



Sustainable development panel

Date: Wednesday, 17 July 2019

Time: 09:30

Venue: Westwick room, City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH

Committee members:*

Councillors:

Stonard (chair)

Maguire (vice chair)

Carlo

Davis

Giles

Grahame

Lubbock

Maxwell

Stutely

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Agenda

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| 1 | Apologies

To receive apologies for absence | |
| 2 | Declarations of interest

(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting) | |
| 3 | Minutes
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2019. | 3 - 6 |
| 4 | Development Framework Strategy for UEA
Purpose - To consider the Development Framework Strategy (2019 refresh) for the University of East Anglia. | 7 - 12 |

Date of publication: **Tuesday, 09 July 2019**



Sustainable Development Panel

09:30 to 12:00

19 June 2019

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair, following appointment), Maguire (vice chair, following appointment), Carlo, Davis, Giles, Grahame, Lubbock, Maxwell and Stutely

1. Appointment of Chair

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Stonard as chair for the ensuing civic year.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Maguire as vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2019.

5. Purpose-built Student Accommodation in Norwich: Evidence and Best Practice and Best Practice Advice Note: Consultation Draft

The planning policy planner presented the report.

During discussion a member praised the planning policy for compiling the consultation document and said that she understood he had received a distinction as part of his professional accreditation for this report.

The panel considered a number of amendments and made suggestions to be included in the consultation document. The planning policy planner agreed that there was an error to the figures in Table 1, Student Numbers in 2017/18, under column titled "Full-time students" and in relation to the UEA, amend the numbers of undergraduates to 12,725 and postgraduates to 3,125. A member of the panel said that the consultation document needed to be clear that the totals in Table 3 were estimated bed-spaces rather than targets for potential growth. The planning policy planner agreed that this would be clarified in the text (paragraph 4.30). The panel

noted that under paragraph 5.37, bullet point “Refuse storage and collection arrangements”, recycling was implicit but for clarification insert text to show that it includes minimisation of recycling and positive recycling protocol. Members also asked that paragraph 2.5 be amended to include “Private rental sector”. It was also proposed that the word “be” should be inserted in paragraph 5.20, paragraph (c), second paragraph after the word “should” and before “of”. A member also pointed that in order to provide accommodation for students suitable to the needs of the diverse population and in terms of accessibility and room size, it was important to provide rooms for wheelchair users but also to ensure that communal areas and doors were wheelchair accessible to enable wheelchair users to circulate freely.

During discussion, the planning policy planner, the head of planning services and the planning policy team leader, referred to the report and answered questions.

The panel considered the section on external amenity and landscape design, a member suggested that that there was an opportunity to improve open spaces and green infrastructure for students in the city centre. Members noted that there was a degree of densification in the city centre and that large developments would provide for infrastructure enhancements to improve the public realm, develop the riverside walk and provide open spaces.

Discussion ensued on the formulation of any policy on student accommodation in the context of other issues, and that it would feed into the Greater Norwich Local Plan. This included the need to relieve the pressure on the rental sector in the city centre for other people on low wages, single people and people who have just left prison, reducing their accommodation and travel costs. A member pointed out that it was important not to stigmatise students and to provide a welcome them to the city. The chair referred to the University of East Anglia’s (UEA), [*Connecting People and Places, 2019*](#)¹ and acknowledged the benefit that higher education establishments have on the local economy.

