



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

6th December 2018

Pre-application presentation of proposed office development at land bounded by Wellington Street / Grove Street, Cropper Gate, Skinner Street and Lisbon Street, Leeds (PREAPP/18/00458)

Applicant – McLaren Property

Electoral Wards Affected:

Little London and Woodhouse

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 proposed development 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 a new multi-storey office development on land presently occupied by three office buildings.

2.0 Site and surroundings

2.1 The site comprises three office blocks dating from the 1980's and 1990's. Two of the buildings have been vacant for 18 months and the third, Bank of Scotland offices, is approximately 50 per cent vacant. The three, four and five storey buildings are constructed around a central, hard-surfaced courtyard over basement car parking with an open, soft landscaped frontage, onto Skinner Street.

2.2 The site has an essentially rectangular plan form and is bordered by public highway on all four sides. The southern edge of the site abuts Grove Street, a short street running parallel to Wellington Street between Cropper Gate and Lisbon Street.

Grove Street has recently been laid out as part of the City Connect cycle route. A narrow soft landscaping strip separates Grove Street from Wellington Street. Lisbon Street runs north from Wellington Street along the eastern edge of the site. The West One / Castle House Offices are situated on the east side of the road with surface car parks on the former site of the International Pool located to its north. Skinner Street runs along the northern boundary of the site and provides access to off-street parking within the site and to off-street parking for offices at Ebor Court on the northern side of the street. Derelict offices to the south-west of Ebor Court were demolished last year. Cropper Gate borders the western edge of the site linking Skinner Street back to Wellington Street, a 5 lane highway at this point. Redevelopment of the former Yorkshire Post site on the southern side of Wellington Street commenced earlier this year.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 It is intended to demolish the existing buildings and to construct a single building on the site. The ground floor of the building would comprise the main office reception, a double height space located on the south-eastern corner to the building, and a secondary office entrance situated in the north-east corner of the building. The two entrances would intersect in an atrium space that would run vertically throughout the building. The ground floor would also accommodate up to four commercial units (use class A1, A3 or A4); a plant room and vehicular access to a two level basement car park containing up to 132 car parking spaces. The north-east and south east corners of the building would be chamfered back from the building line at ground and first floor levels to create more space around the corner entrances. Additionally, the footways around the north, east and western peripheries of the site would be widened to 3.8m, 3.3m and 3.0m respectively.
- 3.2 Other than for a void created by the double-height space the ground level floorplate of the building would be repeated at first floor level. Above this level there would be a consistent floorplate between the second floor and eleventh floors. Thereafter, the remaining six floors would step back incrementally from the southern and eastern elevation in pairs of floors enabling the provision of rooftop terraced areas. In total, the development would provide approximately 40,000m² of grade A office accommodation.

4.0 Relevant planning history

- 4.1 Planning permission was granted on 25th September 1987 for a three-storey office block and a four-storey office block on the western and north-eastern areas of the site (H/20/269/87).
- 4.2 Planning permission for the construction of a five-storey office building in the south-eastern area of the site was granted on 24th February 1998 (20/675/97/FU).
- 4.3 Members of City Plans Panel considered pre-application proposals for redevelopment of the land to the north at Lisbon Square with two residential buildings (part 21 and 24 storey, and part 10 and 15 storey) on 25th October 2018 (PREAPP/18/00239).

5.0 Consultation responses

- 5.1 Environment Agency – the site is identified in an area identified as being in Flood Zones 2 and 3 and a secondary aquifer. The development should be accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrating that the development will be

safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere and for the application to pass a sequential test. New development should connect to the public mains sewer, wherever possible. It will need to be demonstrated that there will be no environmental impacts from the development.

5.2 LCC Flood Risk Management – As the proposed development is located in Flood Zones 2 and 3 a Flood Risk Assessment will be required to evaluate surface water drainage and the management of flood risk. The access level to the basement car park should be related to the 1:100 year flood level with due consideration for the effects of climate change.

5.3 LCC Highways – A transport assessment is required to confirm the proposed servicing and basement access arrangements taking into account tracking, visibility and suitability of the proposed delivery and refuse collection areas. The radius of the bend in Skinner Street may prohibit delivery or refuse vehicles aligning suitably with the kerb line and may need improvement and/or Skinner Street may also need to be widened if a lay-by is not provided. Compensation is required for the loss of any pay and display spaces required to form a loading bay or lay-by. The transport assessment should include modelling of the Kirkstall Road/Wellington Street gyratory at the current time and also when City Square is closed to traffic.

