



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PANEL

9am to 11.30am

25 September 2013

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair), Carlo (vice chair), Bremner, Boswell, Gihawi (from item 7, below) Kendrick, Lubbock (to the middle of item 5, below) and Stammers

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2013.

3. LOCAL PLAN AND JOINT CORE STRATEGY (JCS) UPDATE

The planning team leader (projects) presented the report, and together with the head of planning service, planning team leader (policy) and the planner (policy) answered members' questions. Copies of the *Norwich local plan newsletter* (summer 2013) were available at the meeting. Members were advised of the implications for the delay of the JCS process and that the local plan examination had been deferred to January or February 2014. Members noted that work had commenced to update the evidence base in relation to office development and viability issues. Around 25% of consultees to the office floor space survey had returned response forms and further responses were being still being received. Initial indications suggested that some premises owners were considering using the new permitted development rights to change the use of premises to housing over the next 3 years (to 2016). Members noted that the site allocations plan would be modified to reflect sites no longer available for development including Westlegate Tower and the former fire station, Bethel Street, both of which were currently being developed.

During discussion members noted that there was a need to maintain a balance of viable office space and provide housing, particularly in the city centre with its sustainable transport links. Members were advised that agents and premises owners were likely to be aware of the provisions of the General Permitted Development Order 2013 and that the survey of office floor space had also made

reference to it. The council's economic development team was working with owners to bring vacant office space into use.

A member suggested that the site allocation plan over allocated new housing and therefore the local plan examination should not be delayed. The head of planning service said that planning inspector appointed to the local plan examination had agreed to postpone it until the outcome of the JCS process had been clarified. The city council had to demonstrate that it could deliver its allocation of housing within the JCS. The site allocation plan provided for a 5% to 10% over allocation in housing because of the risk that some sites would not come forward for development. The possible modifications to the site allocations plan would affect the number of houses that would be delivered.

The panel then discussed a previous request by a member for officers to provide training to ensure that all members of the panel were aware of the implications for their work of the requirements for sustainability appraisal and in particular the EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment. A member suggested that he considered the re-examination of elements of the JCS could have been avoided if members had been more aware of the need for sustainability appraisal to demonstrate that reasonable alternatives had been considered.

RESOLVED:

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) that the previous undertaking with regards to training on Strategic Environmental Assessment is researched and what previously agreed is undertaken.

4. HOUSING STANDARDS REVIEW CONSULTATION

The planning team leader (policy) presented the report and the proposed responses to the consultation as set out in the appendix to the report.

Discussion ensued. Members supported the draft city council response to the consultation in relation to water efficiency policies. A higher standard of water efficiency was required in an area of low rainfall. Members considered that the local MPs should be lobbied to support the higher standards of water efficiency in the area.

During discussion on energy efficiency a member argued that the Merton rule for 10% sustainable energy reduction, energy regeneration on site and zero carbon buildings should apply to all new developments. The head of planning service pointed out that the building regulations currently required the minimum standards for housing to be equivalent to code for sustainable homes level 3. This had been planned to increase to code level 6 by 2015 on larger developments locally and 2016 nationally. Code level 6 was considered to equate to zero carbon development by some measures (those which generally did not account for embedded energy use in construction. He explained that zero carbon standards could be achieved on developments with lower levels of thermal efficiency than Passivhaus standards. There were additional costs incurred by the increased thermal efficiency to Passivhaus standards. However, there was an argument that could be made for

zero carbon buildings to retain some element of renewable energy generation on site although this would add to costs. Members considered that it was important that new housing was delivered. The response to the consultation should include reference to the ability of local authorities to retain Merton rules type policies in local plans after 2016 where this could be demonstrated not to harm delivery.

A member referred to the consultation and referred to Q59 and the proposed response. The head of planning service suggested that as no changes were proposed that the council's response to the question "Do you agree that sunlighting should sit outside the scope of this review?" should be "yes".

RESOLVED:

- (1) having noted the report to endorse the proposed response to the consultation, subject to:
 - (a) further emphasis on the justification for the retention of local policies which support the higher levels of water efficiency in water stressed areas, such as Norfolk;
 - (b) provision for local authorities to retain Merton rule type policies in local policies after 2016 where this could be demonstrated not to harm delivery;
 - (c) responding to Q59, regarding sunlighting with "yes".
- (2) that chair writes to local MPs calling on them to support the council's response to the consultation in regard to water and energy efficiency.

5. GREATER FLEXIBILITIES FOR CHANGE OF USE – RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

(Councillor Lubbock left the meeting during this item.)

The planner (policy) presented the report and the proposed responses to the consultation as set out in the appendix to the report.

Members considered that in relation to question 1 the authority should be able to retain its local policies in relation to A1 and A2 uses. A member pointed out that a consequence of extending permitted development rights was that some landlords would be incentivised to change the use of their premises from a shop to residential to benefit from higher rents. Members also expressed concern that once the change of use to a bank had been established there needed to be clear measures in place to prevent a subsequent change to other A2 uses.

The chair referred to the motion on community public houses approved at council on 24 September 2013 which called on the cabinet to include in its response to this government consultation a request for controls to prevent pub buildings being transferred to shops and banks and then to residential use with no requirement for planning permission. He also pointed out that the council had resolved to ask cabinet to pursue a bid to protect community public houses using the council's powers under the Sustainable Communities Act, to seek further controls to prevent

pubs being demolished or converted to other uses, and to work with the Campaign for Real Ale and other local authorities in progressing the bid.

In response to a question, the head of planning service said that the city council had not been successful in its bid for exemption from the new permitted development rights in relation to offices being changed to residential use.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed response to the consultation and recommend it to cabinet, subject to it being augmented to seek further powers to protect public houses from change of use of demolition in accordance with resolution made at council on 26 September 2013.

6. PHOTO-VOLTAIC (PV) PANELS ON CITY HALL ROOF

The environmental strategy officer presented the report, and together with the environmental strategy manager answered members' questions. Members were advised that the angle of the panels was set because it would have been prohibitively expensive. Members were advised that the panels comprised self-cleaning glass. The panels would be offline for a few weeks to allow for repairs to the roof. The system was working well and on target to pay back in 12.5 years.

RESOLVED to note the findings of the report.

7. CARBON REDUCTION

(Councillor Gihawi joined the meeting during this item.)

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and said that the first phase of the carbon management plan for the city council was complete.

During discussion on the development of the second phase of the carbon management plan the environmental strategy manager explained that senior service level managers bought into the scheme by putting forward proposals which were then considered by the board. A member suggested that the sustainable development panel had an early input into the process. Members of the panel could advise and propose alternatives for consideration by cabinet. The plan needed to be aligned to the needs of the council as an organisation and all schemes needed to be deliverable. The environmental strategy manager said that the first phase of the city council's carbon management plan had the best outcomes in Norfolk. Options for consideration were evaluated on deliverability.

Discussion ensued on elements of the scheme, in particular the reduction in carbon emissions from pool cars. Members were advised that taxi firms tendering for the council's contract would have been scored for its environmental pathway.

RESOLVED:

- (1) to note the report;
- (2) that the sustainable development panel's request that it is involved in the development of the carbon management plan at an early stage and has the opportunity to comment on options and propose alternative

options to cabinet is put to the carbon management board for consideration.

CHAIR