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**Report of the Chief Planning Officer**

**CITY PLANS PANEL**

**Date: 4<sup>th</sup> JULY 2013**

**Subject: PRE-APPLICATION PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION, KEY WORKER AND APARTMENT BUILDINGS ON LAND AT ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE AND POLICE DEPOT, ST JOHN'S ROAD AND BELLE VUE ROAD, WOODHOUSE, LEEDS (PREAPP/13/00354)**

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Hyde Park and Woodhouse  
Headingley**

Yes

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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**RECOMMENDATION: This report is brought to Plans Panel for information. The Developer will present the details of the scheme to allow Members to consider and comment on the proposals.**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This presentation is intended to inform Members of the emerging proposals for the construction of three new buildings comprising student accommodation (335 bedspaces), keyworker accommodation (302 studio apartments) and 60 open market apartments on land at St John's Road and Belle Vue Road. All existing buildings on the former police depot and St Michael's College site would be demolished except the original 1908 element of the college which would be retained and refurbished to form part of the proposed keyworker accommodation. A planning application is expected later in the year and the developer is keen to commence construction as soon as practically possible.

## **2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1 The site, extending over 1.8 hectares, comprises two neighbouring parcels of land. The northern third of site, abutting Belle Vue Road and St John's Road, contains a large single storey brick building originally constructed as a clothing factory. It was last used by the police. There is off-street parking on the road frontages behind a low stone wall. A large ash tree close to the road junction is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.
- 2.2 The remainder of the site comprises the buildings and grounds of St Michael's College which closed in 2008. The college buildings are grouped around the original 1908 building which was built on a grand scale elevated above a large stone wall on St John's Road. Although the building is not listed it is a positive feature in the area. Later extensions attached to the north west and to the rear (north east) detract from the prominent college building. Additionally, the buildings have suffered badly from vandalism, theft and lack of maintenance since being vacated.
- 2.3 There are lines of good quality mature trees close to the boundaries of the site both to the front and rear of the college buildings. There are further groups of good quality trees between the sloping grassed area to the rear of the college buildings and on the eastern edge beyond the elevated tarmaced school playground.
- 2.4 Levels in the area fall noticeably from the north east to the south west such that the ground level of the police building is approximately 4 metres lower than the college buildings. Due to the changes in levels the two storey terraced houses in Kelso Gardens 13 metres to the north east currently look out over the roof of the police building. Belle Vue Road is a widely spaced street accommodating 3 and 4 storey terraces set back 20 metres from the road on the west side at a lower ground level. The elevated St Michael's College buildings dwarf two storey dwellings in the "Consorts" located on the west side of St John's Road. Conversely, the existing 3 and 4 storey flats on Victoria Road to the east are elevated relative to the site. Similarly, the three storey blocks of student accommodation at Albert Mansbridge Hall, sit above the eastern boundary of the site.
- 2.5 The Clarendon Road Conservation Area runs along the eastern fringe of the site. The University of Leeds is located to the east of Clarendon Road. The city centre is approximately 10 minutes walk from the site via the footbridge over the Inner Ring Road at the west end of Great George Street.

## **3.0 PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 It is proposed to demolish all existing buildings on the site other than the original St Michael's College building.

### Student accommodation

- 3.1.1 The police building would be replaced by a 4-sided building constructed on a similar footprint to the police building but set around a central, open courtyard. The building would step up in height from 3 storeys fronting Belle Vue Road, to 5 storeys at the corner of Belle Vue Road and St John's Road, then to 6 storeys on St John's Road.

