

Planning Committee

Thursday, 17th December, 2015

ADJOURNED MEETING OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Garrett (Chairperson);
Aldermen L. Patterson and Stalford;
Councillors Armitage, Bunting, Campbell,
Heading, Hutchinson, Johnston, McAteer
and Magee.

In attendance: Mr. P. Williams, Director of Planning and Place;
Mr. J. Walsh, Town Solicitor;
Mr. C. McIlwaine, Area Planning Manager;
Miss N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman McGimpsey and Councillors McDonough-Brown and Mullan.

Declarations of Interest

Z/2013/1434/F – former Visteon Site at Finaghy Road North/Blacks Road

The Chairperson (Councillor Garrett) declared an interest in the above-mentioned application, as per his previous declaration at the Committee's November meeting, namely that he had been contacted by constituents regarding the proposal. However, he pointed out that he had clarified this matter with the Town Solicitor and pointed out that any interest was non-pecuniary and that he remained 'without bias' in respect of the application.

Councillor Heading declared an interest also in the application, also as per his previous declaration at the Committee's November meeting, namely that he had been contacted by constituents regarding the proposals. However, he pointed out that his interests were non-pecuniary and he remained 'without bias'.

Noted.

Student Housing - Planning and Place Good Practice Guide

(Mr. D. O' Kane, Principal Professional and Technical Officer, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report, together with an associated Best Practice Guide for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation, a copy of which was available on the Council's website:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks Committee endorsement of a new Best Practice Guide for Purpose Built Managed Student

Accommodation (PBMSA) in Belfast City Centre. It builds upon the Advice Note following Committee endorsement in October 2015 and helps articulate the Council's vision for PBMSA in the city to prospective developers.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Agree the adoption of the draft Planning and Place Best Practice Guide on Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation in Belfast.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 On 18 August 2015, this Committee agreed a series of steps to be undertaken to provide the Council with appropriate tools to deal with the recent influx of planning applications for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in the City Centre. This included:

- Long-term (3-5 years) – The inclusion of new policies to address any policy deficiencies within the New Local Development Plan;
- Medium-term (6-9months) – The preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance to address gaps in the existing policy framework; and
- Short-term – the preparation of two guidance documents based on the existing policy framework as follows:
 - Technical, internal 'guidelines' to ensure a consistent approach when determining planning applications for PBMSA; and
 - A 'Best Practice Guide' to encourage the development of good quality PBMSA in the right locations.

3.2 On 20 October 2015, the first of these short-term reports entitled 'Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation in Belfast – Planning and Place Advice Note' was approved for adoption and immediate use by this Committee. This report relates to the second of these short-term actions and the Committee is requested to approve the adoption and immediate use of the draft 'Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation in Belfast – Planning and Place Best Practice Guide'.

3.3 Whilst the Advice Note aims to consolidate the existing policy framework for use internally, the Best Practice Guide has been produced to assist applicants and agents in their understanding of the Council's aspirations concerning PBMSA in Belfast. It seeks to encourage the development of good quality PBMSA in the right locations by explaining how new developments can be best planned and designed prior to submitting planning applications. It is structured around the eight key areas containing best practice guidance in relation to:

- Pre-application considerations – Encouraging early engagement with the Council and local communities;
- Locational considerations – Promoting suitable locations within the City Centre as preferred locations for PBMSA;
- Policy designations – Outlining relevant planning policy constraints;
- Design Considerations – Encouraging good quality, well-designed PBMSA in terms of layout, accommodation mix, open space, parking, facilities, waste and recycling, safety and crime prevention and energy reduction;
- Considering impact – Helping reduce negative effects whilst capturing any positive impacts of PBMSA development;
- Management considerations – Ensuring effective management arrangements to deliver a safe and positive environment for students, whilst reducing the risk of potential negative impacts on the local community;
- Considering need – Ensuring the right balance between meeting student housing needs and preventing an over-supply of PBMSA; and
- Planning Agreement and Developer Contributions – Summarising issues in relation to PBMSA where the Council may consider the use of planning agreements.

3.4 The Guide is designed to be referenced by developers when first considering proposals for PBMSA developments and it is hoped that the correct application of the guidance will ensure an appropriate supply of good quality PBMSA in the right locations, helping the Council deliver an integrated approach to the management of student accommodation across the city.

3.5 It should be noted that the Guide is not a statement of policy as to where PBMSA can or cannot take place, but rather articulates the Council's view on student accommodation in

the city to be referenced when considering proposals for PBMSA. It should therefore be read in conjunction with the wider planning policy framework, as well as the associated Planning and Place Advice Note.

3.6 Financial & Resource Implications

No additional resource implications arising from this report.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to endorse the Best Practice Guide as set out.

Z/2013/1434/F - former Visteon Site at Finaghy Road North/Blacks Road

(Alderman Stafford joined the meeting whilst this application was under consideration and was therefore unable to vote or partake in the discussion.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th November, it had deferred consideration of the above-mentioned application to enable the Council to assess the implications of the Department of the Environment's Planning Advice Note, 'Implementation of Planning Policy for the Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development Uses'. That decision had also been taken also to enable the Committee to undertake a site visit to acquaint itself with the location and the proposal, which had taken place on 21st November. At its meeting on 15th December, the Committee, in response to a request which had been submitted by the objectors to the proposal, agreed to hold a pre-determination hearing that evening, and to defer formal consideration of the application to 17th December.

Accordingly, the Committee considered the application, which sought permission for a comprehensive mixed-use development, which would comprise 244 social and private/affordable residential units, with public open space/linear park. The non-residential element of the application would include a community centre and business units, with associated parking.

The Planning Officer outlined the principal aspects of the proposal. He referred to an addendum report which had been submitted for consideration, which had clarified a range of matters that had been raised previously, specifically those relating to the DoE's Advice Note which had been issued on 16th November.

The Committee received Mr. P. Crossan, representing the Campaign for the Economic Regeneration of the Former Visteon Site, who outlined objections to the proposal. In addition, Councillor Attwood outlined his concerns in relation to the

proposal, which related principally to the percentage of land which would be retained for economic uses as part of the development.

The Committee received Ms. A. Conway, representing the applicant, Fold Housing Association, together with their agent, Mr. D. Broderick. In addition, Councillor Walsh spoke in favour of the proposal.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McAteer,
Seconded by Councillor Magee,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation and approve the application, subject to the imposing of the conditions as set out within the case officer's report and as outlined at the meeting.

At this point, Councillor Heading addressed the Committee and indicated that he had been made aware that a letter relating to the application, which had been circulated in October 2014 by the local branch of his political party, might be interpreted as having compromised his objectivity in respect of the proposal. He referred to the fact that the letter had been issued prior to the former DoE Planning Service contacting the applicant to request that they submit an amended scheme. He indicated that, after discussing the matter with his legal representative, he felt it appropriate to declare an interest in the matter and, therefore, he would not be partaking in any vote on the application.

The proposal was thereupon put to the Committee when, on a vote by show of hands, eight Members voted for the proposal and none against and it was declared carried.

Chairperson