



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

CITY PLANS PANEL

22nd October 2020

Pre-application presentation of proposed demolition of existing office building and student residential accommodation development on the site of Arena Point, Merrion Way, Leeds LS2 8PA (PREAPP/19/00530)

Applicant – Olympian Homes

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 the redevelopment of the office building at Arena Point, Merrion Way, Leeds 2. The development would involve the demolition of the existing 19 storey building and the construction of a 43 storey tower for use as student residential accommodation.

2.0 Site and surroundings

2.1 The existing 19 storey (plus plant level) office building is located on the west side of Tower House Street between Merrion Way and Brunswick Terrace. The building, for many years called Tower House, has a rectangular footprint with its longer elevations running north-south. The entrance into the office reception is via a single storey extension situated on the elevated terrace on the west side of the building. The terrace, previously accommodating a two storey podium building, has recently been redeveloped. Unite Students' White Rose View development comprising 17

storey and 27 storey buildings opened during September 2020. A ground floor commercial unit is expected to be occupied by Wetherspoons early in 2021. The terrace sits over a basement car park accessed via a ramp down from Brunswick Terrace and used by the Arena Point offices.

- 2.2 On the east side of Tower House Street the former Hume House site is presently being redeveloped as Altus House by Olympian Homes. The 37 storey (plus plant level) student accommodation building is due for completion during summer 2021. The clv Arena Village 26 storey student accommodation building is located to the north of Altus House. The First Direct Arena is a large building running along the northern edge of Brunswick Terrace. The Merrion Centre on the southern side of Merrion Way contains a wide mix of uses. Properties on the east side of Wade Lane now principally contain residential uses. Consequently, what was for many years an office-focused area, around the mixed-use Merrion Centre, is presently undergoing a rapid change to a largely residential one comprising a mix of private rental and student apartments.
- 2.3 Whilst the site is not located in a conservation area there are three conservation areas within 500m of the site comprising Queen Square conservation area, Grand Quarter conservation area and Leeds City Centre conservation area.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 It is intended to demolish the existing building and entrance lobby and to construct a new building on a very similar footprint as the existing tower. The ground level of the building would be at street rather than podium level such that access into the main entrance would be from Merrion Way to the front. The lifts (3) and stair core would be located to the rear of the reception running full height through the building. The northern half of the building at ground level would contain a bin store, a bike store, substation and generator room.
- 3.2 Level 1 would accommodate amenity spaces (214m²) and water tanks. Level 2 would contain further amenity spaces (334m²). Student accommodation extends from level 3 to level 40. There would be a common floorplan between level 3 and 28. Each of these levels would incorporate 3 studios (21m²); two, 6 bedroom clusters each with a 28m² kitchen living room; and a four bed cluster with a 20m² kitchen/living room. Between levels 29-36 the four bed cluster would be replaced with four additional studios. The mass of the building would reduce at level 37 to two, 6 bedroom clusters. A roof terrace (115m²) would be provided over the southern segment of the building at this level. Levels 38-40 would contain two, 6 bedroom clusters. Level 41 would be additional dedicated amenity space (295m²) and level 42 would contain plant. In total, there would be 843m² of dedicated amenity space, plus the external roof terrace, and 694 student bedspaces.
- 3.3 It is proposed to service the development from the new layby located in Merrion Way and also from within part of the existing basement area which is located beneath the Unite, White Rose View development immediately to the west. Disabled parking spaces for the development, together with a new lift, would also be provided in this area.
- 3.4 The southern glazing line of levels 0-2 would be set back approximately 4m behind the front column line whilst towards the rear levels 0-2 would be inset up to 1.1m from the building line above. Above this level elevational treatment would be consistent up to level 37 comprising vertically proportioned fenestration grouped together in groups of 5, 6, 7 and 8 levels, each group separated from the next by a

horizontal string course. Levels 38-43 would be set back 9m from the southern frontage of the building. The development is likely to use metal cladding along with glazing as principal external building facing material.

4.0 Relevant planning history

4.1 The existing building was constructed in 1965 at the same time as the podium buildings. Since that time the building has changed little other than recladding in the 1980's and early 2000's and the addition of the foyer extension.

4.2 The construction of the arena (09/04815/OT) was the principal catalyst for significant investment in the area. The Merrion New Front project involving new commercial units and recladding of the car park (11/03424/FU) was followed by several major developments containing purpose built student accommodation during recent years:

- Symons House, Belgrave Street - part 9, part 23 storeys (17/06605/FU)
- St Alban's Place, Belgrave Street – part 7, part 11, part 18 storey (16/07741/FU)
- Hume (Altus) House, Wade Lane - 37 storeys (18/01819/FU)
- White Rose View, Merrion Way - one 17 and one 27 storey building (18/05738/FU)

4.3 Planning permission for a 17 storey office building 50m to the west of Wade Lane in the Merrion Centre was approved in July 2019 (18/07799/FU).