It would drop down to 4 storeys adjacent to the rear boundary of houses on Kelso Gardens. This 4 storey part of the building, which is set down approximately 4 metres below the ground level of houses in Kelso Gardens, would be around 2.5 metres from the boundary. The new building would be 11-15 metres from the rear elevation of 24-34 Kelso Gardens

- 3.1.2 The building would contain 335 student bedspaces, in a combination of 80 studios and 59 cluster flats in a mix of 3, 4 and 5-bed clusters. Typical layouts are attached at the end of this report. 1 per cent of the rooms would be for disabled students. A 280 square metre commercial unit is identified at the northern end of the building. 12 parking spaces are proposed for the commercial units and 3 parking spaces are proposed for staff/disabled for the student accommodation. Other students would have a clause in their tenancy agreement preventing them from bringing cars to university.

#### Keyworker accommodation

- 3.2 The 1908 St Michael's College building in the centre of the site would be refurbished and extended in similar locations to existing extensions to the north and east albeit in a different arrangement. On the north side, the new staggered extension would be connected to the retained building by a new section set back 3 metres from the front of the 1908 building. This element would sit just below the eaves of the retained building. Further back, the link would be the same height as the ridge of the 1908 building. Beyond 7 metres from the original building there would be no setback. The easternmost wing to the rear would extend into the existing grassed area beyond the buildings. The retained building, with high floor to ceiling heights would provide three levels of accommodation. New build areas would typically provide 5 or 6 levels of accommodation.

- 3.2.1 This part of the development would contain 302 keyworker studio apartments. The developer states that a keyworker is defined as a public sector employee who is considered to provide an essential service. As there are different interpretations of keyworkers around the country the developer suggests that in Leeds it ought to include a fairly wide interpretation of staff within the following areas:

- Emergency services
- Health
- Education
- Police
- MOD
- Public transport
- Local government
- Prison and probation staff
- Workers in charitable and community sectors

The developer states that the keyworker accommodation at St Michael's College will provide affordable rented accommodation. The rent would be set at a rate of not more than 80 per cent of market rent of open market accommodation of not less than equivalent quality and specification.

3.2.2 The layout of the studios varies depending upon location but averages between 23 and 26 square metres, compared with 14 square metres for the proposed student bedrooms. Each of the rooms would have space for a bed, a desk, a kitchenette, a shower room and cupboard space. Additional shared facilities in the building comprise a dance studio, a weights room and laundry, all located in the lowest level of the original building. A tennis court is identified on land immediately north of the building. 51 parking spaces are provided for the keyworkers, distributed to the front of the building and in a courtyard formed between buildings in the centre of the site.

#### Open market accommodation

3.3 The existing, elevated, playground area at the southern end of the site would be excavated and removed. A part 3, part 4 and part 5 storey building would be constructed in its place. The building would sit on a platform. 60 parking spaces would be provided in the undercroft area beneath this deck. An additional 16 spaces would be located externally alongside a new access road that would be laid out parallel to St John's Road with a new vehicular access formed at the southern end of the site. The existing high boundary wall would be reduced in height.

3.3.1 The building would contain 60 open market apartments in a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom flats.

#### 3.4 Trees and amenity space

3.4.1 It is intended to retain the vast majority of existing trees which are located around the periphery of the site. Smaller, lower quality trees between the college and police building are to be removed. An ash tree to the rear of the 1908 building is shown to be removed. No details are provided regarding 3 off-site trees immediately to the east of the police building.

3.4.2 The courtyard located at the centre of the student buildings would provide outdoor amenity space for students. The distance between buildings is approximately 20 x 40 metres. Areas north and east of the keyworker buildings and open market apartment provide the remainder of the amenity space.

## 4.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND CONSULTATION

4.1 Pre-application discussions regarding the current scheme commenced with officers in March 2013. The scheme is the subject of a Planning Performance Agreement.

4.2 The developer, the Watkin Jones Group, delivered leaflets throughout the area advertising the proposals and subsequently held a public consultation event on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. The developer has also set up a website and set up facebook and twitter pages to promote discussion regarding the scheme. The developer has also been in contact with local Councillors and made a presentation to the Little Woodhouse Community Association.

