

Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel Annual Report 2021- 22



Introduction

Welcome to the sixth report to Council on the work undertaken by the Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel. This report is not intended to reflect the work of the Planning Service per se but instead focuses on the work and activity undertaken by the three Plans Panels and the Development Plan Panel and 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. As well as reflecting on the reporting period, the Annual Report also looks ahead to 2022-23 and describes some of the key challenges coming forward.

The reporting period (2021-22) has been another challenging year, recovering from the impacts of the pandemic and dealing with the aftermath of a surge in planning applications being submitted. This has created a number of significant challenges for the service, in providing continuity and delivery, whilst managing ongoing resourcing and capacity issues, exacerbated by a national shortage of Planners. Leeds is not alone facing these challenges with Local Authorities across the country reporting significant issues.

Whilst these circumstances have led to some delays, overall good progress is being made in determining a host of applications consistent with the City Council's adopted Local Plan and Best Council priorities. This process has been assisted by the continued refocus on those applications which meet the Exceptions in the Chief Planning Officer's Delegation Scheme, means that the appropriate time and attention has been afforded to the most strategically important and sensitive applications in the City.

Within this wider context, the Plans Panels have a challenging role: balancing the current and future needs of the District, delivering the inclusive growth needed, whilst still taking account of local communities, within a national legislative and policy driven framework. In facilitating this process, through the Plans Panel Chairs (and Panel members), a framework is being provided which enables opportunities for pre-application presentations, position statements and the ability for community representatives to address the Panel to share their concerns and ideas, in addition to the public speaking rights at the final determination stage.

A significant application presented to City Plans Panel in March 2021, was the Leeds Bradford Airport application (for a new Terminal Building); the consideration of this application was one of the most complex applications leading to the one of the lengthiest debates to ever be considered by the Panel. The consideration of the application was made even more challenging due to the need for the Panel meeting to be held remotely, due to the COVID restrictions in place at the time. Whilst the consideration of the application was not in the reporting year, there was significant activity surrounding this scheme in 2021-22, with the application subsequently being Called In by the Secretary of State, with a Public Inquiry due in September 2022 and then the withdrawal of the application by the applicant in March 2022.

The role of the Development Plan Panel is key in ensuring that the City Council's Development Plan and Planning Policies are kept up to date. Within this context, a priority for the Plan has been a Local Plan Update, to respond to the City Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency. The priority therefore is to introduce, update and improve existing policies to address climate change, to help achieve net zero emissions by 2030. Between July – September 2021, the service carried out initial statutory public consultation on the scope of the Plan (Local Plan Update 1). This included update themed planning policies for carbon reduction, flood risk, green infrastructure (including biodiversity), place making and sustainable infrastructure. Detailed policies will now be drafted in line with consultation responses, the evidence base, planning guidance, the consideration of reasonable alternatives and sustainability appraisal, prior to further consultation on draft policies due early Autumn 2022. It is anticipated that subject to the comments received and resources available, that the Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State this year for formal independent examination in 2023.

At a national level, the wider Planning picture remains uncertain with the publication in May 2022 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, continuing the Government's planning reform agenda. The Bill, currently progressing through the legislative process, already raises concerns around claims the Bill will lead to a centralisation of the planning system (with the proposed introduction of nation Policies for Development Management) and questions how effective it will be longer term, in making progress on the levelling-up agenda. Whatever finally is in the Act, will have significant implications for the Local Planning Authority and consequently the Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel, who will respond accordingly.

As a final reflection, whilst there have been many challenges this year (both for the Planning Service and the Council as a whole), the work of the Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel continue to deliver positive outcomes for the District and the people of Leeds. Through the work of the Panels, long term investment is secured, environmental improvements are made and any negative impacts upon communities are mitigated. The continued process of updating the Local Plan aims to ensure also that that the Council's Planning Policies provide a framework for sustainable development, for the benefit of both current and future generations. This approach therefore reflects the priorities of the adopted Local Plan and the Council's Best City ambitions for inclusive growth, responding to the climate emergency and health and wellbeing. We look forward to another successful year ahead.