The panel discussed the need to relieve pressure on the rental sector and the impact that purpose built student accommodation would have. Members were concerned that landlords could achieve higher rents for HMOs and therefore properties were no longer available to be let for family lets. The panel was also concerned about the intensification of student HMO’s (houses in multiple occupation) particularly in areas around the UEA and that in planning terms there was no regulation available. A member said that the report was a good piece of work but not going far enough to bring houses back into general use and said that the council had no policy in place to restrict studentification in these wards which, as evidenced by councillors’ case work, was not a perception. The chair and the head of planning services confirmed that there were other discussions on the control of HMOs, including consideration of Article 4 Directions which had not been ruled out in future. Whilst this did not form part of the guidance paper on purpose built student accommodation there was still a lot of discussion on the issues relating to HMOs, with the universities and student unions. It was important that there was a variety of accommodation for all groups of people and HMOs provided accommodation for under 35s, the low paid, single

¹ Link to document:

https://www.uea.ac.uk/documents/3523509/0/12717_UEA_ConnectingPeople%2BPlaces_Brochure_300519_Web_LR.pdf/90855164-904c-b64d-737d-cc63175af4f4

people and people on benefits. The planning policy planner said that the UEA received complaints about HMOs but it often turned out that the residents were not students. The panel was also advised that shorter two year degrees and longer terms times, and more overseas students meant that exodus during vacations were not so clearly defined as in the past.

Discussion ensued on affordability and student finance and that living in an HMO was a cheaper alternative to purpose built accommodation. The panel considered that there should be cost incentives to students to choose purpose built accommodation over shared houses and that developers should provide a range of different priced accommodation. It was estimated that half of the minimum student income was spent on rent, leaving little for books, food and other expenses. The planning policy team leader said that one of the issues relating to affordability was the length of contracts and the guidance provided an opportunity to raise this with providers. The panel expressed concern about the high cost of accommodation for students on minimum student finance and that developers received a better return for the higher end accommodation, which appealed particularly to overseas students, who because of the high tuition fees were from wealthier backgrounds. The head of planning services advised members that it was not currently possible to ask developers to provide more affordable rooms and this was market driven. There were no social registered landlords providing student accommodation. Lower rents were charged for rooms with a less advantageous aspect or more basic fittings. There was clearly a market for affordable accommodation and student welfare could evidence this.

The panel considered the projected growth of student numbers in the city and the uncertainty of the national economy. The chair pointed out that concern about the impact of Brexit on student numbers should be weighed by the fact that at present only 20 per cent of international students were from EU countries. The panel was advised that if demand fell in the future purpose built student accommodation could be altered to accommodate other groups of people but that as student needs and life styles were different and were not liable for council tax, mixed accommodation would not be appropriate. It was considered that the probable outcome would be that rents for purpose built student accommodation would fall if there was an oversupply making it a more attractive option than shared accommodation in an HMO. Rents were currently more expensive as there was an undersupply of purpose built accommodation. The panel noted that it was possible that if there was an oversupply of student purpose built accommodation then student HMOs could return to general use rather than converting student purpose built accommodation.

The panel also considered room sizes and were advised that the majority of purpose built student accommodation rooms met national guidance on room sizes. One of the drivers for purpose built accommodation was to improve accommodation available to students. Many smaller HMOs were converted former council houses or terrace houses, with cramped bedrooms or had converted living rooms as bedrooms, and therefore lacked communal and amenity spaces. A member raised the question of aspect and light to rooms, stating that it was important to provide a suitable environment for students conducive to study. Members noted that communal rooms were fundamental to student accommodation. The panel noted that under permitted development rights offices could be converted into residential accommodation and that in some cases the lesser harm was to provide student accommodation than general housing. These conversions were subject to building regulations. During

discussion on access to light and providing a suitable environment for study, it was noted that some art students would prefer rooms with a northern aspect because there was no glare.

A member asked that information could be provided for comparison purposes on rents per square metre. The policy planner said that this information would be available to the panel when the outcome of the consultation was reported back to the members.

The panel discussed the proposed consultation timetable commencing on 1 July for 6 weeks and it was suggested that the consultation should be extended because it fell out of term time. The panel, however, considered that students were unlikely to respond to the consultation and that, as the universities' respective student unions would respond on behalf of the student body, there was no need to extend the consultation or change the consultation timetable.