4.3 At the time of writing officers had received a comment from one of the LWCA committee members who makes the following remarks:

- Something needs to happen on the site;
- It is believed that it is intended that students are the main occupiers of the development. There is already a massive imbalance in the area with over 70% being students. What is needed is a good demographic mix of permanent residents;

- Public transport links are not good;
- Redeveloping such a large site in the heart of the area can only be good but it needs to be done creatively, considering the community aspect in greater detail. This could include new homes for keyworkers and the elderly; possibly conversion of St Michael's College to postgraduate/international student accommodation; a new school; possibly more commercial units selling healthy foods, a coffee shop, laundrette; and a playground for children.

4.4 Early in the process Councillor Towler representing the Hyde Park and Woodhouse Ward confirmed her opposition to the student component of the scheme.

4.5 At the Cardigan Road (Glassworks) Public Inquiry the Inspector stated that the addition of 256 students in one location would be a material increase in the Area of Housing Mix and that the over-concentration of students in this part of the city does not sit well with the Government's objectives of creating socially cohesive and well-balanced communities.

## **5.0 POLICY OVERVIEW**

5.1 The introduction of the NPPF has not changed the legal requirement that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The policy guidance in Annex 1 to the NPPF is that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given.

5.1.1 The Core Strategy sets out strategic level policies and vision to guide the delivery of development investment decisions and the overall future of the district. On 26th April 2013 the Council submitted the Publication Draft Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for examination and an Inspector has been appointed. It is expected that the examination will commence in September 2013.

5.1.2 As the Council has submitted the Publication Draft Core Strategy for independent examination some weight can now be attached to the document and its contents recognising that the weight to be attached may be limited by outstanding representations which have been made which will be considered at the future examination.

### **5.2 Residential development**

5.2.1 Policy H4 of the Unitary Development Plan Review (UDPR) allows for residential development on unidentified, brownfield sites subject to the proposals being compatible with the area and all other normal development control considerations. Policy H2 of the Draft Core Strategy (DCS) carries this approach forward, subject to meeting accessibility standards. One of the core planning principles in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has previously been developed. Paragraph 49 states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

### 5.3 Student development

- 5.3.1 In the UDPR the site is located beyond the City Centre boundary and is situated within the Area of Housing Mix (Policy H15). Within this area the provision of additional student housing is managed so as to maintain a diverse housing stock that will cater for all sectors of the population, including families. Purpose built student housing, specifically reserved and managed for that purpose, is encouraged where it improves the total stock of student accommodation, relieves pressure on conventional housing and assists in regenerating areas in decline or at risk of decline. Such development must not unacceptably affect neighbours' living conditions, and its scale needs to be compatible with the surrounding area.
- 5.3.2 DCS Policy H6B considers proposals for purpose built student accommodation. Developments should extend the supply to take pressure off the use of private housing; avoid excessive concentrations of student accommodation; and avoid locations which are not easily accessible to the Universities by foot or public transport.

### 5.4 Housing sizes

- 5.4.1 Policy H9 of the UDPR states that the Council will seek to ensure that a balanced provision in terms of size and type of dwelling is made in housing development. DCS Policy H4 says that developments should include an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes to address needs measured over the long-term taking into account the nature of the development and character of the location. The NPPF states that local authorities should deliver a wide choice of homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities (para 50).

### 5.5 Affordable housing

- 5.5.1 UDPR policies H11-H13 set out the requirement for the provision of affordable housing. The Interim Affordable Housing policy states that 5 per cent of the dwellings (not student accommodation) should be provided as affordable housing if the development is implemented in two years. DCS Policy H5 states that the Council will seek affordable housing from all developments of new developments either on-site, off-site, or by way of a financial contribution if it is not possible on site. These policies accord with paragraphs 47 and 50 of the NPPF. Annex 2 of the NPPF defines affordable rented housing as that which is let by local authorities, or private registered providers of social housing, to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent.