Footways around the site should be perfecta paving in line with the City Centre palette. Adopted footways, a minimum width of 3m, should be provided around the building. The footway facing Wellington Street could be widened towards Grove Street subject to the road not being required for loading; provision of access to the post box; retention of a 2.2m width for the cycle lane; and a Traffic Regulation Order.

An application should be supported by a Travel Plan. The development should provide cycle / motorcycle parking and facilities set out in the Parking SPD.

5.4 LCC Contaminated Land Team - A minimum of a Phase 1 Desk Study Report will be required in support of the application. Depending on the outcome of the Phase 1 Desk Study, a Phase 2 Report and Remediation Statement may also be required.

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 for this proposal, 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).

6.2 Leeds Core Strategy (CS)

6.2.1 Relevant Core Strategy policies include:

- Spatial Policy 1 prioritises the redevelopment of previously developed land 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.
- Spatial Policy 11 includes a priority related to improved facilities for pedestrians to promote safety and accessibility and provision for people with impaired mobility.
- Policy CC1 outlines the planned growth within the City Centre including at least 655,000sqm of office floorspace.
- Policy CC3 states new development will need to improve connections within the City Centre.
- Policy EC3 safeguards existing employment land.
- Policy P10 requires new development to provide high quality innovative design and protecting and enhancing 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.
- Policy EN5 identifies requirements to manage flood risk.

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

6.3.1 Relevant Saved Policies include:

- Policy GP5 states that all relevant planning considerations to be resolved.
- Policy BD2 requires that new buildings complement and enhance existing skylines, vistas and landmarks.

6.4 **Natural Resources & Waste Local Plan**

6.4.1 Relevant policies include:

- Air 1 management of air quality through new development
- Water 4 development in flood risk areas
- Water 6 flood risk assessments
- Water 7 surface water run-off
- Land 1 contaminated land

6.5 **Site Allocations Plan Submission Draft (SAP)**

The site is not specifically identified in the SAP.

6.6 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2018**

6.7.1 The Framework sets policies on the following issues which are relevant to this proposal (including section numbers):

- 2 Achieving sustainable development
- 4 Decision making

- 6 Building a strong competitive economy
- 7 Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- 9 Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 Making effective use of land
- 12 Achieving well designed places
- 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding

6.8 **Supplementary planning guidance**

- Parking SPD
- Accessible Leeds SPD
- Street Design Guide SPD
- Travel Plans SPD
- Tall Buildings SPD
- Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

7.0 **Issues**

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

7.1 Principle of the development

7.1.1 There has been a significant shift in the focus of new office accommodation towards the west side of the city centre into areas such as Wellington Place to the south of Wellington Street. At the same time there has been a loss of more established office space north of Wellington Street, especially to residential conversions. The development would provide approximately 40,000m² of grade A office accommodation in a sustainable, designated City Centre, location. The office space would represent a significant contribution to meeting the growth target of at least 655,000sqm of office floorspace within the city centre identified by Core Strategy policy CC1 and help to replace some of the space lost to residential use. The provision of office development in this location would also accord with a raft of other policies including Core Strategy spatial strategies 2 and 3 which direct office development to city centre locations.

7.1.2 The existing offices provide limited animation of the surrounding streetscene. Around 1,000m² of use class A1, A3 or A4 floorspace is proposed at ground floor level. These uses would provide active street frontages and encourage pedestrian activity and general vitality and vibrancy around all sides of the development in addition to the main office entrances at the eastern side of the site. Subject to the extent of A1 retail use being limited to 372m² and providing convenience goods shopping the uses would also complement the neighbouring Wellington Street local convenience shopping centre. Consequently, the proposals are likely to accord with Core Strategy policy CC1 and the principle of the proposed uses is acceptable.

7.2 Townscape considerations

7.2.1 The site comprises a collection of 3 buildings constructed 20-30 years ago. The small scale of the buildings, especially those on the west side of the site, is such that in combination with the cleared site to the west of Cropper Street, the townscape presently merges with the expansive highway infrastructure around the junction of the Inner Ring Road and Wellington Street.

