



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

PLANS PANEL CITY CENTRE

Date: 5th July 2012

Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION – OFFICE AND HOTEL SCHEME UP TO 11 STOREYS HIGH WITH ANCILLARY GROUND FLOOR ‘ACTIVE’ USES (PREAPP/12/00465).

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. The Developer will be asked to present the emerging scheme to allow Members to consider and comment on the proposals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 This presentation is intended to inform Members of a new major mixed use scheme proposed on the vacant former Lumiere development site between Wellington St and Whitehall Rd. This site benefits from permission for the Lumiere scheme, which is extant due to the fact that a significant amount of ground works were carried out before construction ceased. Members will be asked to comment on the emerging scheme.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

2.1 The site is located on the southern side of Wellington St and to the north of Whitehall Rd, between the refurbished former Royal Mail building (West Central residential scheme) and the former Wellesley Hotel (City Central residential scheme). The site is the last significant piece of the jigsaw in the area between City Sq and Northern St. The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of new build offices, a hotel and residential buildings to the south and the rigid grid-like street pattern of the office quarter to the north which is part of the City Centre Conservation Area and contains residential uses fronting Wellington St. When seen

in the context of the surrounding street pattern, the site lies at the point where the east-west pattern of streets in the Conservation Area becomes adjusted through an approximately 30 degree angle to run off to the south-west along Whitehall Rd. The site is currently surrounded by 3m high metal hoardings and lies within the Prime Office Quarter as allocated in the UDP Review where offices and a range of ancillary supporting uses, including hotels, are considered to be acceptable.

3.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS

- 3.1 Officers commenced discussions with the developer on a revised scheme in March this year. A number of meetings have taken place, principally with planning, design and highways officers, to develop the layout, scale, massing and servicing/access strategy for the site.
- 3.2 This site was originally included as part of the development of the former post office building. As part of that scheme the application site had the benefit of permission for a 10 storey office block fronting Whitehall Rd attached to a 10 storey hotel fronting Wellington St, app. ref. 20/314/00/FU approved Aug 2001. This was separated from the refurbished former Post Office Tower (now West Central) by a public piazza. This piazza constituted the provision of all of the publicly accessible open space as part of the redevelopment of the entire site. Anything in addition to this would therefore be a positive addition in excess of the policy requirement. The piazza was laid out as part of the Royal Mail refurbishment but subsequently removed and blacktopped when the Lumiere construction works commenced.
- 3.3 Subsequent to this a further application was submitted for a single office building on the site of 10 storeys in height, app. ref. 20/063/03/FU approved May 2003
- 3.4 Lumiere was approved by application ref 06/01622/FU approved April 2007

4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Northern building: This proposal fronts Wellington St and is proposed to be of a height equivalent to the dominant eaves detail on the City Central building to the east which is a distinctive feature in this part of the street scene. Above this there would be a further floor set back with a balcony/terrace facing out over Wellington Street. The use of the neighbouring City Central building to inform the building's height is considered to be the best way to reinforce the facade on the southern side of Wellington St and fits in to the pattern of terraced buildings that exist between the site and City Square. This building is being designed to a set of physical parameters in terms of heights and floor plates because, at this stage, it is not certain whether it will be used as a hotel or as offices. Either use would be acceptable here, however, as there is no end user currently identified, to work up the elevations of the building would not be the best use of resources. This element of the proposal is therefore being considered in outline.
- 4.2 Southern building: This is proposed to be an office building fronting Whitehall Rd of 9 storeys in height with an additional 2 recessed floors on top of this. The principal element has a distinctive trapezoidal plan form which is a response to the 30 degree shift in street pattern at this point. This has given rise to an acute angled corner visible from City Station to the east and a reciprocal corner at the western end. This will be explained fully by the architect during the presentation. It is considered that there is more potential for height in this part of the scheme as the buildings on the southern side of Whitehall Rd are taller than those in the conservation area to the north. Two wings project from the northern elevation, however, these are of a

reduced height which allows both the principal element of the building to dominate as well as respecting the fact that the buildings to either side contain residential uses.

- 4.3 Distances to the surrounding residential buildings have been carefully considered in order to protect residential amenity through overlooking and over dominance. The building is approximately 18-20m away from both City Central and West Central as well as those to the north across Wellington St. In addition to this there is a 6m gap between the blank elevations of the two buildings on the site above the point at which the vehicle access ramp (described below in para 4.5) is located. This is necessary for construction reasons to enable the delivery of the buildings to be phased but it also provides some visual relief and natural light penetration to this part of the scheme.
- 4.4 An area of open space is proposed between the 2 buildings to create a new urban square, linked to the existing piazza but with a different and more enclosed character. This allows light in to the rear of the 2 main buildings and would have commercial uses on its periphery to activate the space. It is likely that this will receive a hard landscaped approach being located above the basement car park with a softer treatment contained within the existing piazza where there is no basement and therefore better ground conditions would exist to support planting.
- 4.5 In addition to being able to access the central space from the piazza, 2 further pedestrian access points would be taken through the ground floors of the proposed buildings. The first of these would be through the Wellington St building towards the eastern end of the elevation and the other would be from Whitehall Rd at the eastern corner. This is a direct response to the fact that this corner is visible from the North Concourse entrance to City Station. It would therefore fulfil both visual and permeability objectives and the space and routes to it would be open 24 hours a day. The new public realm and access routes are additional to that required by policy and are seen as a considerable gain.
- 4.6 Servicing and vehicle access is proposed to be along the eastern boundary of the site with a one way route heading northwards entering the site from Whitehall Rd and exiting on to Wellington St. This would provide a service vehicle route and provide access to a single level of basement car parking for approximately 100 cars. The route has to be 6m wide to allow one service vehicle to pass another when it is parked and would be physically enclosed to protect the amenity of the residents in City Central.
- 4.7 The site would require measures to be provided as part of a Travel Plan as well as public transport contributions. There are also likely to be requirements for improvements to local highway infrastructure including carriageway widening and the relocation of a pedestrian crossing facility on Wellington St. These will form part of a package of measure to be included in a Section 106 agreement. Officers will ascertain what is required as part of on going discussions once the floorspace dedicated to each use has been established.
- 4.8 The applicant intends to carry out pre-application consultations with the local community following consideration of the comments from Plans Panel.