### 5.6 Design and amenity

- 5.6.1 UDPR policy GP5 states that proposals should resolve detailed planning considerations and should seek to avoid loss of amenity. Policy N12 identifies fundamental priorities for urban design, including ensuring new buildings are good neighbours. Policy N19 states that new buildings within or adjacent to conservation areas should preserve or enhance the character of the area. Policy BD6 states that alterations and extensions should respect the scale, form, detailing and materials of the original building.

- 5.6.2 UDPR policies N2 and N4 identify where new development should assist in supporting the establishment of the hierarchy of greenspace.
- 5.6.3 Similar design and amenity policies are contained within the DCS. Policy P10 requires new development to be based on a thorough contextual analysis to provide good design appropriate to its scale and function, delivering high quality innovative design and enhancing existing landscapes and spaces. Policy P11 states that heritage assets will be preserved. P12 states that landscapes will be conserved and enhanced.
- 5.7 Transport and access
- 5.7.1 UDPR policy GP5 states proposals should avoid highway congestion and maximise highway safety and resolve access issues. Policy T2 amplifies these requirements and subsequent policies T2B-D set out the need for transport assessments, travel plans, and public transport contributions. Policy T6 states that satisfactory access for disabled people and others with mobility problems is required. Car parking, cycling, and motorcycle parking requirements are contained within Appendix 9.
- 5.7.2 DCS Policies T1 and T2 identify transport management and accessibility requirements for new development. Specific accessibility standards are included in DCS Appendix 2.
- 5.8 Retail Policy
- 5.8.1 The site is not located within a centre where retail development is normally encouraged. UDP Policy S6 states that support will be given to modern convenience goods retailing in areas where residents have poor access to such facilities, including Burley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse. Policy S9 refers to criteria for consideration of smaller retail proposals.
- 5.8.2 The DCS proposes designating Burley Lodge (Woodsley Road) as a lower order local centre. Policy P3 states that small food stores compatible with the size of the centre would be acceptable in and on the edge of local centres. Policy P4 indicates that small scale food stores, up to 372 sq.m will be acceptable in principle in residential areas where there is no local centre or shopping parade within a 500 metre radius that is capable of accommodating the development within it.
- 5.9 Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan 2013 (NRWLP)
- 5.9.1 The Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan was adopted by Leeds City Council on 16th January 2013. The NRWLP is part of the Local Development Framework.
- 5.9.2 Policy Land 1 states that trees should be conserved wherever possible and new planting should be introduced to create high quality environments for development.
- 5.10 Supplementary guidance
- 5.10.1 Relevant supplementary guidance includes the Public Transport Improvements and Developer Contributions SPD; Travel Plans SPD; Building for Tomorrow Today – Sustainable Design and Construction; SPG3 Affordable Housing; SPG6 Development of Self Contained Flats; and SPG13 Neighbourhoods for Living (2003).

### 5.10.2 Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Design Statement (2011)

The Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Design Statement (LWNDS) identifies the distinctiveness of the area, encourages improvement where it is needed, and seeks to protect the best elements of the neighbourhood. The LWNDS states that any redevelopment proposal at the college site should:

- Retain the 1908 building and the three storey building to the north of the property;
- Re-use the Chapel stained glass windows;
- Provide facilities for community meetings which St Michael's did over the years;
- Retain greenspace to the rear of the buildings for public use;
- Redevelop the area occupied by the extensions and playground;
- Restore footpath links to Kelso Gardens and Clarendon Road to provide better connections in Little Woodhouse;
- Prepare a masterplan in consultation with the local community and the City Council.

## 6.0 ISSUES

Members are asked to comment on the scheme and to consider the following matters:

- 6.1 Buildings on the site are currently vacant, attracting anti-social behaviour and are starting to adversely affect the appearance of the area. Investment in this site is needed to reverse this deterioration.

