



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

PLANS PANEL CITY CENTRE

Date: 5 July 2012

Subject: **PRE-APPLICATION Reference PREAPP/12/00625 – Proposal for new greenspace at Sovereign Street, Leeds**

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

No Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

RECOMMENDATION: This report is brought to Panel for information. Council Officers will be asked to present the emerging scheme to allow Members to consider and comment on the proposals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 This pre-application presentation relates to the proposed development of a new greenspace at Sovereign Street, Leeds. The proposals will be presented to Panel by Leeds City Council Asset Management to allow Members to comment on the evolving scheme and raise any issues, prior to the intended submission of a full planning application later in the year.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

2.1 The Sovereign Street site is located at the heart of Leeds City Centre, close to Leeds Railway Station and the River Aire. It comprises 1.16 hectares and is currently used as a surface car park. It sits directly to the south and west of the City Centre Conservation Area within the Riverside Area, and has remained undeveloped since the demolition of the former Queens Hall in 1989, despite gaining planning permission for a mixed use redevelopment in 1995, and being the subject of pre-application discussions for the Criterion Place 'Kissing Towers' scheme from 2003-2007.

- 2.2 The surrounding area comprises a mixture of uses including multi-storey car parking, residential, offices, hotel and supporting restaurant and retail uses. The site is allocated as a development site in the adopted Unitary Development Plan Review (UDP) as Proposal Area 21, which forms part of the designated Riverside Area. This policy statement highlights the need for north-south pedestrian routes through the site, with a central public space, and a prestige office frontage visible from Neville Street. The site is identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in flood risk zone 3, however, more detailed topographical surveys have indicated that the site lies within zone 2.
- 2.3 The Council adopted the informal Sovereign Street Planning Statement in July 2011. It identified three indicative building plots A, B, and C, as well as an area of greenspace (see attached plan). The building plots are identified in order to balance objectives to enhance the key views into the site from the Conservation Area in the east, from Neville Street in the west, take account of existing and potential future pedestrian connections from east to west and north to south, and the requirement to deliver and maintain a significant viable greenspace and pedestrian/cycle improvements to connect to the South Bank. The Planning Statement identifies the urban design aims and aspirations for the site as:
- to develop a cohesive urban design solution to the site linking development proposals for the other development plot locations and the existing architectural environment to create a unique, identifiable destination;
 - to provide a meaningful public greenspace with ground floor active uses around it;
 - to facilitate pedestrian permeability across the site, linking into a network of routes and spaces extending to the riverside, Holbeck Urban Village, South Bank, city core and beyond;
 - to maximise the use of the railway arches and create a pedestrian zone of walkways, cafes and restaurants;
 - improve the 'sense of street' of Sovereign Street;
 - to form, over time, a distinctive 'place' at the heart of Leeds City Centre

3.0 Greenspace Proposals

- 3.1 The greenspace proposal is for the creation of over 0.5 hectares of new, high quality greenspace at the Council owned Sovereign Street site. This concept was developed following from the 2008 City Centre Vision Conference, which highlighted a lack of greenspace in the City Centre.
- 3.2 As a result, the Council gave consideration to how it could bring forward high quality greenspaces in the City Centre. The response was two-fold: firstly a long term proposal for the creation of a new City Centre Park in the Leeds South Bank area, which is now encapsulated in a Planning Statement for that area; and a proposal for the site at Sovereign Street to deliver an innovative and well designed environment in a prime area of the city, that would be a forerunner and complementary to the South Bank and City Centre Park proposals.
- 3.3 Following Executive Board's rejection of the Criterion Place development for Sovereign Street in July 2008, the Council produced an updated Planning Statement to guide the sites development proposals. This Statement was approved by Executive Board in July 2011. It promotes the site's potential to introduce the first new component of high quality greenspace as part of the greening of the City Centre southwards towards the River Aire.

3.5 In addition, collaborative discussions on the greenspace design have established that the space should be:

- Extroverted i.e. the proposals are not restrained by the sites physical boundary;
- A tranquil space, an escape from the noise and hustle of a busy City Centre;
- A '21st Century Park Square'

3.6 Using these design aims and aspirations, the proposals for the greenspace have been developed to set the benchmark for design quality for future City Centre greenspace and public realm proposals. The proposals will be presented under the following headings:

- Concept layout
- Connectivity
- Landscaping
- Materials

3.7 Concept Layout

3.7.1 When all of the development plots are included on the site, the area naturally divides itself into 4 greenspace zones:

- a central focal square that would form the main area that Plots A, B and C address
- the area between Plot B and the BT building up to the railway arches
- the area between the Plot A and the BT building including Pitt Row
- the area between Plot C and Bibi's

3.7.2 Central Focal Square

This area is expected to be the central gathering/seating space within the greenspace. Opportunities to sit, work, relax and socialise would be provided through raised grass areas and seats. Planters and trees would bring shade, provide a back drop to the area, and frame the buildings.