During discussion, a member had asked for a timetable to be set to review the guidance, given the lack of robust data on the impact of Brexit and climate change. The head of planning services said that he would be reluctant to set a date for a review of the policy because projections for the growth of student numbers would be constantly monitored and if the UEA and the Norwich University of the Arts developed slower or faster than projections had indicated the guidance would be reviewed.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) endorse the consultation document for consultation "Purpose-built student accommodation in Norwich: evidence and best practice advice note" subject to the changes itemised above;
- (2) approve the consultation timetable as set out in the report;
- (3) ask the planning policy planner to provide information to the panel on rents by the square metre for comparison purposes.

CHAIR

Report to Sustainable development panel
17 July 2019
Report of Head of planning services
Subject Development Framework Strategy for UEA

Item

4

Purpose

To consider the Development Framework Strategy (2019 refresh) for the University of East Anglia.

Recommendation

To note the emerging Development Framework Strategy for the University of East Anglia (2019) to form part of the evidence base for the Greater Norwich Local Plan, which will be publicly consulted upon as part of the Regulation 18 consultation expected later in 2019.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority Inclusive economy

Financial implications

None

Ward/s: University but with wider impacts

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard - Sustainable and inclusive growth

Contact officers

Graham Nelson – Head of Planning Services 01603 212530

Samuel Walker - Planner 01603 212257

Background documents

None

Report

Context:

1. In November 2010 the first Development Framework Strategy (DFS) for the University of East Anglia was endorsed. This provided a useful framework and successful planning tool for the University, Norwich City Council and other stakeholders. It was also used to inform site allocations in Norwich City Council's Local Plan (2014) and formed part of the UEA's Development Strategy for 20-30 years.
2. The DFS 2010 has enabled growth of the campus and delivery of a number of significant developments including the student residences at the former Blackdale School site, the refurbishment of Earlham Hall and the development of the Enterprise Centre on the former City Care depot. Most of the development sites identified in the previous DFS and allocated within the Local Plan have now been built out.
3. Furthermore updated student numbers have risen more rapidly than previously projected and updated projections are available. A total of 17,955 students attended the UEA in the 2017/18 academic year. The UEA's growth strategy is to grow to 22,000 students by 2036. As such the DFS now requires review 8 years into 20-30 year strategy.
4. The Development Framework Strategy 2019, available [here](#), is a refresh of the document to reflect and develop UEA's Vision 2030. It has been produced by consultants working for UEA working closely with City Council Officers. It is intended to be used as part of the evidence base informing preparation of the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) to provide planning framework to guide UEA's development requirements for period up to 2036.
5. The UEA and its students have many positive economic impacts for Norwich, boosting the city's national and international profile, providing local companies with skilled graduates, and purchasing local goods and services. In addition the universities have an important role to play in delivering a creative city as part of the emerging Norwich 2040 City Vision. The DFS document highlights the importance of the UEA to Norwich and the wider region covering a multitude of factors including Economic, Social, Educational, Community Involvement and research.
6. The Norwich Research Park along with the UEA are viewed as an integral element of the Tech Corridor. The two world class universities within the Tech Corridor (UEA & University of Cambridge) will 'feed' the Tech Corridor through the education of the next generation of innovative scientists and business leaders through the delivery of cutting edge research.
7. Norwich City Council is currently consulting on the "Purpose-built student accommodation in Norwich: Evidence and best practice advice note" which has been drafted in response to increasing higher education student numbers in Norwich and recent rise in planning applications for Purpose-Built Student Accommodation. The consultation is currently underway and it is anticipated that following report back to Sustainable Development Panel in September it will be reported to Cabinet in October.