**Do Members agree that the sensitive redevelopment of the site including refurbishment of the 1908 college building, in terms of scale and use, should be encouraged and that any development that takes place should provide employment and training opportunities for local people?**

- 6.2 Despite the decline in the number of undergraduates for the 2012-2013 in-take, the growth in supply of student accommodation is continuing. In Leeds (excluding Trinity and All Saints) planning permission is in place to construct developments providing an additional 3325 new student bedspaces. There a similar number of bedspaces proposed in schemes at the pre-application stage. In larger, purpose-built, student accommodation the surplus of rooms has led to price reductions and more flexible letting periods being offered. In November 2012 Unipol estimated that there were at least 650 purpose-built rooms still available in Leeds. Whilst it is evident that new purpose-built student accommodation continues to be developed in the city a review of the impact of new student accommodation is currently underway and a Scrutiny Inquiry is intended in the near future following completion of that review.

- 6.2.1 The site is located within the Area of Housing Mix where the provision of additional student housing is managed so as to maintain a diverse housing stock that will cater for all sectors of the population, including families. Similarly, the Draft Core Strategy seeks to avoid excessive concentration of student accommodation. The developer states that the student element of the scheme is fundamental to being able to deliver the redevelopment of the remainder of the site.

**Do Members consider that additional student development in this area is appropriate having regard to local and national policies relating to the**



**objective of creating balanced communities and the supply of other consented schemes and pre-application enquiries?**

- 6.3 Discounting the student element of the scheme the proposals identify 302 one bedroom studios for keyworkers, 30 one bedroom and 30 two bedroom dwellings. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2011 identified a general need across the city for 2 and 3 bed properties to meet housing need. At the same time there is also potential for a higher demand for smaller properties in the future as a result of Welfare Reform.

**Do Members consider the scheme provides an acceptable mix of housing sizes and that the size of the units themselves are acceptable?**

- 6.4 Current policy states that 5 per cent of the dwellings (excluding the student accommodation) should be provided as affordable housing in perpetuity. The developer comments that keyworker housing is widely recognised as a valuable source of specialist affordable accommodation designed to meet the specific needs of workers that provide essential local services but cannot afford to access open market housing. The developer also states that it is possible to ensure that it remains affordable in perpetuity through conditions or a section 106 legal agreement. Officers are still considering whether the proposed tenure and cost would satisfy affordable housing policy.

**Do Members have a view as to whether low-cost housing exclusively for keyworkers (see para 3.2.1) is suitable in lieu of provision of affordable housing managed by a registered provider?**

- 6.5 The proposed development is located in a residential neighbourhood containing a mix of tenures. Covenants on the land to the east prevent the re-opening of a direct footpath route through to Clarendon Road and the universities beyond. Consequently, pedestrian access to and from the site to the universities and to the city centre would involve passing through residential areas.
- 6.5.1 Although built close to site boundaries (less than 2 metres) the existing police building has a limited impact on the amenities of neighbours by virtue of its use, its height and the topography of the land. The student development would replace this building with one of much greater height (3 to 6 storey). The 4 storey, 50 metres long, eastern wing of the building, although at a lower ground level than existing dwellings in Kelso Gardens to the east, would be up to 2.5 metres from the site boundary, including trees on that boundary. By virtue of the change in ground levels only the upper two floors of the building would be evident from the houses on Kelso Gardens 11 to 15 metres away. This part of the new building has been designed with a single aspect facing into the courtyard and directional windows on the eastern boundary to control overlooking. The scale of the building increases with distance from the eastern boundary. A five storey element would be 10 metres from the eastern boundary stepping up to the 6 storey section 14 metres from the boundary (28 metres from houses on Kelso Gardens). The tallest parts of the student building would be situated 24 metres from the closest two storey housing in the Consorts constructed at a lower level on the opposite side of St John's Road.