5.0 Consultation responses

5.1 LCC Transport Development Services – the building should not project over the adopted highway and no wind mitigation would be accepted within the highway. 3m wide footways are required around the site which should be dedicated as highway. A contribution towards public realm and pedestrian improvements will be required. Long-stay cycle parking equivalent to 20% of student bed numbers should be provided, plus short stay cycle parking for 20 bikes. The existing disabled car parking around the site should be retained and provision of disabled parking for residents will be required. More details are required as part of a Servicing and Delivery Management Plan regarding proposals for servicing of the development as well as student drop-off/pick up as there will be a high level of demand on nearby streets. Subject to improvements to the ramp the basement car park could potentially be used for these activities. However, the basement car park could not be used for commuter car parking as it would be contrary to policy controlling commuter parking and would raise road safety concerns. A detailed Construction Management Plan will need to accompany any planning application given the site constraints. The application should also be supported by a travel plan and a transport statement.

5.2 LCC Flood Risk Management (FRM) – there are no objections in principle to the proposed development. A detailed surface water drainage strategy should accompany any planning application.

5.3 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.

5.4 LCC Access – All shared areas and external area / approaches should be designed in line with BS8300-1:2018 to be inclusive as per Accessible Leeds SPD.

- 5.5 LCC Conservation - Tall buildings are different from other types of development because sometimes their impact (and acceptability) may depend on other tall buildings. Key views, including from Briggate and St Johns' Church, should be tested.
- 5.6 Ward Members were consulted. Councillor Brooks raised concerns that this will become a student-only area placing strain on existing services and amenities. At times when the universities are not sitting and students move out the night time economy suffers and areas can feel unsafe. Councillor Brooks comments that the area is sustainable for offices and employment and questions what would happen if demand ceases within the student accommodation market. Responses – see paragraphs 7.1.2-7.1.6 and 7.2.4 below.

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 within the City Centre boundary, the Development Plan for Leeds currently comprises the following documents:

- The Leeds Core Strategy 2014 (as amended by the Core Strategy Selective Review 2019)
- 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)
- Site Allocations Plan (Adopted July 2019)

6.2 Leeds Core Strategy (CS)

6.2.1 The Core Strategy sets out the strategic level policies and vision to guide the delivery of development and the overall future of the district. Relevant CS 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 8 supports training/skills and job creation initiatives via planning agreements.
- 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. Part B encourages residential development, providing that it does not prejudice town centre functions and provides a reasonable level of amenity for occupiers.
- Policy CC3 states new development will need to provide and improve walking and cycling routes connecting the City Centre with adjoining neighbourhoods, and improve connections within the City Centre.
- Policy H2 refers to new housing development on non-designated sites.
- Policy H3 refers to housing density requirements.

- 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.
- Paragraph 5.2.46 of the supporting text to policy H9 states that “Provision of reasonable space standards is still important for student accommodation, and this will need to be judged on a case by case basis, and via the application of any national standards that might be created in the future”.
- Policy EC3 safeguards existing employment land, stating that the loss of an existing Class B use in an area of employment shortfall will only be permitted where the loss of the premises can be offset sufficiently by the availability of existing general employment land and premises in the surrounding area.
- 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.
- Policy P11 states that the historic environment and its settings will be conserved, particularly those elements which help to give Leeds its distinct identity.
- Policy P12 states that landscapes, including their historical and cultural significance, will be conserved and enhanced.
- 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 EN4 states that where technically viable major developments should connect to district heating networks.
- Policy EN5 identifies requirements to manage flood risk.
- Policy ID2 outlines the Council’s approach to planning obligations and developer contributions.

6.3 Saved Unitary Development Plan Review policies (UDPR)

6.3.1 Relevant Saved Policies include:

- Policy GP5 states that all relevant planning considerations are to be resolved.
- Policy BD2 requires that new buildings complement and enhance existing skylines, vistas and landmarks.
- Policy BD4 relates to provision for all mechanical plant on and servicing of new developments.
- Policy BD5 requires new buildings to consider both amenity for their own occupants and that of their surroundings including usable space, privacy and satisfactory daylight and sunlight.
- Policy LD1 sets out criteria for landscape schemes.
- Policy N19 requires new buildings adjacent to conservation areas to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the relevant areas.

6.4 Natural Resources & Waste Local Plan (NRWLP)

6.4.1 The NRWLP sets out where land is needed to enable the City to manage resources, like trees, minerals, waste and water and identifies specific actions which will help use the natural resources in a more efficient way.

6.4.2 Relevant policies include:

- Air 1 states that all applications for major development will be required to incorporate low emission measures to ensure that the overall impact of proposals on air quality is mitigated.
- Water 1 requires water efficiency, including incorporation of sustainable drainage
- Water 4 requires the consideration of flood risk issues
- Water 6 requires flood risk assessments.
- Water 7 requires development not to increase surface water run-off and to introduce SUDS where feasible.
- Land 1 requires consideration of land contamination issues.