- 7.2.2 The site is located in an area of the city centre where the Tall Buildings Design Guide identifies a potential opportunity for a string of tall buildings. The proposed redevelopment of the site with a single building 18 storeys in height would reinforce the western gateway into the City Centre. The scale of the building proposed would be more commensurate with buildings approved on the Yorkshire Post site on the southern side of Wellington Street and the proposed buildings on the north side of Skinner Street at Lisbon Square. The magnitude of the building would also provide a suitable response to the width of nearby roads.
- 7.2.3 Although a single form the building mass can be read as a defined top, middle and base, each distinguished from the next. The top of the proposed building has been articulated with a series of terraces at upper levels stepping down in response to the height of West One / Castle House to the east side of Lisbon Street whilst also creating opportunities to benefit from the south-facing facade. These levels would have a strong vertical emphasis utilising a lightweight expressed frame. The main body of the building, delivering the most extensive areas of office space, would utilise pairing of floors and more refined framing than the upper levels to give the middle of the building a strong form but light appearance. The full height frameless structural glazing proposed for the lower two storeys would provide an appropriate active base to the building enhancing the entrance areas and street frontage.
- 7.2.4 The north-east and south east corners of the building would be chamfered so as to form a more inviting arrival to Lisbon Street from Wellington Street. The chamfered corners would also provide an improved space around the junction of Lisbon Street and Skinner Street and help to balance the space alongside the west side of West One offices. On these corners the ground and first floors would be recessed further to both strengthen and define the office entrances and to provide more space for pedestrians.
- 7.2.5 Limited information is presently available regarding the detailed architectural appearance of the building. It is likely that the building would be heavily glazed within an elegant brick grid presenting a balanced, high quality, elevational treatment.
- 7.2.6 **Do Members consider that the proposed scale of development and its relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable?**

7.3 Transportation, accessibility and public realm

- 7.3.1 The site is located in a highly sustainable, city centre, location that is accessible by a range of modes of transport. There are existing bus stops and the City Connect cycle route is presently being constructed along Wellington Street to the front of the site.
- 7.3.2 By setting the building line further back from that existing footways on the north, east and west of the site would be widened to 3.8m, 3.3m and 3.0m respectively. Such dimensions would provide sufficient space for pedestrians using these routes and also help to create a more comfortable setting for the proposed larger building. At the time of drafting this report there are no proposals to increase the width of the footpath which runs along the southern elevation of the building facing Wellington Street. However, in conjunction with reconfiguration to introduce part of the City Connect cycle route along Grove Street, subject to the provision of suitable servicing facilities elsewhere, there may be opportunities to deliver a wider footway in this area alongside some minor improvements to the appearance of the public realm.

7.3.3 The development identifies a two-level basement providing up to 132 car parking spaces. There are requirements for a disabled person's car parking to a minimum 5% with another 5% to be convertible. Similarly, spaces are required for electric vehicle charging point provision at a rate of 1 space per 10 parking bays. Long and short stay cycle parking and motorcycle parking will also need to be accommodated for the office and retail floorspace. The Wellington Street corridor is regularly congested and the increase in the level of office accommodation will increase movements to both on and off site car parking and other vehicular activity such as drop offs. These increases will need to be assessed in a Transport Assessment against the network in order to confirm the impact of the development on the highway network, in particular the Wellington Street / Kirkstall Road gyratory. A Travel Plan will also need to demonstrate how safe, healthy and sustainable travel options will be prioritised to reduce the need to travel by non-sustainable modes.

7.3.4 Access to the basement car park would be located close to the junction of Skinner Street and Cropper Gate. The acceptability of the location in terms of visibility and vehicle tracking was being reviewed when the report was drafted.

7.3.5 The proposed height of the building relative to its surroundings is such that the applicant is mindful that wind issues need to be considered in detail in conjunction with the emerging design of the development.

