

Report of the Chief Planning Officer

Report to Outer East Area Committee

Date: 11th September 2012

Subject: Thorpe Park

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Cross Gates and Whinmoor, Garforth and Swillington, Temple Newsam		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. This report highlights key aspects of a pre-application planning proposal submitted by Scarborough Developments for undeveloped land at Thorpe Park and the provision of a new public park. Two planning applications are expected, the first relating to Thorpe Park itself at the end of August/early September and the second concerning the new public park later on (albeit it is hoped determination dates will be the same).
2. In brief, the Thorpe Park proposal is to provide up to 160,000m² of development comprising:
 - 121,300 m² of B1 offices,
 - 22,100 m² of retail (including approximately 12,000m² in a single large format supermarket),
 - 17,800m² of leisure uses (including hotels)
 - 3,200m² of food and drink uses.
 - The proposals also include the delivery of the Manston Lane Link Road (MLLR).

- The proposals to create the public park are being presented to Area Committee as a separate agenda item led by Parks & Countryside.

Recommendations

3. Area Committee is requested to:

- Note the report and associated presentation and provide any comments.

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report and presentation gives Members an opportunity to understand and comment on a proposal which will have major implications for their area.

2 Background information

2.1 In 1995 outline consent was given for up to 1.2m ft² (111,500m²) of office floorspace. In 2004 this permission was amended to permit up to 1.8million ft² (167,225m²). Approximately 600,000 ft² (55,742m²) of offices have currently been built.

2.2 The applicant, Scarborough Development Group, is preparing an outline planning application and this presentation forms part of wider public consultation events that have been undertaken or are ongoing.

2.3 Thorpe Park is identified in Leeds' UDPR (Unitary Development Plan Review) as employment land and a key business park. The principle of employment use on the site is established and still considered appropriate; however, many of the other uses now proposed conflict with local and national planning policy and accordingly need to be fully justified if they are to be supported.

3 Main issues

3.1 Site:

3.1.1 The proposal would increase the level of development by approximately 50,000m² over the current permission level of up to 167,225m².

3.1.2 Building heights would generally be higher than has currently been developed on Thorpe Park (up to six storeys is proposed)

3.1.3 Buildings would front onto streets rather than being centrally positioned within individual plots - as has occurred elsewhere at Thorpe Park.

3.1.4 The layout would maintain publicly accessible open space within the site linking the new public park 'Green Park' in the west to Brown Moor in the east.

3.1.5 The proposals seek to retain and protect most existing trees along the boundaries and large sections of the emerging woodland on Brown Moor. A number of other

trees are however likely to be removed but a detailed site survey will identify the most important of these and retention will be sought where possible.

3.1.6 With respect to the MLLR, it would connect with the existing highway network at Thorpe Park and cross the railway line in the northeastern part of the site before linking with Manston Lane. A further roundabout is proposed within Thorpe Park just south of the railway line to serve the office development. The MLLR is also intended to connect to the proposed East Leeds Orbital Road (ELOR) in due course and on this basis provision is made for the road to be a dual carriageway. This would provide a strategic link to the M1 for traffic in east Leeds.

3.2 Surroundings:

3.2.2 Cross Gates centre is located to the west, Garforth to the east and Colton Retail Park across the A63 to the south.

3.2.3 Residential properties are between the northern side of the A63 and the built component of Thorpe Park. (The Barrowbys – Lane, Road, Drive, Avenue etc and the Austhorpes – Lane, Avenue, Drive etc.)

3.2.4 The East Leeds Extension housing allocation is sited across the railway line to the north. A planning application has recently been submitted for 2,000 houses on part of this allocation.

3.2.5 The ‘Green Park’ part of the site is surrounded by residential properties with Austhorpe Lane forming the eastern boundary.

3.3 Proposed Uses:

3.3.1 The principle of Class B1 use offices has been established for the site and accords with UDPR policies E4 and E18. Leisure uses, cafes, restaurants and even small scale retail uses that clearly perform an ancillary function to the main office use could also be considered depending on the detail and how they fit into the wider masterplan.

3.3.2 However, the outline proposal includes a significant amount of retail floorspace in an out of centre location. This clearly conflicts with the “centre first” approach advocated in the current UDPR and the more recent guidance provided in NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and the Council’s own Core Strategy.

3.3.3 UDPR policy S5 notes major retail development outside designated centres would not normally be permitted unless:

- It is of a type that cannot be accommodated in existing centres.
- It is demonstrated there will be no adverse effect on vitality and viability of existing centres.
- It addresses qualitative and/or quantitative deficiencies and in the case of food shopping would create a new centre to meet the needs of local residents.
- It is readily accessible.
- It does not entail use of land designated for housing or employment.

- 3.3.4 The NPPF and Core Strategy seek to focus retail and other main town centres uses (such as hotels and leisure) in designated centres with out of centre sites only being considered suitable if more central locations are not available. The applicant is aware many of the uses proposed represent a significant policy challenge for the Council and is currently completing the necessary documentation to support their outline application.
- 3.3.5 In terms of the layout details which have been provided to date, large parts of the office development are considered to be generally acceptable, however, some of the large scale footprints of the retail units fail to successfully integrate into the grain of either the existing or proposed Thorpe Park. The inevitable parking and servicing associated with such retailers also makes proper integration even more difficult. The developer is understood to be responding to this issue by providing smaller units with basement parking and servicing.
- 3.3.6 In addition to the above, there are major concerns with the location of the large supermarket being provided in a detached location from the rest of Thorpe Park to the east of the proposed MLLR. The proposed raising up of the building to provide undercroft car parking and the prospect of substantial remodelling works to Brown Moor in order to provide a level development plateau are also of serious concern.

3.4 Transport:

- 3.4.1 The proposed development will link to existing roundabouts at Thorpe Park that serve the development and access junction 46 of the M1 and the A63 to the south. A new road (the MLLR) proposed to be dual carriageway, will extend northward from the existing roundabout and bridge over the railway line on the northern boundary and link to Manston Lane. The developer is proposing delivery of the MLLR is brought forward to help unlock the remaining housing potential of Cross Gates' Barnbow and Optare sites which should make a financial contribution to the Manston Lane Link road.
- 3.4.2 Highways officers are awaiting a transport assessment and also seeking to ensure Travel Planning measures and access to public transport are enhanced at the site.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The applicant has engaged in pre-application discussions with appropriate Council officers since November 2011. A series of public consultation events have also taken place.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 There are no specific issues in this respect.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 As highlighted above, there are potential conflicts with the Council's planning policies as they relate to the location of key town centre uses and also some aspects of the design approach which has been adopted.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 N/A.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 N/A

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 N/A

5 Conclusions

5.1 Whereas this proposal would bring jobs, major development and a new link road to the area, aspects of the application – in particular those relating to introduction of a significant retail offer - are in direct contravention of local and national guidelines and, in a worst case scenario, could lead to a loss of amenities and jobs in neighbouring centres. Therefore the sequential approach and impact assessments for the uses proposed will need to be carefully assessed in order to fully understand the impact on existing centres. The highway implications and the timescales for delivery of the MLLR will also need to be given significant consideration as will the overall design approach. The proposed tie in with the separate planning application for 'Green Park' is also important.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Note the report and associated presentation and provide any comments.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 Pre-application presentation (PREAPP/11/01151) – submitted to *Plans Panel East* on 9th August 2012.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.