6.5 **Site Allocations Plan (SAP)**

The site falls within the designated City Centre. However, the site is not specifically identified in the SAP.

Other material considerations

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

6.6.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) replaces previous planning policy guidance and statements in outlining the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. One of the key principles at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of Sustainable Development set out in three parts: Economic, Social and Environmental. Relevant paragraphs of the NPPF are as outlined below.

6.6.2 Paragraph 108 states that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes should be taken up; safe and suitable access provided for all users; and any significant impacts on the highway mitigated. Paragraph 110 states that priority should be given to pedestrian and cycle movements; the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility addressed; creation of safe, secure and attractive spaces; allow for the efficient delivery of goods; and be designed to enable use by sustainable vehicles.

6.6.3 Chapter 12 identifies the importance of well-designed places and the need for a consistent and high quality standard of design. Paragraph 124 states that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 127 states that decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

6.6.4 Chapter 14 identifies the approach to meeting the climate change challenge. New development should avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and should be planned so as to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design (paragraph 150).

6.6.5 Chapter 15 identifies guidelines for conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 170 states that new and existing development should not be put at unacceptable risk or be adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions.

6.6.6 Chapter 16 refers to the historic environment. Paragraph 192 states that local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 193 states that “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).” Paragraph 196 states that “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

6.7 **Supplementary planning guidance**

- Accessible Leeds SPD
- Travel Plans SPD
- Tall Buildings SPD
- Building for Tomorrow Today: Sustainable Design and Construction SPD
- Neighbourhoods for Living SPG
- Parking SPD
- City Centre Urban Design Strategy SPD

7.0 **Issues**

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

7.1 Principle of the development

7.1.1 The site is located within the designated City Centre. CS 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. Policy H2 of the CS states that windfall sites will be acceptable in principle providing the number of dwellings does not exceed the capacity of transport, educational and health infrastructure, as existing or provided as a condition of development.

7.1.2 CS Policy H6B relates specifically to the provision of student housing. CS paragraph 5.2.26 states that growth in new purpose built student accommodation is to be welcomed in order to meet need and to deflect pressure away from private rented houses in areas of over-concentration. It has been established (2019) that there are approximately 38,000 university students in the city presently without access to purpose-built student accommodation. This suggests that additional provision of such accommodation is unlikely to result in an over-supply of purpose-built student accommodation in the near future. Despite the existing Covid-19 pandemic there is anecdotal evidence that comparable properties in the City Centre to that now proposed are 93-95 per cent occupied this year. Further, the applicant has commented that in the unlikely event of future demand for such accommodation falling significantly that the building could be readily repurposed as residential flats, given the arrangement of the core, the largely open floor plates and the high number of windows. Due to the provision of amenity spaces which could provide communal spaces for residents, Private Rented Sector accommodation would be the most likely format.

7.1.3 The proposal is considered against the criteria set out below within the adopted CS policy H6B (identified in italics):

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

The provision of approximately 694 student bedspaces would help to reduce the need to use private housing for student accommodation.

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

The existing building on the site is used as office accommodation and the new building would be used solely for the provision of purpose built student accommodation. The development would therefore avoid the loss of residential family accommodation.

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

The site is within the City Centre and is well-placed with regard to access to Leeds Beckett University, the Leeds University of Arts and the University of Leeds along Merrion Way. Ongoing improvements to Merrion Way and the provision of new crossings across Wade Lane brought forward by other developers of student accommodation in the area will help to improve accessibility to the universities, albeit this development would result in additional pedestrian and cycling activity. As such,

subject to a contribution towards further pedestrian improvements in the area the development would accord with Core Strategy policies SP11, CC3 and T2.

Criteria (iii) and (v) of policy H6B are considered in the amenity section, at paragraph 7.2 below.