Councillor Helen Hayden

Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

Plans Panel activity 2021-22



31 Plans Panel meetings and six Development Plan Panel meetings



61 items considered including 44 applications



48 decisions made



Granted permission for around 2,000 new homes



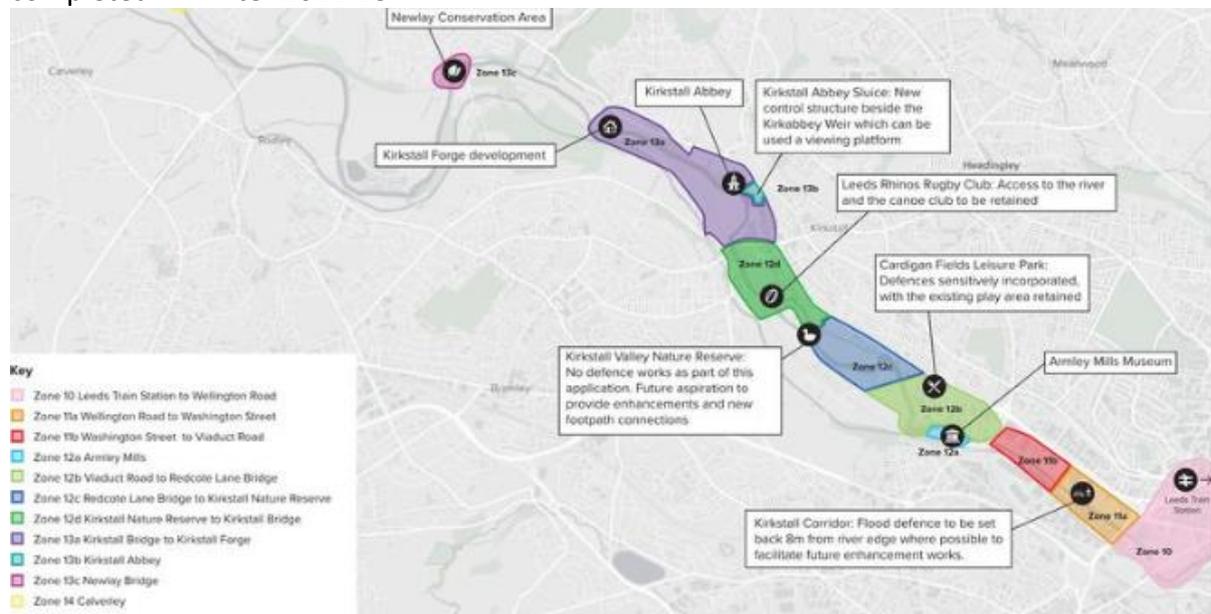
14 Pre-application presentations including Yorkshire Bank, Merrion Way, former International Swimming Pool, Quarry Hill

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, making robust decisions in the context of adopted local and national policy. Some examples of schemes considered by the Panels are detailed below:

Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2

The multi-million pound plans developed by Leeds City Council, Bradford Council and Environment Agency, include a new flood storage area between Horsforth and Rawdon and flood defences at Apperley Bridge. The proposals are part of a series of measures to reduce flood risk to 1,048 homes and 474 businesses along the River Aire. The scheme is due to be completed in winter 2022-23.



Barnsdale Soar, Allerton Bywater

Installation and operation of a solar park with associated infrastructure and upgraded access



at land off Barnsdale Road, Allerton Bywater. This will be the largest Solar (photovoltaic energy generation) Park in West Yorkshire covering circa 50 hectares with an installed capacity of up to 50MW, which would generate enough electricity to cover the annual electrical consumption of approximately 12,000 homes each year.

Mixed use development on former international swimming pool site

£270 million development proposal on the site of the former Leeds International Pool building which was demolished in 2009. Plans

including a 33-storey residential tower, a hotel, offices and student accommodation.



Acanthus Golf Club, Thorpe Lane, Tingley



Erection of a Garden Centre incorporating a restaurant, indoor soft play, outdoor play area, outdoor sales area, service area, outdoor adventure play area and associated access improvements, car parking and landscaping. Change of use of the existing golf club house to

Adventure Play Centre and demolition of the existing driving range bay structure, netting and other ancillary structures.