Process:

8. Work commenced on the updated DFS in mid-2018 with a series of working groups and meetings including Officers from Norwich City Council, South Norfolk District Council, Greater Norwich Local Plan team and Transport Officer from Norfolk County Council, Members of Norwich City Council, representatives from the UEA & Bidwells acting as their agents.
9. The process to refresh the DFS assessed the need for growth, tested different options for accommodating it, and translated this into preferred development areas, with a suggested policy approach to help inform the preparation of the Greater Norwich Local Plan.
10. The UEA growth strategy has informed a quantifiable need for additional floorspace required to achieve this. Options for delivering growth were considered, including development/expansion off campus, before evaluating site options using a matrix scoring system. The site scoring system informed draft revisions of the DFS which have been discussed and refined through a series of subsequent working group meetings.

Purpose:

11. The aim of this report is to seek member endorsement of the DFS ("link") as part of the evidence base for the Greater Norwich Local Plan and subsequent relevant Local Plan documents.

Summary:

12. In order to accommodate the UEA's plan to increase student numbers to 22,000 by 2036, it will be necessary to provide approximately 62,175sqm of additional academic, student and student welfare accommodation, this equates to approximately 9.4 hectares. This is broken down as follows:

- | | |
|--|--------|
| a) Academic floorspace (inc. 20% contingency): | 34,315 |
| b) Student Accommodation: | 25,000 |
| c) Student Welfare: | 2,860 |

13. The 2010 document previously identified five possible scenarios for single-campus growth, which remain relevant moving forward into the 2019 refresh document:

- Intensification of existing uses
- Demolition and rebuilding at a higher density
- Infill of under used and undeveloped areas
- New development locations within UEA's ownership/control and within approximately 500m/five minutes walking distance of the Registry building; and
- A combination of some or all of the above.

14. The emerging draft of the revised DFS proposes development of four sites on campus within five minutes' walk of the registry building to meet the future needs on campus. The sites are:
- i) Walled Garden & Former Nursery Site of Earlham Hall; (approximately 5,000sqm of additional floorspace for B1a, B1(b), D1 and associated uses)
 - ii) Congregation Hall; (approximately 8,800sqm of additional floorspace for higher density campus redevelopment 3-5 storeys tall including a larger high-quality congregation facility)
 - iii) Land between Suffolk Walk & Bluebell Road; (approximately 29,000sqm of additional floorspace to complete the southern part of the campus appropriate to the Lasdun masterplan for university related development including some student residential accommodation)
 - iv) Grounds Depot Site (approximately 10,500sqm of additional floorspace for student accommodation use)
15. Decisions on whether or not to reflect these proposals in the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan will be taken by Cabinet following consideration of the emerging plan by the Greater Norwich Development Partnership. Initial consideration had been expected at a GNDP meeting planned for 17th July but this has now postponed and is expected to be rescheduled shortly. It should be noted that even if the case for the above developments is accepted it is possible that not all will be considered to need allocation within the Greater Norwich Local Plan, for example the Congregation Hall is a currently developed site within the defined University Campus boundary, as such it is unlikely to be necessary to allocate this site as development for academic use is acceptable in principle in this location.
16. It is acknowledged in the report that the University will be unable to facilitate sufficient student accommodation (residences) on campus to support its growth plans. Whilst there are plans for some new accommodation to be built on campus, the framework proposes that residences which cannot be accommodated on campus to be developed within the City Centre. This is consistent with the content of the document on purpose built student accommodation that is currently undergoing consultation.
17. The proposed developments within the framework include sites within the UEA's ownership, but which fall outside of the campus boundary as defined in the existing adopted Development Management policy DM26. The DFS proposes an extension of the campus boundary to the south to include grounds depot site and north west to include Earlham Hall sites including existing enterprise centre

Conclusion:

18. The next stage is for the refreshed draft DFS to form part of evidence base to inform allocation of UEA sites within the Greater Norwich Local Plan regulation 18 consultation documentation. The consultation is currently anticipated to commence later in 2019.

19. Once the consultation period has completed and necessary amendments are presented, the final DFS will be reported to cabinet for endorsement.
20. Following the final endorsement of the DFS the document will be a material consideration for relevant planning applications.