- 7.1.4 The existing building comprises Use Class E (formerly Class B1a) office space. Since the introduction of amendments to the Use Classes Order in September 2020 the building could be used for a wide range of commercial, business or service uses (including retail, sale of food and drink, indoor sport, medical services, or day nursery) without the need for planning permission. CS policy EC3 seeks to retain an employment use unless the development (i) would not result in the loss of a deliverable employment site; or (ii) existing buildings are considered to be non-viable in terms of market attractiveness, business operations, age, condition and or compatibility with adjacent uses; or (iii) the proposal will deliver a mixed use development which continues to provide for a range of local employment opportunities and would not undermine the viability of the remaining employment site.
- 7.1.5 Prior to Covid-19 only 40% of the Arena Point office floorspace was occupied. The high vacancy rates are likely to be a result of two main factors: Arena Point's location and the quality of its offer in the context of other areas/developments within the City Centre. According to the agents the emergence of both private rented accommodation and student accommodation in the area, together with the development of the arena and additional leisure uses in the Merrion Centre, suggests that use of Arena Point for office accommodation is relatively less compatible with adjacent land uses such that this has had a negative impact on the building's market attractiveness. At the same time, there has been a shift in the focus of new office accommodation towards the southwest of the City Centre to areas such as Wellington Place. Despite refurbishment, as a structure from the 1960's, Arena Point can no longer compete with these new office schemes and the manner in which they are tailored to more recent trends within the office sector (hot desking, social collaborative spaces, flexible spaces etc). The schemes located towards the southern part of the city also enjoy better transport connectivity due to their proximity to the train station (a key demand of office workers in Leeds) as well as benefitting from the cluster effect where businesses seek to be situated in close proximity to their clients and other businesses. Unfortunately, Arena Point can no longer offer these key office requirements and with a healthy supply of alternative spaces in more attractive parts of the City Centre Arena Point has suffered as a result.
- 7.1.6 Notwithstanding, new office development has recently taken place at Merrion House and approval was granted last year for nearly 13,000m² of B1 office floorspace in a new 17 storey tower in the nearby Merrion Centre together with existing office space nearby such as within St John's Centre and Fairfax House. Consequently, the site is not in an area of the city with a shortfall of employment land and there remains a significant amount of committed or newly completed office floorspace elsewhere within the City Centre. In this way, the site fulfils one or more of the criteria within CS Policy EC3 that provides for its use as other than strictly employment land. Correspondingly, the development would provide some employment opportunities for local people in both the construction and subsequent operation of the development. As a result, the development would accord with CS policies SP8, EC3 and CC1b.

- 7.1.7 **Do Members consider that the loss of office accommodation and proposed use of the site for student accommodation is acceptable in principle?**
- 7.2 Amenity considerations
- 7.2.1 Criteria (iii) of CS policy H6B aims *to avoid excessive concentrations of student accommodation which would undermine the balance and wellbeing of communities.*
- 7.2.2 Benefitting from its proximity both to the universities and also the City Centre, the area is a focus for new purpose-built student accommodation supplementing older developments at Sky Plaza on the west side of Clay Pit Lane, and Arena Village on Wade Lane. Havana Residence on Cookridge Street (96 bedspaces); Vita St Alban's Place (376 bedspaces); Symons House, Belgrave Street (353 bedspaces); Vita 2 Portland Crescent (312 bedspaces); and Unite White Rose View (976 bedspaces) have all opened during the past 24 months (2,113 bedspaces). Next year Olympian Homes Hume/Altus House (752 bedspaces) development will open on Merrion Way. Planning permission is also in place for 98 student studios on land north of the Q One Residence, Wade Lane; 660 bedspaces at 44 Merrion Street; whilst redevelopment of Commerce House on Wade Lane (210 bedspaces) is likely to be commenced in the near future (1,622 bedspaces in the pipeline).
- 7.2.3 The area has also experienced a move towards the introduction of private residential apartments at Q One, Belgrave House, Warwick House and Zicon House (Havana Residence) on the east side of Wade Lane (283 apartments in a mix of sizes). Permission is also in place for the conversion of Fairfax House into up to 169 rental apartments. Consequently, what was for many years an office-focused area around the mixed-use Merrion Centre, has undergone significant change with the introduction of both purpose-built student accommodation and also private rental apartments.
- 7.2.4 It is not considered that more established residential communities to the north, such as those living within Lovell Park, would be adversely affected by student accommodation in the proposed location given the wider area's use, the direction of travel of students towards the universities and the City Centre, and the manner in which purpose-built student accommodation is managed. Similarly, it is not considered that the number of students proposed would result in an excessive concentration of students that would undermine the wellbeing of the area (or indeed place a strain on existing infrastructure and amenities as has been raised as a concern by the Ward Member) within the context of a busy mixed use, City Centre environment. It is more likely that the students would help to support existing businesses within the City Centre. While it is recognised that this influence can be much-reduced during summer months, during this period, the properties could potentially be used to accommodate people attending summer schools, conferences or other similar events. Additionally, the continuing presence of significant retail and leisure uses, office uses and non-student residential accommodation in the area would help to ensure that the area remains vibrant during the summer recess.
- 7.2.5 Criteria (v) of CS policy H6B requires that the proposed accommodation provides satisfactory internal living accommodation in terms of daylight, outlook and juxtaposition of living rooms and bedrooms. Although Policy H9 in the CS expressly excludes purpose built student accommodation from the space standard a footnote states that "Provision of reasonable space standards is still important for student accommodation, and this will need to be judged on a case by case basis, and via the application of any national standards that might be created in the future". CS Policy P10 and Saved UDPR Policies BD5 and GP5 provide more general requirements

that development should contribute positively towards quality of life and provide a reasonable level of amenity and useable space. The assessment of amenity is also a wider consideration of qualitative factors including arrangement and separation of living functions (general living, sleeping, studying, eating, cooking, food preparation, storage and circulation), usable shape, daylighting, outlook, privacy and external amenity space.

