

**PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

19 March 2019  
5.30 - 7.00 pm

**Present:** Councillors Sargeant (Chair), Smart (Vice-Chair), Baigent, Bick, Green, Hipkin, McQueen and Payne

Executive Councillors for Planning Policy and Transport: Councillor Blencowe

**Officers:**

Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly

Strategic Director: Fiona Bryant

Head of 3C Building Services: Heather Jones

Committee Manager: Claire Tunncliffe

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**19/11/PnT Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

**19/12/PnT Declarations of Interest**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Councillor Baigent	19/31/PnT	Personal: Ex member of the fire service; Member of the Fire Brigade Trade Union; Fellow of the Institute of Fire Engineers and Fellow of Higher Education Academy occasionally working in the fire industry.

**19/13/PnT Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**19/14/PnT Public Questions**

A member of the public asked a question as set out below.

- i. The Accordia estate was a major asset not just for its residents but for the City as a whole. This was demonstrated by Accordia's inclusion in the Brooklands Conservation Area, the Article 4. Direction that applies to it, and by the award of architectural prizes, including the Stirling Prize, the most prestigious in the UK.
- ii. Accordia's design was special in that the housing was densely distributed with most houses directly overlooked by or overlooking many others. Private outdoor space was limited, confined to terraces and balconies and some courtyards which also serve as car ports and bike and bin storage. (So the surrounding green spaces with their mature tree belts serve as the community's communal garden.) There were several house types of different sizes and heights, but the architecture throughout shows a strong stylistic homogeneity both from the street side and the rear, 'private' side. Re-modelling or extending properties is therefore extremely difficult to achieve without compromising the overall impact of the architecture. It was recognised at the original planning stage that infilling of terraces and courtyards would be detrimental to the overall design and this was prohibited by a planning condition (28). Although this condition was overturned in an appeal, this was not related to the requirement about infilling.
- iii. There were pressures for change which make the character of the estate increasingly vulnerable. Individual homes may no longer fully meet the needs of the people who live in them, and as time goes by properties would deteriorate and need updating, with the risk that, without clear guidance, the design concept and homogeneity of the estate will be eroded. A Planning Committee decision on 6 March reflected the sensitivity of the site by adopting a cautious approach to proposed alterations to one of the estate's homes. An authoritative design guide about the kind of alterations that are acceptable would be useful for homeowners contemplating alterations and their advisors, for people seeking reassurance that the essential qualities of the estate will be maintained, and for City Councillors and planning officers.
- iv. We therefore ask the Committee to agree that Officers should launch a process to develop such a design guide, perhaps in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document for Accordia. This would be

produced in consultation with experts including the Design and Conservation Panel and the original architects. As was the case with the Article 4 Direction and the application of the Conservation Area, residents are eager to provide support; residents previously developed a comprehensive manual, (which is available via the Clerk of the Committee) and a similar approach could be taken as part of the development of any new Planning Document. We ask the Committee further to agree that residents should be closely involved in the process.

In response, the Director of Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. Expressed thanks for attending the meeting and noted the concerns that had been highlighted.
- ii. Supported and welcomed the work that had been undertaken but could not commit to a request for the production of an additional Supplementary Planning Document.
- iii. There was a prioritisation of staffing resources which had to be considered.
- iv. Had to take into account other conservations areas in and around the City; there were conservation areas which required additional work from Officers to protect the area.

The Executive Councillor advised that it was not just a question of resource but what the additional benefit would be. The published Article 4 had been produced to address resident's concerns on certain conservation issues and safeguard a number of sensitive issues.

The following supplementary points were made by the member of the public.

- i. This was not another step to further safeguard the design features of the Accordia Estate.
- ii. The proposal was for guidance designed to assist residents who wanted to make renovations / changes to their properties and how they could be advised.
- iii. Article 4 identified the sensitive issues of a conservation area but did not offer guidance to residents on how to treat these areas; or what consideration the Planning Committee or Officers would take into account when thinking about making alterations to their properties.
- iv. Appreciated the comment regarding staffing resources but a working group of Accordia residents had produced a comprehensive document the 'Accordia Conservation Review Information Pack' which advised of

appropriate colour schemes and where suitable materials could be found, as example.

- v. A Supplementary Planning Document would take the guidance a stage further to indicate what was likely to be appropriate whilst maintaining the objectives in Article 4 and the conservation area to ensure compliance.

The Director for Planning and Economic Development stated the following:

- i. Reiterated the need to prioritise staffing resource.
- ii. Was keen to ensure officers had an understanding and level of sensitivity to the way they treated Accordia; this would be in line with the conservation area and the current legalisation.
- iii. Would make sure that Officers were aware of and had sight of the 'Accordia Conservation Review Information Pack' and how they should be applying it.
- iv. Would review whether there could be a further role planning services could undertake when giving advice within the framework of all the controls and measures which were in place.
- v. Needed to ensure that all conservation areas were brought up to the same level and committed to safeguarding all conservation areas appropriately.

The Director of Planning and Economic Development concluded it would be possible to provide a report on the status of each conservation area; which would help to assist the prioritisation of work required.

