

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

---

REPORT OF: Head of Planning  
TO: Planning Committee  
WARD: Coleridge Ward

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ‘THE MARQUE’  
SCHEME, CHERRY HINTON ROAD/HILLS ROAD JUNCTION  
CAMBRIDGE**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Leader of the Council asked the Head of Planning Services to commission an independent review of the Marque development at the junction of Hills Road and Cherry Hinton Road.
- 1.2 On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014 Planning Committee resolved to approve the draft brief for the independent review presented to them at that meeting, and to ask officers to procure the services of an appropriate consultant to undertake this work as soon as practicable.
- 1.3 Officers appointed Barry Shaw MBE, an independent advisor on town planning and urban design, to carry out the review, which has now been completed. His report is attached to this agenda.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Committee receive the report of the independent review of the Marque development carried out by Barry Shaw, note its conclusions, and consider its recommendations.

**3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Outline planning permission was granted in 2006 for a mixed-use development on the site of the former Tim Brinton car sales and repair premises at the corner of Hills Road and Cherry Hinton Road. Subsequently, reserved matters were approved.
- 3.2 The approved scheme consists of an apex block of ten storeys at the junction of Hills Road and Cherry Hinton Road, with wings at five-storey level along the two road frontages. A further residential block of three storeys extends down Cherry Hinton Road with a four storey block in the centre of the site. The Apex block is enclosed in a screen of stone cladding panels. The wings and additional blocks are finished in brick. Retail/business space occupies the ground floor on the Hills Road frontage and at the apex end of the Cherry Hinton Road frontage.
- 3.3 The scheme, now named The Marque (it was previously known by a number of provisional or ‘working’ names including Living Screens, Artisan Apartments, and

Mosaic) involved a number of novel design and construction aspects. Over time, responsibility for the delivery of the scheme has passed through a number of contractors. The scheme has had a complex planning history, with requests for changes and development of the original design concepts spanning a number of years. The development is now complete and occupied.

3.4 The completed Marque scheme has had very mixed reviews of its success as a prominent new development in Cambridge. The review process has been used to provide an objective understanding of the circumstances surrounding the delivery of this development, and, importantly whether there are lessons that might be learned from the process that was followed in this case. The reviewer was asked specifically to focus on:

- 1) What can be learnt from the processes and decisions that led to the final design and construction of The Marque development;
- 2) Have processes changed since the first Marque application in 2005 and how would they now deal with:
  - (i) delivery of comparable major development particularly tall buildings in prominent locations; and
  - (ii) How such processes will continue to support the delivery of new development after Local Plan adoption.
- 3) Are the circumstances of this case unique (in comparison to other similar schemes in the city) or are further measures needed to assist the council in delivering successful major developments and tall buildings in future?

3.5 The review contains a number of conclusions and two recommendations. They are summarised as follows:

- The final design drawings, and the as-built details, match the approved Scheme 2 Living Screens drawings.
- The Design and Conservation Panel initially acted in a way that potentially blurred the boundary between championing good design and critical review. Subsequently the Panel delivered helpful and critically correct advice to members including questioning the use and extent of delegated authority and on the detailed development of the scheme. The operation and working of the Design and Conservation Panel was reviewed in 2014 and the recommendations have been put in place and acted upon.
- Initial handling of the Living Screens planning application failed to secure a fully detailed scheme, however, it is the nature of outline consents that the detail should follow, and what was submitted was comparable with similar schemes going through the planning process at the time.
- Disappointment with the outcome of this scheme does not mean that there is a lack of dedicated and knowledgeable work being undertaken in the planning service. The Review evidence does not indicate that major changes are required to the way that major planning applications are managed by the planning service.

- Managing innovative, technically complex or high rise design sometimes requires the support of additional independent technical specialist inputs such as quantity surveyors or structural engineers or environmental engineers with wide ranging understanding of the building industry and able to take a holistic view of technical issues. This helps to de-risk untried or novel architectural solutions for the local planning authority.
- Appropriate action was taken by the Council to review the management of planning decisions taken under delegated powers.
- The public art work as delivered does not match the ambition contained in the initial Design and Access Statement to provide large scale public art integrated into the design of the screen. However, the council's processes were followed correctly in relation to the public art solution that emerged.
- From time to time the processes for managing long running projects need to be reviewed to ensure the delivery of good design outcomes.
- This was an unusual and difficult application and many of the planning conditions that applied at the time of the first applications have changed or been amended.

#### Recommendations

- The extent of technical support information required to support innovative, technical or high rise planning applications should be reviewed. Large scale technical drawings (1:20 or 1:5) should be required, with such supportive technical reports as are necessary, as part of the set of approved drawings. The Committee report should include a section on design quality that articulated the design evidence used to support the application.
- The Planning Committee should consider imposing a design quality section as part of S106 agreements or similar measures to protecting design quality through changes to the lead architects.

3.6 The overall findings of the independent review are that the council largely followed correct procedures in the assessment, determination and post-application procedures for The Marque. However the as-built development is disappointing and is not considered to have lived up to expectations. This is in part a consequence of the relatively undefined 'conceptual' nature of the scheme approved at the outset and the challenge in realising the original architectural vision by subsequent multiple parties involved over time, sometimes against a backdrop of fixed deadlines.

3.7 The conclusions of the review are helpful in analysing the critical issues, decisions and factors that have contributed to the outcome in this case. The review has provided an understanding of how specific risks can be managed and undesirable or unintended outcomes avoided, should these particular circumstances repeat themselves in future. The review is clear that this is a one-off outcome and there are no underlying problems with the handling of major planning applications by the local planning authority that the council needs to be concerned about.

## 4.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 The reviewer has consulted a number of parties, including Council officers, previous Chairs of Design and Conservation Panel, the Leader of the Council, the applicant's agent, and residents from the surrounding area. The parties are listed in an appendix to the review report.

## 5.0 OPTIONS

- 5.1 To receive the review report  
To decline to receive the review report

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- (a) **Financial Implications** – The review report recommends additional technical support information be required for large/complex proposals, and the drafting of appropriate design quality protection clauses in Section 106 agreements and the engaging, at developers' expense, of independent technical advice on design, for innovative, technical, or high-rise applications. Each of these processes involves an input of additional time from urban design, development management and legal officers. The precise financial requirements are likely to vary significantly between different cases, and are difficult to quantify in general terms.
- (b) **Staffing Implications** – additional officer time required, as indicated above.
- (c) **Equal Opportunities Implications** – None
- (d) **Environmental Implications** – Officers' view is that adoption of the review recommendations would assist the Council in its efforts to ensure high design standards in the city's built environment in the future.

Climate Change Impact: Nil

- (e) **Procurement** – The procurement of independent technical advice would be required in the future and will need to follow council procurement procedures.
- (f) **Consultation and Communication** - None
- (g) **Community Safety** - None

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

1. Planning Committee minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014
2. Brief for The Marque Review, attached to Planning Committee agenda of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014
3. Report of the Independent Review of the Marque Development

Items 2 and 3 above are attached to this agenda.

The author and contact officer for queries on the report is Tony Collins on extension 7157.

Report file: Date originated: 20 February 2015

Date of last revision: 20 February 2015