**Do Members agree that the development would be acceptable having regard to the scheme's effect on residents' living conditions in houses in Kelso Gardens and Consort View?**

- 6.6 The original 1908 St Michael's College building was built on a grand scale in an elevated position relative to St John's Road. Unfortunately, subsequent extensions to the building were less successful and some diminish its setting. There is a mix of building scale and form beyond the site boundaries and the changing topography and layout affects their impact. Buildings to the east are typically 3 to 4 storeys in height and elevated relative to the site. The Kelso's to the north and the Consorts across St John's Road to the south are primarily conventional two-storey terraced houses. The scale of housing on the west side of Belle Vue Road is larger (3, 4 and 5 storey) although these buildings are set slightly down, and 22 metres back from, the road helping to create a widely spaced street and junction with St John's Road.
- 6.6.1 The scale of the proposed buildings takes reference from the height of the 1908 building. The keyworker extensions are of a similar height to the 1908 building, slightly taller to the front and slightly lower to the rear. A recess and change of material is intended to create a visual break between the 1908 building and the extension on its northern side
- 6.6.2 The student buildings are separated by 11 metres and a 4 metre change in levels from the keyworker buildings in an elevated location at the centre of the site. The student buildings step down from 6 storeys to 3 storeys fronting Belle Vue Road and 4 storeys along the eastern boundary to Kelso Gardens. The 5 and 6 storey wing alongside St John's Road, which sits 4 metres forward of the keyworkers housing, is 63 metres long. The crank in the building directly reflects the junction arrangement with Belle Vue Road. The scale of the new student building proposed around the road junction is 5 storeys in height whereas existing houses to the west side of the junction is two storeys high.
- 6.6.3 The open market housing is laid out in a linear arrangement in the southern third of the site. It is positioned a similar distance back from St John's Road as the keyworker's accommodation and approximately 20 metres from it. The staggered building frontage is 59 metres long and comprises 3, 4 and 5 storey elements sitting on a deck over undercroft parking. It is unclear whether the undercroft area will be enclosed in any way and how visible it will be from St John's Road. Although this area of the site currently comprises the school playground the proposed open market apartment buildings relate to the scale of nearby buildings.

**Do Members consider that the location, massing and design quality of buildings respond acceptably to their context?**

- 6.7 Each of the uses need an appropriate quantity of amenity space to meet the future occupiers needs. Additionally, adopted policy requires that developments of this scale also provide areas of public amenity space. The Little Woodhouse NDS also identified the need for an area of greenspace that could be used by the local community. A landscape strategy is currently being produced for the development but the extent of buildings, hardsurfacing, existing trees and site topography will limit the ability to provide meaningful areas of on-site greenspace.