7.2.6 Officers and Members have visited several student housing schemes to review the quality of amenity provided for occupiers and to inform decision-making on subsequent applications. These schemes include Fresh Student Living at Darley Bank in Derby (April 2014) where the studio was 22m²; Downing's Cityside, Calverley Street, Leeds (May 2016) where the student showflat was also 22m²; Vita Student's Telephone House, Sheffield (September 2016) where the average studio size was 20m²; and in March 2018 Unite's development at Angel Lane, Stratford where Members viewed a 10 bedroom cluster flat where the cluster bedrooms of 11m² were supported by 23m² kitchen/living spaces, together with other internal and external amenity space located around the building. Most recently, Members visited the Vita St Alban's Place development in October 2019. Members viewed the communal facilities located at the lower levels of the building and two student studios, the smallest of which had a floor area of 20m².

7.2.7 For reference, City Plans Panel has previously approved the following student accommodation developments:

- Vita St Alban's Place, in which the smallest studios would be just over 20m² (78% of the total provision), 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. However, each studio was found to benefit from a good outlook, natural daylighting and a suitable noise environment.
- Symons House, Belgrave Street (17/06605/FU) where the smallest studio is 21.3m². 2 to 5 bedroom clusters in that development have 14m² bedrooms with kitchen/living spaces increasing in size from 21-43m².
- Hume (Altus) House, Wade Lane (18/01819/FU) comprises a mixture of studios (22m²) and 4, 5 and 6 bedroom clusters with 21-35m² kitchen/amenity space, the area depending upon the size of the cluster.
- Unite, Merrion Way (18/05738/FU) scheme comprises 4, 5 and 7 bedroom clusters with 23-40m² kitchen/amenity space, and 30m² studios.
- 44 Merrion Street (20/01965/FU) comprises 5 bedroom cluster flats, the smallest bedroom of which would be 12.8m² with a kitchen/diner (15.2m²) and have shared access with an adjacent cluster to a lounge (18.4m²); and studios the smallest of which would be 20m² albeit a range of sizes is proposed dependent upon location within the development.

In each of these purpose-built student schemes additional dedicated communal amenity spaces within the buildings were considered critical in providing overall acceptable levels of amenity for the occupiers of the development.

7.2.8 The format of the proposed scheme is similar to the purpose-built student accommodation schemes referred to above. Areas of amenity space for use by

occupants would be distributed throughout the building, in total comprising 843m² in addition to an external roof terrace. The smallest studio would be 21m². Four and six bedroom clusters would all have study bedrooms of 13.5m² supported by 20m² or 28m² kitchen/living rooms dependent upon cluster size.

- 7.2.9 Student bedrooms would be located throughout the building above level 2. Those situated in the southernmost part of the building would be closest to White Rose View (15.4 metres to the west) and Altus House (11.4 metres to the east). However, each of these bedrooms would principally face due south such that they would benefit from open outlooks across Merrion Way and beyond and not be affected by the neighbouring buildings. Those bedrooms situated in the northern half of the building would face east or west. This part of the building would be 17 metres from White Rose View to the west, similar to the distance between the two White Rose View buildings, and is considered to provide an acceptable outlook and, with full height windows, reasonable levels of daylighting to the rooms. Although Altus House is closer (a minimum of 12.4 metres), in common with those cluster bedrooms facing west, occupiers would also benefit from the north-facing kitchen/living spaces which would enjoy largely open views in that direction.
- 7.2.10 Due to the presence of the existing Arena Point building occupiers of rooms in White Rose View and Altus House would not experience a material difference in terms of overshadowing or loss of daylighting below level 26 of those buildings. As the White Rose View building is 27 storeys, the impact would be limited. Further, whereas the closest part of Altus House to the development would be 11 metres away, the orientation of Altus House is northeast – southwest such that the distance between the two buildings increases, in general, moving in a northerly direction. As a consequence, the impact on higher level northwest facing rooms in Altus House is not considered unacceptable.
- 7.2.11 **Subject to confirmation of detailed proposals do Members support the approach towards living conditions for the student accommodation?**

7.3 Townscape considerations

- 7.3.1 Given its height the development would be visible from a number of locations around the city, including from the Queen Square conservation area to the west of Merrion Way, and the Grand Quarter and City Centre conservation areas to the south. In accordance with paragraph 193 of the NPPF, great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets. Any new development must also provide good design that is appropriate to its location, scale and function (CS Policy P10). Part (i) of the CS policy states that the size, scale, design and layout should be appropriate to its context and that (Part ii) the development should protect and enhance skylines and views. These policies accord with guidance in the NPPF 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.
- 7.3.2 The Tall Buildings SPD identified that there could be the opportunity for a cluster of tall buildings in the area to the north and east of the Merrion Centre and this opportunity has been reflected by the recent construction of White Rose View and Altus House. However, the existing building now appears out of scale and dominated by its neighbours in views along Merrion Way. Further, access into the building is only available from the raised terrace area whilst the building presents a blank façade at street level which fails to contribute to the local environment. Consequently, the demolition of Arena Point would not be resisted.