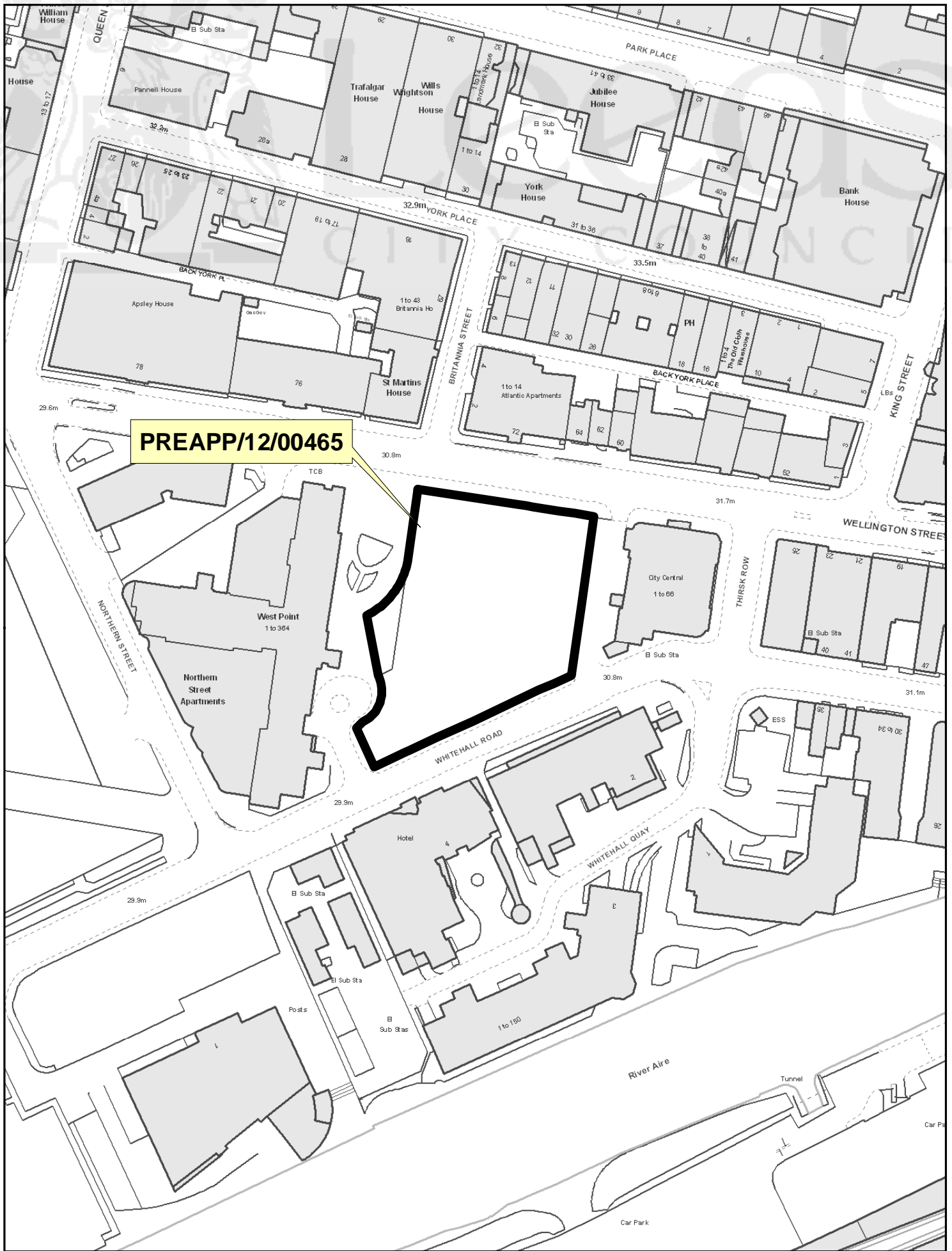
5.0 ISSUES

- 5.1 Members are asked to consider the following matters:

- i. Are the footprints and layout of the buildings acceptable?
- ii. Are the scale and massing of the buildings acceptable?
- iii. Are the proposed materials and elevational treatments acceptable?
- iv. Are the measures employed to protect the amenity of surrounding residents e.g. distances between building facades; angles between building facades; relative heights, sufficient?
- v. Is the provision of the additional open space area supported in this form with the new access points on to Whitehall Rd and Wellington St.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Pre-application file PREAPP/12/00465 and history files 20/314/00/FU, 20/063/03/FU and 06/01622/FU.



PREAPP/12/00465

CITY CENTRE PLANS PANEL

