



Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel Annual Report 2020-21

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth annual report describing the work of the Leeds City Council Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel during 2020-21. This report provides the opportunity to highlight and review last year's activity and describe some of the key achievements in helping deliver the Best City ambitions for Leeds, in what has been an unprecedented year. As well as reflecting on the reporting period, the Annual Report also looks ahead to 2021-22 and describe some of the key challenges coming forward.

The most dominating feature of course has been the COVID19 pandemic. This has seen social and economic impacts all over the country and for the City Council overall. At a service level, it has meant that Planning and Sustainable Development has had to respond to the challenging environment, developing a new ways of working in order to continue delivering the service. This has been key in supporting business continuity and economic growth, creating certainty in the planning process and maintaining continued involvement in planning by local communities.

A significant pillar of this approach was the move to holding remote Plans Panel meetings, once legislation allowed. The service responded at pace and with cross party consensus, delivering a governance and practical framework for dealing with planning applications through this medium. The focus of these meetings was to replicate the protocols of 'face to face' Panel meetings as closely as practicable and the first remote Plans Panel meeting, City Panel, took place on 21 May 2020. In accordance with the Chief Planning Officer's Delegation Scheme and the role and remit of the Plans Panels, applications which met the "Exceptions" in the Chief Planning Officers Delegation Scheme continued to be determined thus providing a focus on the most sensitive and significant applications, allowing for the allocation of officer and member resources and time appropriately. Officers and members worked collaboratively to find solutions to issues which would otherwise have resulted in a Member requesting an application being referred to Panel for determination, allowing them to be determined under delegated authority. This worked successfully and kept applications flowing through the system and is a testament to members and officers working together to deliver high quality outcomes.

Similarly, the work of the Development Plan Panel (DPP) continued despite the pandemic and was characterised by reaching the first statutory consultation stage of a Local Plan Update focussed on the planning system's response to the Climate Emergency.

DPP was also heavily involved in shaping the Council's responses to various Government consultations on the planning system; both for the Planning White Paper and immediate changes to the NPPF that happened. The Council's response to Government was broadly welcoming of change provided that it kept people at the heart of the process, prioritised tackling the climate emergency, created more certainty for people and investors in Leeds and resulted in good quality design and place-making (something that the Council

considered was lacking from the Government's measures, which in its view were overly focussed on beauty).

Much work was involved responding to the High Court challenge to the Site Allocations Plan (SAP) made in 2020. A subsequent High Court Order (August 2020) was issued requiring that 37 sites (including one mixed use allocation) which immediately before the adoption of the SAP were in the green belt, be treated as not adopted and be referred back to the Secretary of State for further examination by the Planning Inspectorate, against up-to-date evidence and national and local policy. The Examination in Public was held virtually (and successfully) during September 2021. The Council awaits the Inspector's views.

Finally, DPP steered the drafting of a Supplementary Planning Document on improving the quality of Homes in Multiple Occupation and Purpose Built Student Accommodation, building on the Council's adopted space standards policy. This will be subject to further consultation next year.

In conclusion, a not easy year but one which showed the strength of the Local Planning Authority and of Leeds as a Council. where elected members and council officers work collaboratively and positively to help deliver this Council's ambitions. I would like to express my thanks in particular to members of the Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel and Council Officers involved in the planning process for enabling good inclusive growth to continue through the challenging period.



Councillor Helen Hayden
Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

Plans Panel activity 2020-21



27 Plans Panel meetings and 7 Development Plan meetings held throughout the year



Plans Panel considered 51 applications



Three decisions appealed: 1 in progress, 1 allowed, 1 dismissed



5 pre-application presentations and position statements (including for the former Debenhams site) and Masterplan and Planning Brief for Eastgate Quarter



Plans Panels determined 17 residential schemes



Granted permission for around 1,500 new homes



Applications determined by the Plans Panels will generate over £2.4m in Community Infrastructure Levy

Significant schemes considered by the Plans Panels

The Plans Panel determine those schemes not delegated to the Chief Planning Officer. As such they usually relate to the largest and more sensitive developments. The role of the Panel can be challenging, balancing the needs of the applicant and those of the city, delivering the inclusive growth needed, whilst still taking account of local communities and making robust decisions in the context of adopted local and national policy.