- 7.3.3 The proposed building would be constructed on a very similar footprint to the existing tower, aligned with the White Rose View buildings to the west. The southern element of the building would be 1.6 metres wider than its northern counterpart. This southern element would extrude up to level 36 where it would be terminated by an open roof terrace. This part of the building would be 34 metres taller than the nearest White Rose View tower but the same height as Altus House. The northern component would extend up to level 42, 18 metres taller than southern element. Consequently, the building mass would step up progressively from small-scale buildings in Queen Square along Merrion Way to the high-point of the redeveloped Arena Point and then step down towards Wade Lane. The proportions of the building would present a tall, elegant, form especially in views from the north and south vantage points up Wade Lane. In longer distance views from the north and east this additional height would reinforce the “doming” of height in the cluster of tall buildings around the arena.
- 7.3.4 Given the combination of distance and the presence of White Rose View buildings, subject to the choice of materials, the setting of Queen Square is likely to be maintained by the development. It is likely that a similar conclusion will be reached in respect of conservation areas to the south but views from Briggate and St John’s Church need to be tested as part of any subsequent planning application.
- 7.3.5 The emerging architecture of the building takes on a modernist form with vertical lines of windows and the stepped top referencing the nearby Altus House. The primary frame of the building is likely to be white in response to its position as part of a family of buildings along Merrion Way. Similarly, in common with its neighbours, the three storey base of the building would be clearly expressed with a strong column line to the front and a recessed footprint to the rear. By placing the reception into the building at street level this part of Merrion Way / Tower House Street would be animated by the additional views into the building and general activity relative to the existing situation on site. Further, amenity space at level 1 would directly interact with the level of the terrace immediately to the west.
- 7.3.6 **Do Members consider that the proposed mass and form of the development and its relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable?**

7.4 Transportation and accessibility

- 7.4.1 The site is located in a highly sustainable location close to the many amenities offered by the City Centre and is readily accessible by a range of modes of transport. A long-stay bike storage area for the development is proposed towards the rear of the new building. Facilities are also required for short-stay bike storage within the public realm. The cycling facilities would form a key element of the Travel Plan which would be submitted with the planning application.
- 7.4.2 The existing building is serviced from the basement area located beneath White Rose View. The basement also currently provides 90 parking spaces for use by the staff and visitors to the Arena Point offices. Whilst servicing of the new building from the basement may be acceptable subject to further detail, following removal of the offices, use of the remainder of the basement as a commuter car park would not. Additional commuter car parking would be contrary to CS policy T1 which seeks to encourage sustainable travel and would also negate improvements to the local pedestrian environment due to the additional vehicular movements involved. Other than for the provision of disabled parking spaces the development itself is likely to be

car-free supporting the sustainable approach to parking provision advocated in the City Centre in the Parking SPD.

- 7.4.3 Arena Point sits on a tight site and its replacement on a similar footprint will be challenging given the need to maintain access to the arena and the clv Arena Village building via Tower House Street, whilst also maintaining access along Merrion Way for a wide range of users. Consequently, detailed proposals of the management of construction processes for the development would need to be submitted with the planning application.
- 7.4.4 Level access would be provided into the building's reception from Merrion Way. Lifts running throughout the building would provide access to all floors from the reception ensuring level access to all accommodation according with Accessible Leeds SPD and CS policy T2.
- 7.4.5 The existing building is bordered by highways on three sides and its replacement on a similar footprint provides little scope for public realm works especially as the White Rose View and Altus House developments are currently delivering improvements to the highway and pedestrian environment wrapping around the site along Merrion Way, extending onto Tower House Street and Brunswick Terrace. The development accommodating 694 students would, however, result in additional pedestrian and cycling movements to and from the universities, placing greater demands on existing and proposed highway crossings and footways along the route. Recent and ongoing student developments in the area have contributed towards improvements to Merrion Way and Wade Lane in order to mitigate the impact of those schemes by developing a more pedestrian friendly environment. As a consequence, and in common with the recent purpose built student developments in the locality, it is considered that these impacts should be mitigated by a developer contribution towards the improvement of the pedestrian environment in the area to accord with CS policies P10, T2 and CC3.

7.6 Sustainability and Climate Change

- 7.6.1 The CS environmental policies are designed so that new development contributes to carbon reduction targets and incorporates measures to address climate change concerns following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. Policy EN1 is flexible, allowing developers to choose the most appropriate and cost effective carbon reduction solution for their site. Major developments also need to meet the BREEAM Excellent standard if feasible (EN2). Where technically viable, appropriate for the development, and in areas with sufficient existing or potential heat density, major developments should propose heating systems, potentially connecting to the emerging district heating network (EN4(i)).
- 7.6.2 At this stage of the design process, detailed information regarding sustainability measures is not available. However, as the scheme progresses sustainability measures will be integrated into the detailed design and the applicant has been made aware of the policy requirements in this regard.