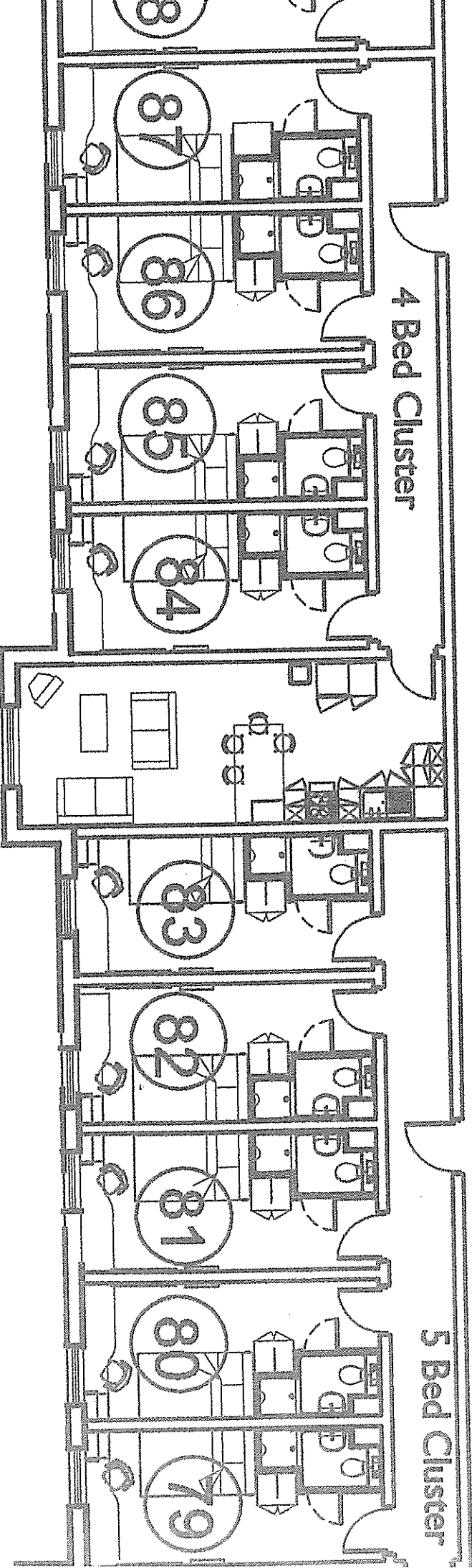
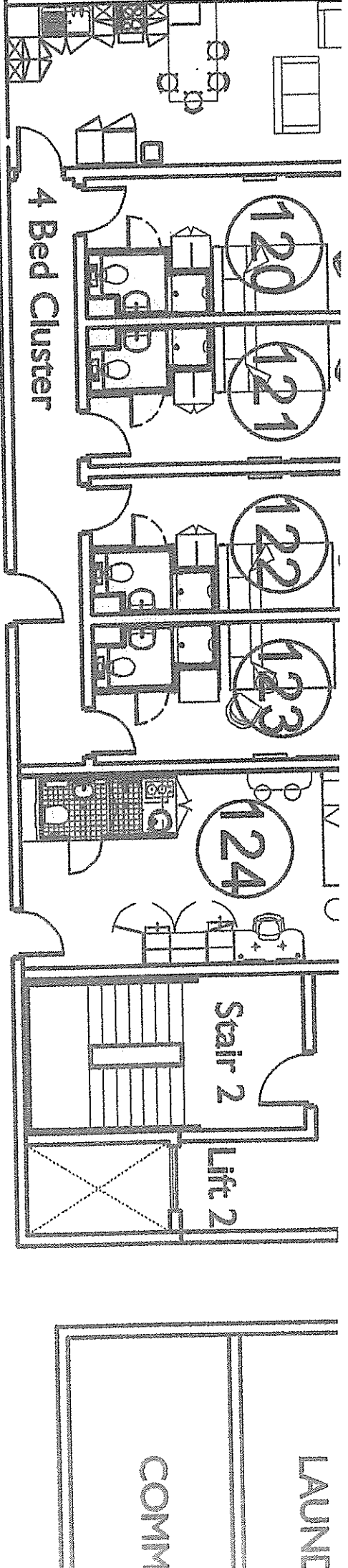
**Do Members agree that the development should provide greenspace on site, or if this is not practically possible that a contribution should be paid towards the provision of off-site greenspace having regard to UDPR policies N2 and N4?**

- 6.8 Existing mature trees around the site provide a valuable amenity to the wider area and also help to provide a buffer to some of the properties around the periphery of the site. Although much of the new development is located in similar locations to existing buildings the construction of new buildings, and change in levels, has the capacity to adversely affect existing trees. The juxtaposition of new buildings with outlooks and daylighting affected by existing trees could also result in future pressure for the removal of trees.

**Do Members agree that it is important that existing trees are appropriately protected from construction work and that new buildings should be arranged so as not to result in their future removal?**

- 6.9 The development includes a large commercial unit that could be occupied by a range of uses. The unit could also help to activate this part of Belle Vue Road where the remainder of the new frontage is proposed to be elevated 2 metres above ground level.