Prince Henrys Grammar School, Farnley Lane, Otley

Development of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, floodlighting, hardstanding area, storage container, acoustic barrier fence, access pathway; environmental benefits include the wildlife buffer zone, including swift boxes, bat corridors, a wildlife pond and apple orchard.

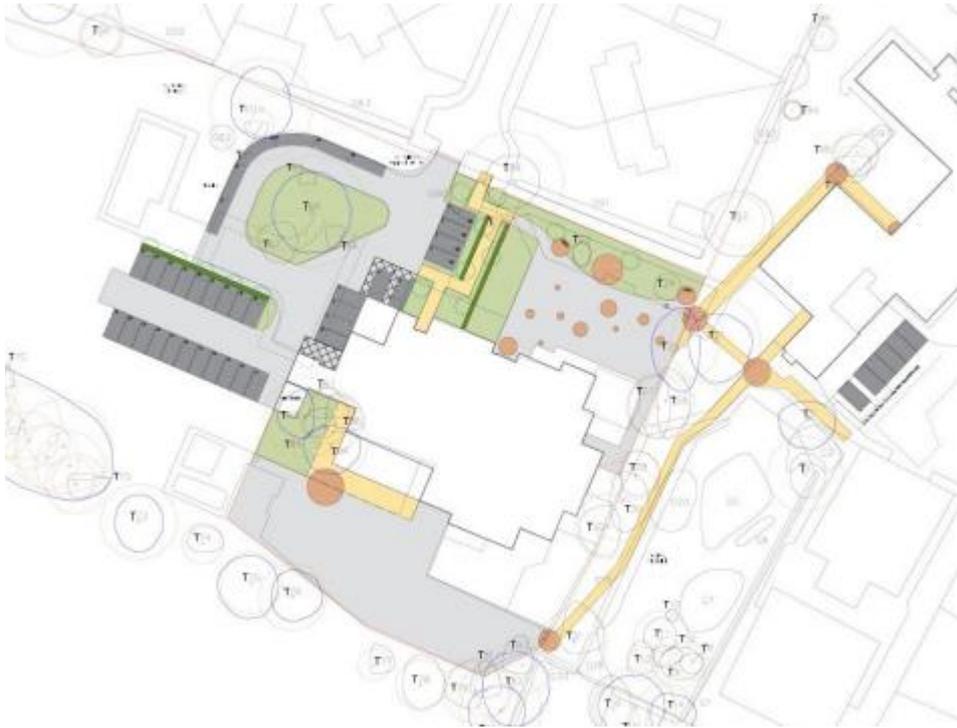
Erection of a 62-unit Extra Care housing facility land to the North of Holmsley Lane Woodlesford

Including associated community facilities, parking, access, landscaping and infrastructure.



Bramhope Primary School, Tredgold Crescent, Bramhope

Proposed alterations and extension to the existing school including new landscaping and reconfiguration of site access and car parking, new 2.4m boundary fencing.



Conversion and extension of Belmont House

Conversion and extension of Belmont House to create 11 residential apartments; demolition of Round House and Coach House buildings and replaced by two residential buildings providing 7 and 6 apartments respectively;



Land at Leeds Road, Collingham



Reserved Matters application following the grant of outline planning permission on appeal in December 2016. The application dealt with the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of the development. The Panel deferred and delegated the determination to officers subject to further negotiation, and consultation with ward Members on matters including the inclusion of housing for the elderly, design, details relating to the design and access to the open spaces and mix of affordable housing. Following further discussions and the revision of the scheme the Reserved Matters were approved in December 2021.

Demolition, extension and new build to create 175 new flats at Mount St Marys Church, Church Road, Richmond Hill



Having been originally reported to North and East Panel in February 2021, the application was further considered by Panel in December 2021 as the applicant wanted to vary the scheme to include the provision of build-to-rent units. The development involved the partial demolition and extension to Mount St Marys Church, a

Grade II* listed building to create 62 residential units, and the demolition of a grade II listed presbytery and its replacement with a five-storey block of 113 flats. One key aspect of the scheme was its lack of viability, which was the justification for partial demolition as the

buildings were in such a poor condition and the revenue from the scheme would go towards the restoration and refurbishment of the most important elements of the grade II* listed building. The Legal Agreement was to include financial review clauses during the carrying out of the development so that in the event of a certain level of profit being achieved then the delivery of affordable units could be reviewed. Changes that Panel secured included saving a Celtic Cross and its re-use as part of the redevelopment, and funding for the restoration of steps that formed part of a historic footpath that would be reopened as part of this development.