A selection of schemes considered by the Panels are detailed below:

Land at White Hall Road and Globe Road

Hybrid application for full and outline planning permission for the erection of new residential dwellings with ancillary commercial uses and landscaped public realm; outline



application for an associated 'hub' building in a flexible commercial use. The application was in two parts. Full permission was sought for 8 buildings with a total of 783 apartments and 3,000 square metres of ancillary, commercial and leisure space. Outline permission was sought for a standalone building ('The Hub') and 3,000 square metres of commercial and leisure space on the ground floors of these buildings, along with a co-working space for residents and

landscaped public squares and pedestrian only streets. The new buildings would occupy prominent but disused waterfront land along Globe Road and Whitehall Road, close to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. The application went to City Panel in February 2021, where Panel deferred and delegated to the Chief Planning Officer for approval subject to draft conditions and the completion of a Section 106 agreement. An approval was subsequently granted in September 2021.

Leeds Former Tetley Brewery Hunslet

Reserved Matters Application (RMA) following the grant of outline planning permission at the former Tetley Brewery site, at City Plans Plan in October 2017. The park area is divided into five-character areas: a. The Tetley Triangle – Event Space to the north-west of the Tetley – hard surfaced event space for concerts, markets, outdoor cinema, outdoor café space, approximately the size of half the paved area of Millennium Square b. The Tetley Triangle – The Green – to the west of the Tetley - grassed and stepped amphitheatre for

informal performance and sitting, a similar size to Merrion Gardens c. Theatre Gardens – north of Salem Chapel - modern ornamental and sensory garden for quiet enjoyment, which would be slightly larger

than the Raingarden area at Sovereign Square. d.

The Central Park – east of the Tetley to Crown Point Road - including significant parkland including grassed areas and trees, water feature, play area and grassed mound. This includes a 'Flowering



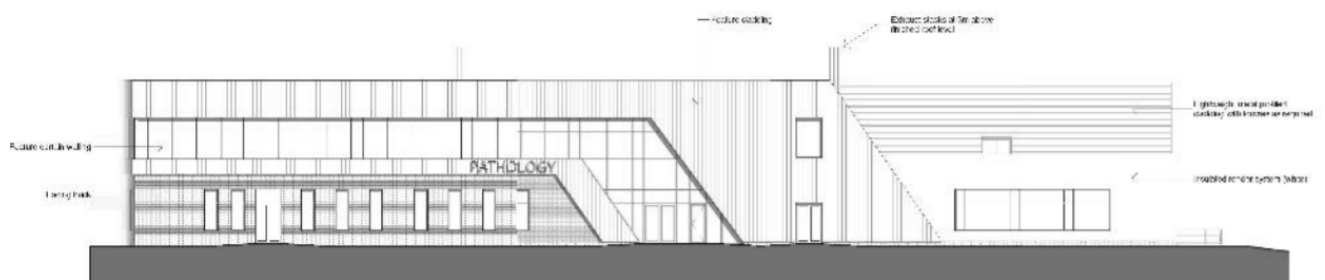
Avenue', which will feature springtime blossom from Cherry and other flowering fruit trees.

This central area would be slightly smaller than Lovell Park, but would be flat with the exception of a grassed mound at the eastern edge close to Crown Point Road. e. Link Ways – greened communal connectors between new building plots with 4m wide pathways and pocket park trees, swales, planting, benches and grassed areas. At City Plans Panel in September 2020 Councillors resolved to grant Approval of Reserved Matters, subject to confirming the list of tree species with the Hunslet and Riverside Ward Member; the list of tree species were later confirmed to be acceptable and permission was approved; development has commenced on site.

[Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust St James Hospital Beckett Street Outline application for the demolition of existing buildings to provide a new Pathology Facility including partial basement, new external waste compound, associated hard landscaping and access arrangements Caroline House, Diamond House Sheepscar Street South](#)

The scheme was submitted in outline to North and East Plans Panel in August 2020 which sought the demolition of existing vacant buildings to provide a new Pathology Facility. Only the means of access was being applied for in detail at this stage, indicative plans had been provided which suggest the likely accommodation needs will include a partial basement with two floors above providing circa 5661sqm of floorspace. Other requirements are a new external waste compound, associated hard landscaping and access arrangements.

Members resolved to defer and delegate to the Chief Planning Officer as set out in the submitted report with additional guidance: a CAVAT assessment be undertaken in respect of



the oak tree and that it be retained as part of the detailed scheme; a green wall to be detailed within the landscaping condition; Review of parking requirements (with introduction of further off-site restrictions if required) and a direction added to ensure the development to be of good quality design and build. Approval was granted in November 2020 and construction is due to start later this year; the new facility is expected to be completed in the Spring of 2023.

Caroline House, Diamond House Sheepscar Street South



105 Purpose Built Student Accommodation to accommodate 411 students, as well as cycle storage and car parking. The scheme also includes gallery and studio space to be managed by East Street Arts, with commissioned public artworks integrated into public and outdoor student areas. The development requires the demolition of

the existing Diamond House, Britannia House and Caroline House.

This application was brought to City Plans Panel in March 2021 following the resolution to defer and delegate the application to the Chief Planning Officer for approval at City Plans Panel in November 2020, subject to the reporting back to Panel of further details on the elevational treatment which would inform the conditional discharge phase of the scheme. At City Plans Panel on 11 March 2021, officers presented the revised elevational treatment and Members were of the view that the proposed changes were positive, resulting in an improved scheme. The Section 106 Agreement was completed and the application was granted consent in June 2021.

Development Plan Panel

The main focus of activity for the Development Plan Panel this year has been on plan-making and responding to Government proposals to change the planning system. Several key areas of work have progressed as follows:

- Developing the proposed scope and supporting material for a Local Plan Update towards statutory (Regulation 18) consultation with a focus on addressing the climate emergency. The material for the LPU was shaped by DPP throughout 2020/21 and was tailored to address the Council's 3 pillars across carbon reduction, flood risk, green infrastructure, place-making and sustainable infrastructure.
- Public consultation on the LPU was necessarily focused on-line and involved developing a new and well-received package of measures aimed at reaching and engaging a wide audience with targeted consultation for young and older people as well as inner city groups.
- Following the High Court Challenge to the Site Allocations Plan (SAP), the SAP Remittal was a key focus for the Panel, through the consideration of up-to-date evidence to inform the approach to housing and employment allocations, and subsequently consulting on and agreeing main modifications to the Plan. The Examination in Public was held virtually (and successfully) during September 2021.
- DPP was also heavily involved in shaping the Council's responses to various Government consultations on the planning system. The Panel discussed and shaped the Council's response to the Planning White Paper; broadly welcoming some of the changes proposed but noting that it needed to keep people at the heart of the process, prioritize tackling the climate emergency, create more certainty for people and investors and deliver good quality design and place-making (something that the Council considered was lacking from the Government's measures, which in its view were overly focussed on beauty).
- There were several other proposed changes to the Planning System, which DPP considered, including First Homes, the standard method for calculating housing requirements, raising accessibility standards for new homes, changes to permitted development rights, the use classes order and the National Model Design Code. Panel were engaged with the responses to these consultations, where appropriate.
- Engagement on the preparation of the Homes in Multiple Occupation and Purpose Built Student Accommodation Amenity Standards Supplementary Planning Document, including developing the consultation draft.
- DPP also noted the sequencing of Local Plan Updates with a focus on policies for the climate emergency, nature emergency and health and well-being coming before other matters, which will be scoped during 2021/22.