3.7.3 Plot B to the Railway Arches

Extending northwards from the central square towards the railway line would be a strongly defined tree lined route that would allow movement through this area from and towards the railway arches. This route could be enhanced by a water feature that runs into the central focal square, that is a reflection of the goit that used to run through the site.

3.7.4 Pitt Row to Plot A

This area has the potential to provide the strong sense of arrival. The proposal could provide the opportunity for an extroverted greenspace that reaches beyond the site boundary. The opportunity to provide a shared vehicle/pedestrian space using the same paving materials as the greenspace is being explored. This route would also be defined by a strong tree line.

3.7.5 Bibi's to Plot C

This area through Bibi's could provide the opportunity to have formal sitting out, eating space. In addition it provides a strong east-west link which will be enhanced by a strong tree-lined route from and to the central focal area.

3.8 Connectivity

3.8.1 The site connectivity would be significantly enhanced through the creation and enhancement of several linkages. These consist of:

- The expansion of the central focal area across Sovereign Street towards Sovereign House, using a continuation of paving materials to create a 'raised platform' across the roadway to give increased pedestrian priority and an expanded greenspace;
- the removal of the existing paving along Pitt Row and its replacement with the paving materials consistent with the new greenspace materials to link in to the new crossing being developed at Neville Street;
- the construction of the existing roadway from Pitt Row through the site to the City House car parking under the railway arches, in the same materials as the greenspace materials to provide a continuous finish;
- The opening up of the pedestrian route along Sovereign Place by removing the walled area that forms external seating space, attached to the back of the BT building.
- The potential re-opening up of the route underneath the railway arches to connect through to New Station Street, Boar Lane and the new Trinity Shopping Centre, in discussion with Network Rail.

3.9 Landscaping

3.9.1 The landscape scheme will explore grassed areas for sitting and relaxing, raised planters with planting that would provide all year round interest with foliage and flowers providing accents at different times. The planting scheme will be put together to reflect the tranquil peaceful setting that is part of the design aims and aspirations.

3.9.2 Tree planting is an essential element of the Sovereign Street greenspace. Trees would be planted in such a way to provide structure and regularity to a design that in essence is semi-formal. Tree planting would be used to enhance routes through and beyond the site to define the larger greenspace area and bring together the holistic design of the space.

3.10 Materials

3.10.1 Paving materials being explored are those used at City Square and through the pedestrian streets such as Briggate and Albion Street. This would be to ensure that the palette of materials used in the City Centre is consistent from space to space.

3.10.2 Lighting of the space is also proposed to provide some lighting of the main routes through the space. This would provide security to those walking to and through the greenspace at night.

3.10.3 One of the opportunities being explored is the potential to include or use public art within the greenspace. This could be in the form of a permanent sculpture or in the form of exhibitions within the area at certain times but would be subject to further discussions.

4.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS

4.1 The Sovereign Street site has been identified as a development site since the early 1990s, and in 1995 Leeds Development Corporation granted planning permission for a large mixed use development, of which only the multi-storey car park was built. The adoption of the UDP in 2001, and its review in 2006, formalised the site's allocation in the statutory development plan. In 2002 an informal Planning and Development Brief was adopted for the site, which led to the pre-application discussions with Simons Estates and Ian Simpson Architects regarding the 'Kissing Towers' mixed use scheme. Following the cancellation of this scheme, the site was identified by the Council's Executive Board as a potential site for new buildings and a greenspace, and following public consultation in 2011, a revised Sovereign Street Planning Statement incorporating that vision was adopted. Plans Panel (City Centre) discussed the updated Sovereign Street Planning Statement in March and October 2011, and Members were generally supportive of its aims.

5.0 ISSUES

5.1 This is an emerging proposal and Members are requested to confirm their support for the broad concept for the greenspace and proposals for enhanced connections.

Background Papers:

Sovereign Street Planning Statement July 2011



KEY

- SITE BOUNDARY
- E-G
A DEVELOPMENT SITES
- POSSIBLE STREET HEIGHTS
- ← ACTIVE FRAMMAGE
- URBAN GREEN SPACE (HARD + SOFT LANDSCAPE)
- OFFSITE CONNECTION FOOTWAY BRIDGE
- ← KEY PEDESTRIAN ROUTE
- KEY FUTURE PEDESTRIAN LINK (OPTIONS/POSSIBILITIES SHOWN)
- TREES ALONG STREET EDGE
- ▶ KEY VIEWS
- ← VEHICLE/DELIVERY ACCESS (CONSIDERABILITY TO ADJACENT PARKING)
- POSSIBLE VEHICLE LINK
- POSSIBLE DROP OFF
- POSSIBLE OFF-PROXIMITY TO ADJUT MULTI-STORY + PROMOTE ARCHADE
- POSSIBLE ARCHADE/SHELTERED ROUTE
- RAILWAY ARCHES TO BE RE-DEVELOPED (FUTURE OPTION)
- RAILWAY ARCHES REGENERATED/ MUSE