## **19/15/PnT SHARED SERVICES 2019/20 Business Plans for 3Cs Building Control, and Greater Cambridge Planning Service**

### **Matter for Decision**

The report sought approval for the Building Control Business Plan and Greater Cambridge Planning Services Business Plan 2019/20.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Planning Policy & Transport**

- i. Approved the Business Plans for each of the Shared Services, Building Control Shared Services Business Plan & Greater Cambridge Planning Service Business Plan 2019/20.
- ii. Authorised the Shared Services Management Board to approve final amendments to the Business Plans in line with comments received from all partner councils.

## **Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the officer's report.

## **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

## **Scrutiny Considerations**

The Committee received a joint report from the Strategic Director, the Director of Planning and Economic Development and the Head of Building Control.

In response to the Committee's comments the Director of Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. There had been a total of 27 job vacancies advertised across the shared services since April last year.
- ii. Had recently appointed four planning officers from the process that was started earlier in the year.
- iii. The Shared Planning Services consultation would allow the organisation to make improvements to the personal development and growth of officers; this would allow an additional learning opportunity into the planning service.
- iv. The consultation would also allow development of the induction process and ensure that support was available.
- v. Important to develop staff to enable them to progress, whether inside or outside the organisation; in turn they would promote the level of service experienced to external organisations and members of the public.
- vi. Work had taken place on benchmarking and job evaluations; salary levels were competitive with other local authorities.
- vii. There was a recruitment timeline which was being followed, although there was a slight delay there.
- viii. Lessons had been learnt from the first round of the consultation process as there had been a series of workshops involving staff to discuss ideas and to put forward suggestions
- ix. Could be possible to include the offer of accommodation in the future as this was an important consideration when looking at job opportunities.
- x. Research had shown that there was a consistent pattern in the number of planning applications submitted between Cambridgeshire City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council; 42% and 58% which had allowed previous budget to be based on ratio of work.

- xi. As part of the shared services project a memorandum of understanding has been drafted using planning applications and policy delivery outcomes such as the joint Local Plan, North East Cambridge Area Action Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents. Based on this a resources plan had been designed as it was important to understand the resource allocation for budgetary purposes.
- xii. The budget had been historically based on ratio but in future officers would have the capacity to account for their time to the relevant authority with the implementation of a single ICT system.
- xiii. The benefit of a shared planning service brought resilience; officers should be able to cover both authorities if required. Therefore the way that officers recorded their time was critical.
- xiv. Cambridge City Council had limited areas of geography for development which would have an impact on future income for the Council.
- xv. Important to create a new culture under the shared services so that officers did not see themselves as working for one or the other local authority, there is the opportunity for flexible working and working at various locations.
- xvi. Citizens and businesses required a good, responsive and accessible planning service, wherever they were located, which is what the shared services would offer.
- xvii. The strategy of the business plan would account for the cost of officers and allow the recruitment for a range of specialist officers whose services could be used by outside agencies and charged for their time.

The Committee then received an executive summary on the Business Plan for 3c'S building control.

In response to Members questions the Head of Shared Service said the following:

- i. Post Grenville there was a discussion to be part of a joint competency agency which would only include Local Authority Building Control. Certain buildings in scope would only be dealt with by the Local Authority Building Control Department and not by Approved Inspectors. This model was currently being tested by Central Government.
- ii. Individual local authorities and developers were being encouraged to take forward their own initiatives.
- iii. The Hackett report referred to the introduction of gateways; at planning stages there would be enforced consultations with the Fire Authority and Local Authority Building Control. Further discussion on this matter would be taken forward.
- iv. Looking to ensure tighter communication between Building Control and Planning Services.

The Committee then resolved by 5 votes to 0 to exclude the press and public during the discussion of Appendix 2 of this item by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **The Committee:**

**The Committee resolved 7 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendations.**

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport approved the recommendations.

### **19/16/PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport since the last Planning and Transport Meeting.**

**19/16a/PnT** East West Rail Bedford to Cambridge Routes Consultation.

The Director for Planning and Economic Development informed the Committee the deadline to the consultation response had given a very limited time span; the deadline for a response had been closed the week before the meeting.

There had been some dialogue with Cambridge and Bedford Councillors to determine whether there had been a preference to the options given. There had been an inclination for the route leaving Bedford from the North to Cambourne, then approaching the City from the South. However it was reiterated in the response that the information concerning each route option had been very limited.

In response to Members' questions the Director for Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. There would be limited stops between Bedford and Cambridge.
- ii. Alongside the railway was the Oxford to Cambridge Express Way; an announcement of the preferred alignment was via Caxton Gibbet. This would provide infrastructure capacity.
- iii. There had to be an opportunity for economic growth along the railway line to justify the investment from East West Rail; 150,000 additional homes between Bedford and Cambridge.
- iv. Looking at established towns which could support further expansion.
- v. Long way to go to understand expectations and have to take into account local transport projects.
- vi. This was just the beginning of the project.

The Executive Councillor advised the Committee this was a concept plan which lacked detail and was only the beginning of the planning process. The response from Cambridge City Council had not ruled out any options.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

**CHAIR**