Reflecting on the year and looking ahead

The reporting year, 2020-21 has been a particularly challenging year, however the work of the Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel continued throughout the lockdown period, through the use of remote Panels and has ensured business continuity and certainty in the planning process for investors and local communities. Other activities have also taken place through this period:

Joint Plans Panel

This is an informal meeting of members of the three formally appointed Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel. In the past this meeting has been treated as a formally constituted Council meeting, however it has no formal terms of reference. The original purpose of Joint Plans Panel as an informal service meeting was revisited and updated terms of reference have now been approved. This was undertaken in consultation with the Leader and the Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and the first meeting under these amended arrangements was held in August 2021.

Member training

Part 2 Article 8.2.2 of the Council's Constitution, states that Members of the Plans Panels must complete all compulsory training prior to taking part on a Plan Panel.

All Plans Panel members and substitute Plans Panel members in 2020-21 have undertaken the prescribed compulsory training.

A programme of discretionary member training was produced for 2020-21. Two sessions were made available to all members of the Council as follows:

- Trees and the planning process, and
- Access and Inclusion in planning

Training materials have been made available on the Member Development SharePoint site.

The Council's Procedure Rules on Substitute Members of Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel were amended in 2020-21 to remove the automatic right to sit on Panel by Licencing Committee members as a substitute. This provides additional assurances around member training and planning decision making.

Looking ahead

Member training

A programme of remote training sessions for the forthcoming year have been scheduled, with a focus on the climate emergency, but also covering other significant topics. Events scheduled so far:

- Viability and housing
- Introduction to Climate emergency and Planning
- Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Trees
- Planning Enforcement
- Conservation in the planning process

Planning Reform

The long-awaited response to the Planning White Paper has now been further delayed due to a change of Secretary of State and indications are that it will be a further 12 months before the consultation response to the White Paper is published. It is now speculated that many of the elements in the White Paper will be “watered down”, however there will still be changes which the service will need to respond to and the service is attempting to be proactive, particularly focussing on the Government’s digital agenda to enable greater participation in and understanding of the planning process; this will also flow through into the work of the Plans Panels through the use particularly of new technology such as 3D modelling. It is also noted that Neighbourhood Planning is proposed to remain a key element of the planning system and is one which the Council are national leaders on and there has been focus in the past year on seeking to expand the development of Neighbourhood Forums in the inner city areas.

Digital improvements-VUCITY

The service has acquired VU CITY which is a piece of technology which provides a “digital twin” of areas of Leeds, representing the topography, build environment and natural features such as trees, accurate to 15cm. The software will be used by planning case officers and design officers to assess the real-life impacts of development proposals and on their surrounding environments. Case officers will be able to import or build a 3D model of proposals within VU CITY to test it in accurate context. Data layers can be incorporated into the model such as traffic, flood risk, conservation areas and so on, so that the spatial constraints of a proposal can be seen at a glance and in context. The software also allows for a ‘walk around’ at street level, or higher level views, and an ability to assess the impact at different times of the day or times of the year, assess zones of theoretical visibility and a host of other tools. In due course, for Plans Panels, it is proposed that for the largest of schemes, VU CITY models will become the norm as part of the officer presentation, providing members with an accurate representation of the proposal in its spatial context.

Budget Challenge

The Development Management service and Strategic Planning Service reviews conducted in summer 2020 and instigated by the Council’s budget review highlighted a number of systems and process changes which the service needed to address to streamline the planning and decision making process and make it more efficient and cost effective. These changes are now being worked through and include a streamlined process for dealing with householder applications and discharge of conditions applications, increased use of self service, agreement of service standards for members, and further use of new and emerging

technologies to derive service efficiencies. This is critically important for the service to achieve these efficiencies as the increasing complexity of caseloads, backlog of applications and high numbers of applications.