7.4 Amenity considerations

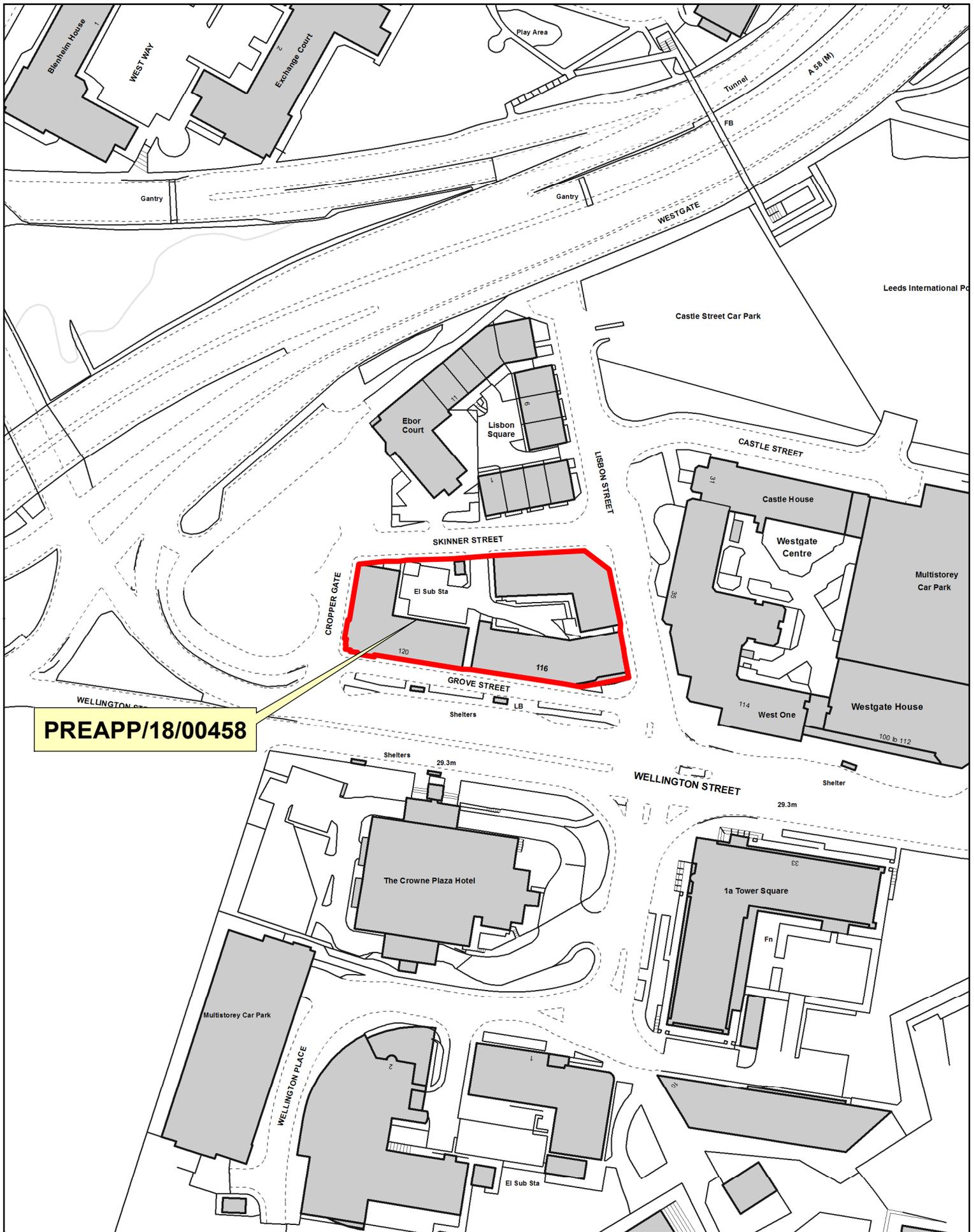
7.4.1 The proposed building would be located approximately 35m north of the Crowne Plaza hotel on the southern side of Wellington Street. With such a large intervening distance the physical impact of the new building on the hotel would be negligible. The building would be located a minimum of 15m from the corner of West One / Castle House to the east, and more typically, over 20m. Although the new development would result in some overshadowing of that property, as West One / Castle House is in office use and given the intervening distances and configuration of the site, the impact would be acceptable.

7.4.2 The proposed building line along Skinner Street is to be set back from that existing. Notwithstanding, the much taller building proposed would have a greater impact in terms of overshadowing the existing offices on the northern side of Skinner Street. However, with a separation distance of 17m, the juxtaposition is considered acceptable. Similarly, if that site were to be developed in accordance with details presented to City Plans Panel on 25th October 2018 (PREAPP/18/00239) the arrangement is considered acceptable in the context of a developing city centre environment. There are no current proposals for the development of the cleared site to the west of Cropper Gate such that the acceptability of any proposals there would be considered on their merits at the time that any such application is made.