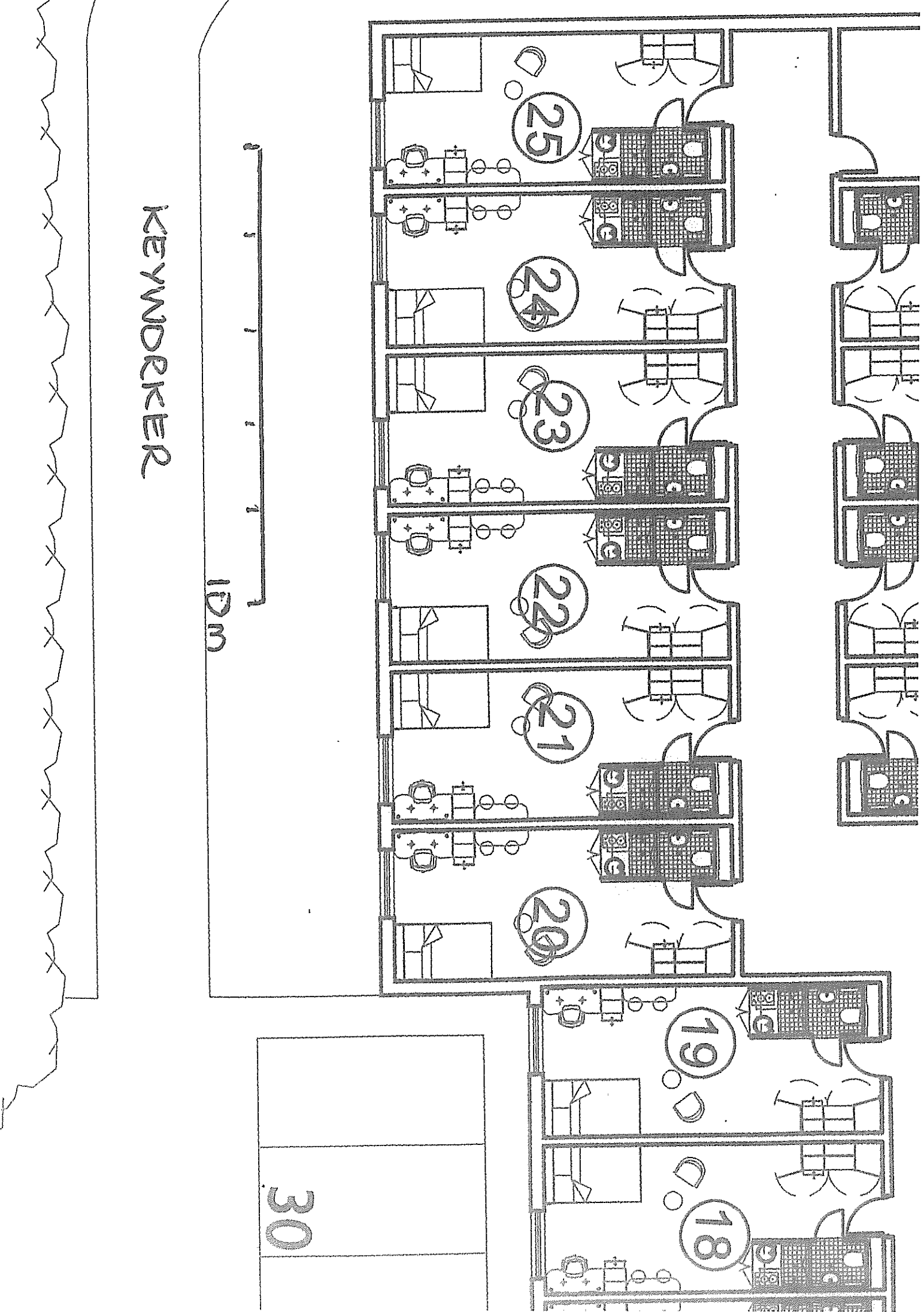
**Do Members consider that the commercial unit would help meet local needs and that the developer should fully investigate the opportunities to introduce community uses into the development?**



STUDENT  
CLUSTER

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KEYWORKER

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OPEN MARKET

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