7.7 Wind

- 7.7.1 Due to the height of the building the applicant is mindful of the potential impact of the development on the local wind environment and is developing the building massing and architecture in conjunction with input from a wind consultant. Once the form of the development is fixed, the wind impact will be fully tested as the next stage in the design process. The findings of the assessment will be contained within a wind

impact assessment which will be submitted with the planning application. As is the usual approach on receipt of any planning application where there may be wind issues, upon receipt of a wind study the Council will appoint their own experts to peer review the report's findings.

- 7.7.2 The Highways' consultation response notes that no wind mitigation features would be supported within the adopted highway and the applicant has been made aware of this.

7.8 Conclusion

- 7.8.1 The opportunity presented by this proposal is highlighted to Members. The development would deliver new, purpose-built student accommodation at a currently under-used site within the City Centre, adding to the creation of a residential 'core' in close proximity to the universities. In turn, this would further reduce the pressure on private housing being used to extend the supply of student accommodation in the City.

- 7.8.2 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:

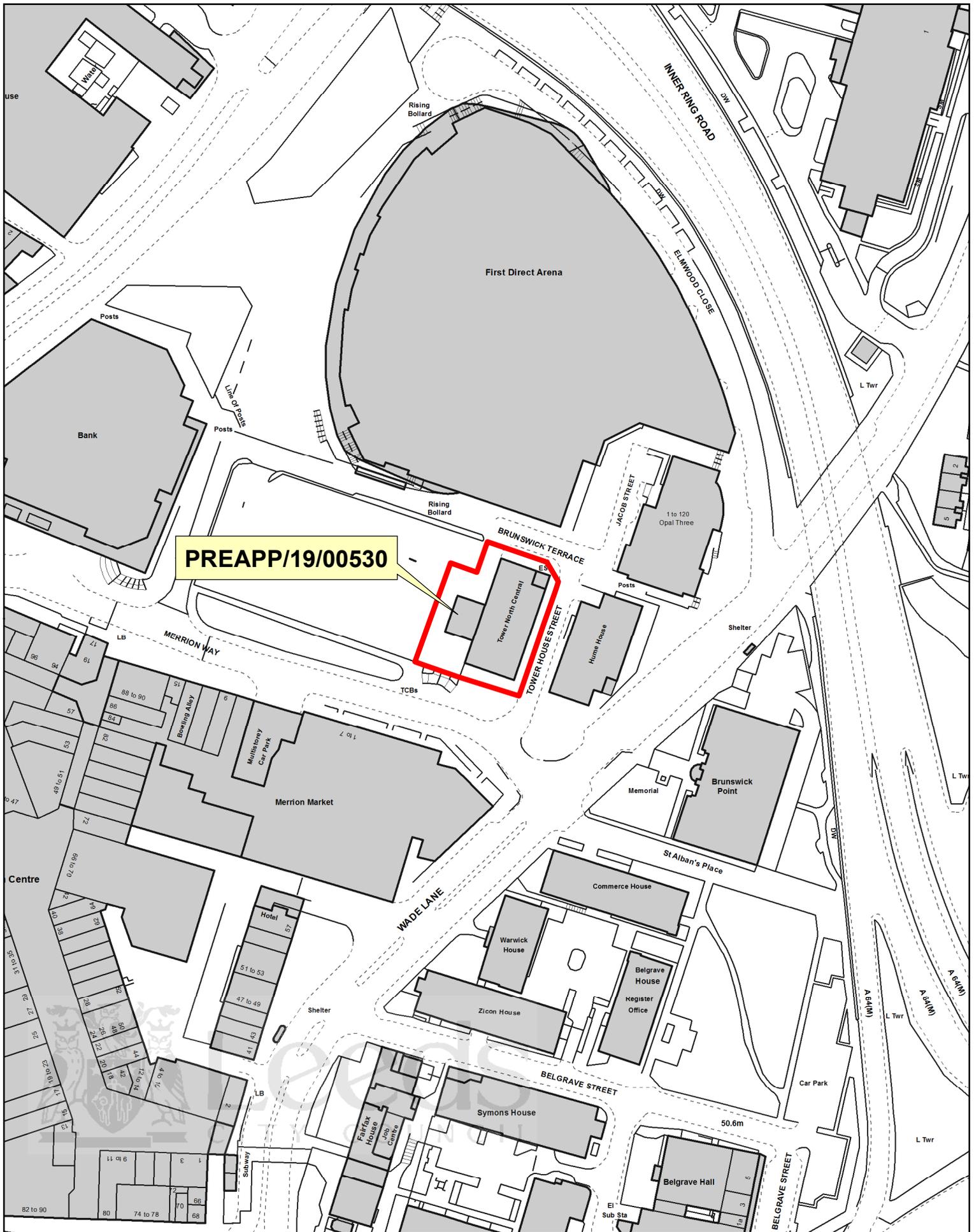
Do Members consider that the loss of office accommodation and proposed use of the site for student accommodation is acceptable in principle? (7.1.7)

