre, Red Ladder theatre and Northern Ballet as well as the Quarry House Department of Health Building. It is also home to a variety of bars and restaurants such as Café 164, The Wardrobe, Kendells Bistro, Aagrah's and Ipsum Vinoteca. Development has commenced on the NE part of Quarry Hill to deliver the new campus for Leeds City College.
- 2.2 At the western entrance to the site is a triangular area of green space that is owned by the Council. It is 0.4 ha (1 acre) in size and rises upwards almost 6m from Eastgate Roundabout up to the entrance of the West Yorkshire Playhouse through a series of steps and ramps. It consists mainly of large grassed banks with several trees located along its side and is known as Gateway Court. There are 9 trees that run up through the site along its southern boundary. These are relatively mature but obscure views within the space and beyond it and in places prevent the site from meeting disabled access requirements. At the top of the green space is Playhouse Square which is currently used as a pay and display car park. Both of these sites – Gateway Court and Playhouse Square are the subject of the proposed landscape improvement works as detailed in this report.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- The site itself has no relevant planning history. However 3 adjacent sites on Quarry Hill have recently proposed major redevelopment works which would directly link to the site.
- 3.1 Application reference 16/05468/FU: Hybrid planning application for Leeds City College for full planning permission (phase 1) to erect part 5 storey rising to part 10 storey educational building (use Class D 1) including associated access, parking and landscaping and outline planning permission (Phase 2) for part 10 and part 11 storey educational buildings (use class D1). Approved December 2016 and currently being constructed on site.

- 3.2 Application reference 14/06534/OT: Outline consent granted for a mix of residential, office, educational and hotel accommodation, ancillary A3 (cafes restaurants), A4 (bars) A5 (take-aways) and A1 (retail) uses, a D1 medical centre, basement level car parking to serve the development and a public Multi Storey Car Park. Approved November 2017.
- 3.3 Application reference 17/05349/LA: Redevelopment of West Yorkshire Playhouse to include entrance extension onto St Peters Street; alterations to Playhouse Square entrance and alterations to internal spaces; new substation enclosure; new screens to service areas; new studio space in Rock Void area with supporting accommodation and new external lighting scheme. Pending Consideration.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The approach to improving Gateway Court has been to provide a clear and legible space that is: well connected to the remainder of the site and the city centre inviting connections between spaces and enabling fully accessible routes and is unified in terms of the use of materials and character. In doing this, the approach has also taken account of the requirement to develop continuous public realm throughout the site that provides a series of 'key moments' for relaxation, interaction, performance etc. It takes advantage of the axial geometry of the site but uses landscaping to soften the edges of what is currently quite a 'hard' urban space and explores the potential to maximise the 'key moments' by locating them within the sunnier sides of the site, offering a variety in activity and functions and to significantly increase the amount of green infrastructure through the main axial route of the site.
- 4.2 The sites level changes are addressed through a series of lawned terraces and planted slopes with steps and ramps which will offer a variety of routes through and up/down the site although these form part of the public realm itself, with inbuilt benches, terraces, stopping points offering views either back to the city centre or up to Quarry House. At level 33.0m there is an important link to West Yorkshire Playhouse, whose mid-level entrance at this level opens out on to Gateway Court into a paved terrace as well as being the new location for the Playhouse box office and interval bar. This provides opportunities for outdoor seating, café spill out or outdoor performance space which could be a really vibrant location within the space itself. Just above this is a promontory which will have feature seating developed for it and potentially is a location for public art but will provide a great viewing platform for students, residents and visitors to orientate themselves within the eastern side of the city centre. Lighting at night time will also be a key element.
- 4.3 Playhouse Square is an important element of the Quarry Hill landscape proposal scheme. Currently it forms part of the existing car park on site but importantly provides 8 disabled car parking spaces and coach turning facilities. As part of the wider Quarry Hill proposals Playhouse Square will need to remain as the West Yorkshire Playhouse's pick up and drop off point, and as a vehicle

access and turning area for the Caddick development and Leeds City College development.

- 4.4 In collaboration with Caddick Developments and Leeds City College, Playhouse Square has been realigned to accommodate the wider site infrastructure requirements for pick up and drop off but also now plays a role in terms of its public realm as one of the sites 'key moments'. It achieves this with new tree planting and feature seating to define the axial route through the site and new hard landscaping materials and lighting consistent with the new public realm proposals for Gateway Court. In addition the drop off and pick up has also managed to retain the 8 disabled parking bays that sit directly adjacent to West Yorkshire Playhouse.
- 4.5 The scheme as a whole, including Gateway Court and Playhouse Square will see the significant enhancement of approximately 0.4ha of existing green space and will provide an additional 0.2ha of new green space. The site will provide 33 new trees alongside new areas of shrub planting and grassed terraces.
- 4.6 A key constraint from a design development point of view relate to the transitioning from the 29.0m level at Eastgate roundabout up to 35.0m level at Playhouse Square. The design solution proposed successfully addresses this issue using a series of ramps and terraces creating a wheelchair accessible route through the site.
- 4.7 In addition levels across the site that connect into West Yorkshire Playhouse and Leeds city College building have a 1.15m level difference between them across the site. The design has been adapted to reduce the impact of this level change through the promontory area of the greenspace, reducing the distance users may have to travel to avoid using the stepped interface which forms part of the Leeds City College design.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The wider redevelopment of the Quarry Hill site, including proposals for the West Yorkshire Playhouse, the Caddick Development scheme and the new Leeds City College present the opportune moment to bring forward significant landscape improvement proposals for the Council's existing triangular green space on site which has a frontage on to all of the schemes outlined above. The development of the Gateway Court and Playhouse Square proposals at this time will ensure that when the West Yorkshire Playhouse and Leeds City College open in September 2019, the new green space will also have been completed.
- 5.2 Gateway Court and Playhouse Square landscape proposals will provide a series of well-connected spaces with a variety of character and uses that will be complementary to the proposed adjacent developments but also will give the green space an identity in its own right. It supports the ambitions of the Best Council Plan and is also a key component of the Council's Breakthrough Project '*World-class events and a vibrant city centre that all can benefit from*'.

- 5.3 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the emerging proposals.

Background Papers:

Design and Cost report for the development and delivery of design proposals for public realm improvements at Quarry Hill – Executive Board 20th September 2017



Appendix 1 – General Landscape Arrangement