Development Plan Panel (DPP)

The main focus of activity for Development Plan Panel has been as follows:

- Local Plan Update 1 focusses on developing new planning policy to help address the climate emergency and meet Leeds' ambition to have made rapid progress towards carbon neutrality. The Panel endorsed the Local Plan Update 1 scoping consultation material and recommended it to Executive Board, with the consultation taking place from July to September 2021. The consultation helped steer a path towards policy options and incorporated a series of well-received measures including webinars and mobile-phone friendly consultation material. DPP received a report of the consultation in January 2022 and have been working through policy issues and options with officers as part of the drive towards having a full suite of draft policies. This full suite of policies, formally known as a Publication Draft will be consulted on in Autumn/winter 2022. The Plan will propose policies that require new developments to be zero carbon, to monitor their embodied carbon, to ensure that trees lost as a result of development are replaced by an amount of new planting commensurate with the amount of carbon storage lost, amongst many other measures that will improve the quality and sustainability of new development;
- The Site Allocations Plan Remittal Examination in Public took place in September 2021, following which Development Plan Panel considered and recommended to Executive Board a consultation on a schedule of Inspector Main Modifications to the Plan, which took place from December 2021 to January 2022. Following this consultation, the Inspector re-opened the hearing sessions for a single session to discuss the implications of the Integrated Rail Plan on the proposals within the Plan, which took place in May 2022;
- Throughout the year Government announced a series of confirmed and proposed changes to the planning system. Members of Development Plan Panel were informed of these changes, including information sessions on the National Model Design Code, a revised National Planning Policy Framework, the inclusion of the First Homes concept within national guidance, and the Environment Act, which has introduced the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain through new development;
- Development Plan Panel considered the updated Local Development Scheme which reflected that preparatory work has now begun on Local Plan Update 2, which aims to ensure that the Leeds Local Plan is up to date and in accordance with national policy, with the full scoping of the subject of the Plan to take place in autumn winter 2022;
- The Council had adopted an interim Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to ensure the robust continuation of public consultation during the pandemic. However, as restrictions have eased, work has progressed on a full update to the SCI, which seeks to formalise more modern, responsive and engaging methods of consultation into the process. Panel considered and commented on the draft documentation and structure in January 2022 before endorsing formal consultation

on the document from March to April 2022. Following consultation, officers are currently making final changes before the document is adopted;

- DPP also considered the draft Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which seeks to combine and streamline a number of existing policy documents, reflecting on comments received at the previous round of consultation and endorsing the material for a further (and final) round of consultation from March to April 2022. Following this consultation, officers are currently implementing final changes before the adoption of the SPD.

Reflecting on the year and looking ahead

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 2021-22 have undertaken the prescribed compulsory training. A programme of discretionary member training was produced for 2021-22. Four well-attended sessions were made available to all members of the Council as follows:

- Introduction to Climate Emergency and Planning
- Biodiversity and Trees
- Viability and Housing
- Planning Enforcement

Meeting of the Joint Plans Panel (JPP)

JPP is a consultative meeting of all three Plans Panels and the Development Plan Panel which considers planning performance, service improvement matters and changes to the planning process. There have been two meetings in the reporting period. Matters brought before these meetings included:

- Half year and end of year Planning and Sustainable Development Performance Reports
- VU CITY presentation
- Design Matters presentation

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB)

The Government is currently proposing a range of new measures which will impact on the service through the LURB. Whilst the Bill has already received criticism for a lack of detail of the changes, the service is trying to anticipate some of them and is already developing a digital planning strategy which will use automation and the latest technology to drive efficiencies and provide a better and quicker customer experience, this includes both for development management and plan making.

Policy progress

As referred to above, with regard to the work programme of Development Plan Panel, the Council is still awaiting the Inspector's report for the Site Allocations Plan Remittal. Early correspondence from the Inspector in July 2022 indicates that they may seek further modifications to the Plan.