Subject to confirmation of detailed proposals do Members support the approach towards living conditions for the student accommodation? (7.2.11)

Do Members consider that the proposed mass and form of the development and its relationship with the surrounding context is acceptable? (7.3.6)

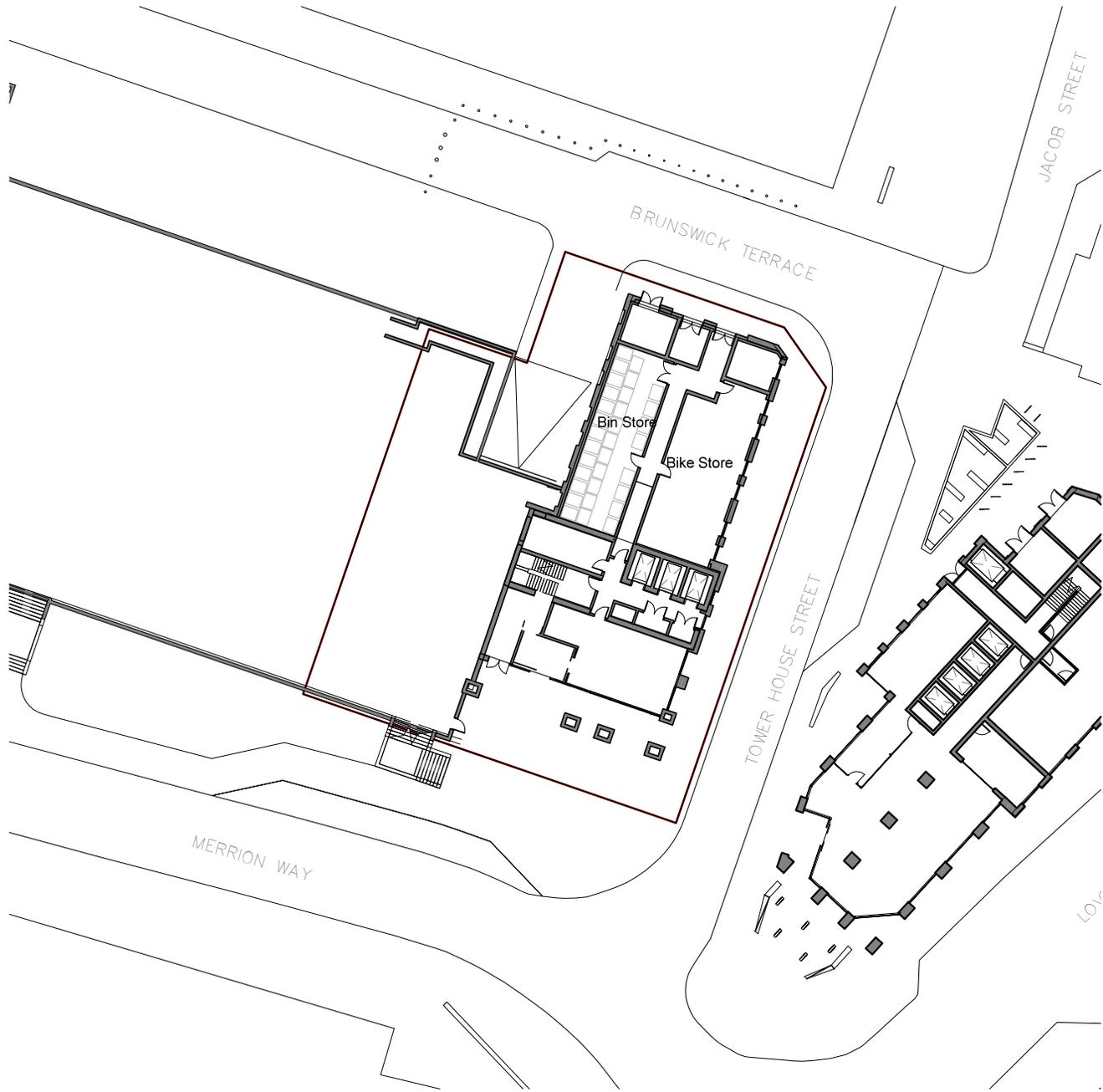
Background Papers

Pre-application file PREAPP/19/00530



CITY PLANS PANEL





Notes:

All dimensions are in millimetres unless stated otherwise. No dimensions to be scaled from drawings. All dimensions to be checked on site prior to manufacture.

Any discrepancies between drawings and site conditions are to be reported to the contract manager.

This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all relevant Structural Engineers and Mechanical & Electrical Engineers drawings and specification.

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dwg status:

SKETCH

Rev	Description	Date	By	Chk

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dwg title: Proposed Site Plan			
job title: Arena Point, Leeds			
scale:	1 : 500	@ A4	drawn: AP
date:	02/09/20		job no: 1935
dwg no:	1935_OP17_10_002	rev:	

Proposed Site Plan