



Sustainable Development Panel

09:30 to 10:10

16 October 2019

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair), Carlo, Giles, Grahame, Lubbock, Maxwell and Stutely

Apologies: Councillors Davis and Maguire

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2019.

3. Purpose-built Student Accommodation in Norwich

(A revised version of Appendix 2, that showed the proposed updates to the guidance note, was circulated at the meeting.)

(The planning policy team leader explained that Sam Walker, planner (policy) had been seconded to the county council to work on the Greater Norwich Local Plan and had returned to present the report. She introduced Charlotte Hounsell who was his replacement and Joy Brown, senior planner, who would also be joining the planning policy team.)

The planner (policy) presented the report and outlined the changes to the report in reflect the consultation responses. The planning policy team leader said that there was a further amendment to reflect the mobile bike share scheme around paragraphs 5.17 and 5.18. In reply to a question from the chair, the planning policy team leader explained that the document was guidance rather than a supplementary planning document (SPD) and therefore the comments were in the spirit of encouraging cycle sharing for the benefit of the future residents and was predicated on larger purpose-built student accommodation developments.

Discussion ensued in which the planner (policy) and the planning team leader answered members' questions. Members expressed concern that student study rooms should have room for a study desk. The planner explained that if room sizes were set it would reduce the scope of the development. However the guidance sought to ensure that where there were smaller bedrooms study facilities were provided elsewhere in the building. He referred to paragraph 5.34 and said that it was not about reducing size but to make sure that there was study provision for

students' needs. The guidance was not intended to be prescriptive. However members commented on the concerns raised at planning applications committee regarding student accommodation room sizes and that the committee could benefit from guidance. Members also concurred that all student rooms should have room for a desk for private study and that an alternative of providing desks in communal areas or reliance on library use was not acceptable. The panel agreed that communal amenity space and kitchens was important for student well-being. The planner (policy) agreed to remove the suggested addition to paragraph 5.34 providing greater flexibility about room sizes from the advice note, to ensure that rooms are of a sufficient size to include a study desk. A member commented on ensuring that all communal spaces were accessible to wheelchair users and suggested that the term "accessible" was inserted before all references to communal areas. The planner (policy) referred to the reference in paragraph 5.34 and said that this was referred to under bullet point 4, final sentence – "Circulation, social and communal spaces should also be accessible." Members were also advised that DDA compliance was covered by building regulations.

Under paragraph 5.43 members considered that for clarification "student finances" should be referred to as "student maintenance loan".

In reply to a question, the planner (policy) explained that developers would need to demonstrate that schemes "would not saturate the market". An application would be unlikely to be supported unless the applicant could provide evidence that it was required. The expectation was that schemes would come forward providing a range of provision including low cost affordable units. The planning policy team leader pointed out that measures to improve affordability of student accommodation that should be considered by applicants providing purpose built student accommodation was set out in paragraph 5.44.

Members were advised that paragraph 5.45 had been deleted from the guidance because it was not appropriate to require or expect developers to demonstrate that they had contacted higher education institutions or student union bodies. Universities or other higher education institutions could have other priorities or be in the process of developing their own accommodation. The planning policy team leader said that the advice note proposes creation of a working group involving the council and local higher education institutions in order to share best practice and knowledge. The planner (policy) said that rents of private purpose built student accommodation reflected the prices charged by higher education institutions. This would cascade to other types of student accommodation. Members noted that the objective was to encourage a wide range of student accommodation as possible though wider planning policy. It was suggested that wording in paragraph 5.40 should be changed from "advisable" to "strongly advised."

Further discussion ensued on the demonstration of need for student accommodation and a member suggested that it would be beneficial if developers were in contact with higher education institutions. The planner (policy) said that the intention was that developers and higher education institutions engaged with each other.

The chair in conclusion praised the planner (policy) for an excellent piece of work which would ensure that there was a structure to provide good quality accommodation for students, including affordable accommodation, which would take the pressure off the private sector houses in multiple-occupation and free up

accommodation for young professionals and family use. Members joined with the chair in wishing the planner (policy) good luck on his promotion and secondment.

RESOLVED, having noted the summary of consultation responses and the tracked changes in the draft guidance note (Appendix 2, revised version circulated at the panel meeting) to recommend the guidance note on Purpose-built Student Accommodation in Norwich to cabinet for adoption, subject to the changes to text as minuted above.

CHAIR