7.5 Conclusion

7.5.1 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:

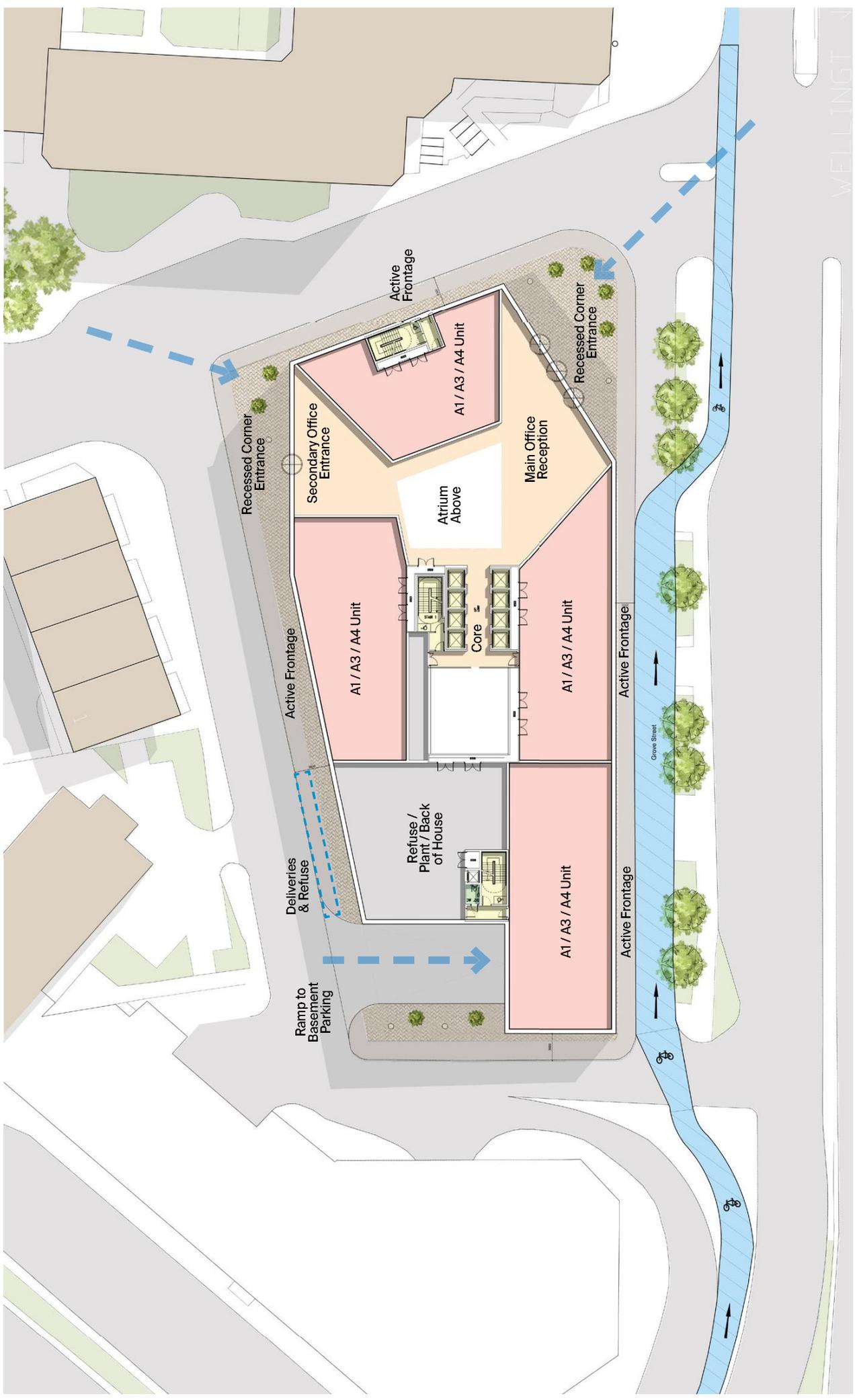
- **Do Members consider that the proposed scale of development and its relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable? (7.2.6)**
- **Subject to no adverse comments with respect to design and access issues do Members agree that, when submitted, the planning application can be determined on a delegated basis?**



CITY PLANS PANEL



Proposed Ground Floor Plan



- 'A' Class Uses
- Entrance Lobby
- Vertical Circulation
- Toilets
- Plant / Back of House