



PLANNING ISSUES – November 2023

Here is this month's review of planning, development and transport matters as discussed at the Trust's committees. After Anna's excellent summary in October, I am afraid that I am back in the columnist's chair for November.

In October, we had one external presentation when Mark Pullen came to show us his company's plans for the Joseph's Well 'campus' at the west end of The Headrow. Former mill buildings and more modern extensions are home to a wide range of businesses and there are plans for some residential units as well. The scheme shown to us (the first 'in-person' presentation at Wharf Street since before Covid!) is for purpose-built student accommodation on what is now an open car park alongside the inner ring road. Our view was that the building would be too high for this location, featuring in a number of key views, and that the form and materials proposed would make it difficult to deliver the high quality development we feel is essential for this historic site.

There were not many applications to review this month but we were able to support the following:

- Dartmouth Park, Morley: plans to create a new landscaped garden on the site of a former arboretum within this public park – the Morley Town Deal will see a wide range of interventions in the town's greenspaces
- Leeds Town Hall: a series of interventions to create a more flexible concert and event space
- Calverley Old Hall: proposals to protect Tudor wall paintings which were discovered while the Landmark Trust was renovating this medieval manor house as a holiday property.

We commented on two schemes:

- 23-27 New Briggate: while welcoming the revitalisation of these shops next to St John's Churchyard as part of a Townscape Heritage Initiative programme, we suggested a number of changes which would deliver an even better result
- 22-23 Commercial Street: we felt the Listed building could be better reflected in the new shopfront and any shutters safeguarding the shop should be internal.

Unfortunately, as is usually the case, there were two schemes to which we objected. The first was at 2 The Headrow where the operator of new apartments in the former bank wishes to put a nameplate on the façade – not a big issue but it would ruin the symmetry of the carefully designed building. The second submission was to maintain our objection to a residential block at Holdforth Court opposite the Minster – changes have been made to the plans initially submitted but it still presents a blank façade to the roads alongside which we hope to 'downgrade' as part of our Eastside project.

We made no comment on a number of projects including works to the Third White Cloth Hall (the former Pizza Express behind the Corn Exchange is to become a bar and food venue), Pudsey Leisure Centre (new energy-saving heat pump), City Point on King Street (new lighting scheme) and the Victoria Quarter (new shopfront).

Recent approvals include a 30 storey apartment block alongside the railway in Holbeck – we objected to the initial 45 floor project but still feel that this is not an appropriate location for such a building as it will overshadow an adjoining block and dominate several key views. The Trust joined many local organisations and objected to plans for an out-of-town Lidl store and a care home on the Mercure Hotel site at Wetherby – consent for this was refused by the City Council.

On the planning and development side, matters discussed at meetings included the following:

- it has been determined that six concrete panel tower blocks in Seacroft, Moortown and Armley cannot viably be refurbished to modern standards and their demolition was proposed – plans have been put on hold to further explore rehousing issues



- the Local Plan Update has been published to allow all to comment on changes made since the initial consultation at the end of 2022 – documentation and response forms can be found at [Local plan update](#) (consultation closes 11 December 2023)
- Anna gave an update on the Eastside project last month and we have continued to work up plans for on-going engagement with local stakeholders and the wider community
- while we have concerns over the number of purpose-built student accommodation schemes in Leeds, a major provider (Unite) has reported 99.7% occupancy for the current year even though rents rose by 7.3%
- at a briefing to the Trust's corporate members, the Council's Leader and Chief Executive outlined the financial challenges for the authority, with higher demands from more disadvantaged residents falling on a reducing budget – quizzed on highways issues, the response was that roadworks are painful but there have been significant benefits to the health of local communities
- one of the Trust's Buildings at Risk, the Rising Sun pub on Kirkstall Road, is up for sale with consent for conversion to apartments – however, the agent's description stating it was built in 1985 is only 100 years out
- on a positive note, the oldest part of Kirkgate Market has reopened after extensive reconstruction – it will be good to see new tenants moving in shortly.

Turning to transport, we have also been busy in this field:

- we have again met officers designing a new Mass Rapid Transit network for West Yorkshire and had an open discussion on route options – we will continue to develop our ideas and feed these into the formal consultation process which will start in early 2024
- while supporting the vast majority of the project, Leeds Council has made a formal 'objection' to the plans for the Transpennine Route Upgrade as this is the only mechanism to determine specific issues – it is hoped these will be negotiated away during the design phase
- there is an on-going consultation on the design of segregated cycle routes across the north and south sides of Leeds City Centre, generally using road-space made available through downgrading the Loop following closure of City Square – comments can be made at [Leeds City Links](#) until 11 November.

Last month, Anna mentioned the opportunity for Trust members to join the planning committee. We have recruited one potential member but we are happy to hear from more so that we can widen the skills upon which we can call.

Mike Piet
Chair of LCT Planning Committee