NE POSSIBLE NEW HEIGHTS ALIGNMENT & IMPROVEMENTS FOR PEDESTRIANS ESPECIALLY AROUND SWINEGATE

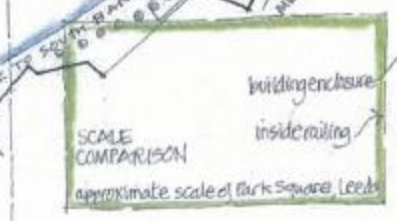
NE ENCOURAGE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUILDINGS + PUBLIC OPEN SPACE - INTEGRATED USES SUSTAINABLE CHARACTERISTICS + FEATURES

OPTION (A)

SOVEREIGN STREET DEVELOPMENT SITE

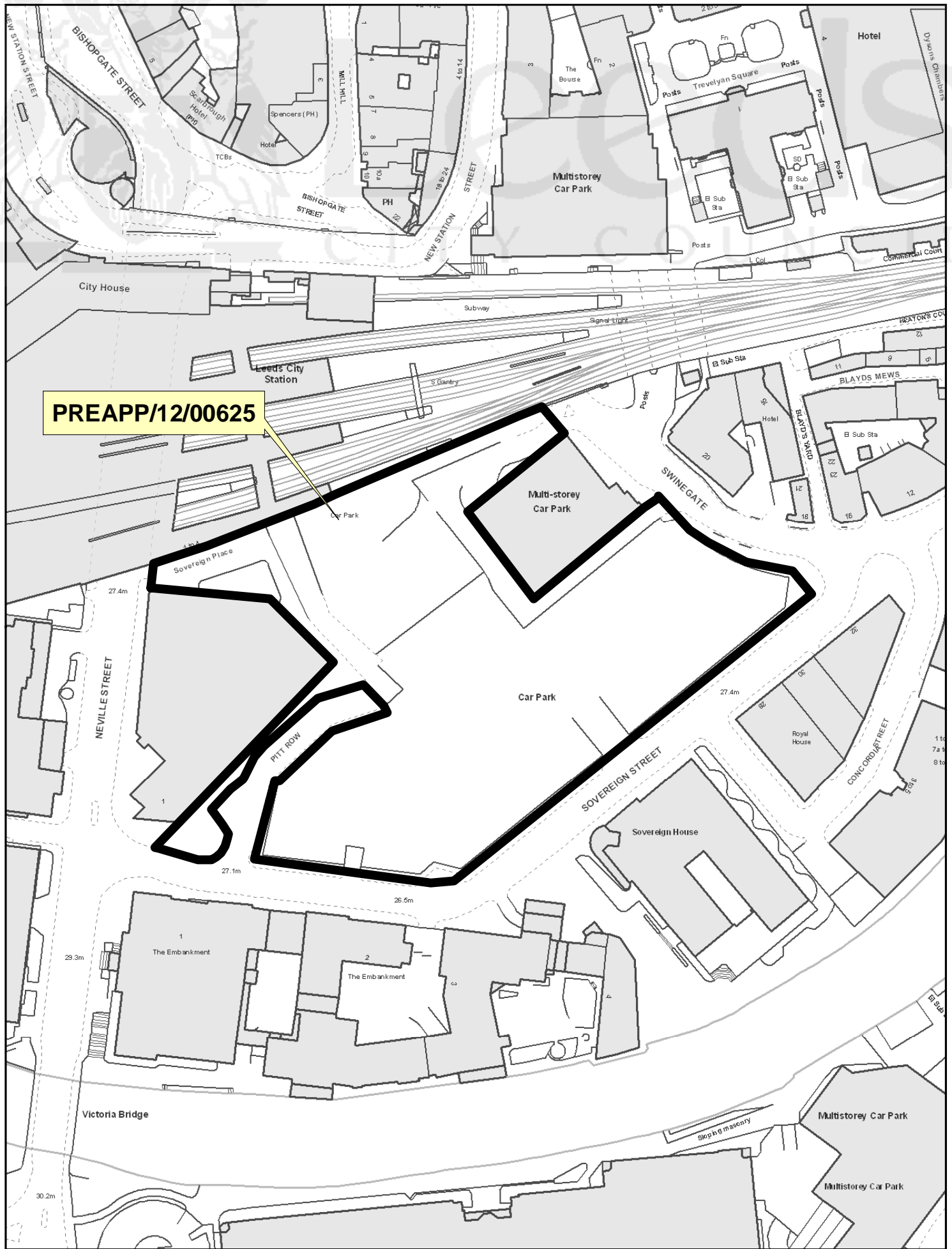
~ FRAMEWORK ~

INDICATIVE ONLY



M.B. SRU NOV 2010
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EAST PLANS PANEL

