



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Abbey, Castle, Wycliffe

Cabinet

24 February 2003

St Peters Lane
Area Strategy Guidance

Report of the Corporate Director of Environment, Regeneration and Development

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Comments of Scrutiny Committee

1. There needed to be adequate consideration given to car parking facilities with good access and they needed to be close to the development and at a reasonable price.

Whilst it is accepted that many people would wish to visit the area by way of car, an appropriate balance must be struck between the demands of the motorist and policies to reduce congestion and encourage the use of public transport. The SPG allows for the 'relocation' of any lost parking provision but does not allow for any unwarranted additions to the existing stock. Any replacement of lost spaces would have to be located on a site that could be convenient for both sides of the ring road and would have to be housed within a secure, high quality, well designed building.

2. The negative comments about the ring road within the guidance were welcomed.

The comment is noted.

3. Pedestrian access was important and it was felt streets such as East Bond Street were cut off and this should be avoided in future.

The importance of developing a network of streets and spaces is paramount to the success of any development in this area. This is stressed in the SPG. The document also requires that the area be as well connected as possible, with any major development becoming fully integrated into this part of the city.

4. There should be good access to other attractions outside of the area.

In addition to the 'local links' the SPG indicates that wider 'strategic links' will be required to improve connections to the city centre and to the other side of the ring road.

5. The car parking spaces in front of the Great Unitarian Meeting Church should be removed.

It is acknowledged that setting of the church needs careful attention. Issues such as the car parking spaces would form part of any detailed discussions with potential developers.

6. It was felt that it may be helpful to include the Vaughan Way / Churchgate corner within the guidance as it was felt Churchgate was the natural boundary and it may achieve a consistency of facades along Vaughan Way.

The boundary of the revised SPG has been kept as close to the boundary contained in the original document as possible (The original SPG did not include this area). A new SPG is proposed to cover the 'Mansfield St area' which will include the Vaughan Way Churchgate corner. This guidance will stress the importance of a strong high quality built frontage to Vaughan way. It also will be possible to ensure that strong coordinated buildings flank each side of Churchgate where it meets Vaughan Way thus ensuring a strong 'gateway' into the retail core.

7. It was felt that there was limited opportunities for affordable housing within the guidance area therefore the boundaries could be reconsidered to include areas more suitable for this.

The draft SPG makes provision for residential development within the area as part of a comprehensive scheme. Providing that appropriate attention is given to the location and design of residential development there are no inherent reasons why affordable housing should not be provided as a significant proportion of such development.

8. Serious consideration should be given to the 'percent for art' scheme, as this could potentially be a very large sum given the scale of any future Shires development. The development of an iconic piece of art would be welcomed and the Committee expressed a desire to be kept informed of emerging ideas in this area.

Paragraph 6.3 of the makes clear the importance to be placed on Public Art. The Public Arts Officer will be closely involved in any development proposals to ensure that the potential for public art is realised, whether it be by 'iconic' pieces or by a piece (or pieces) integrated into the design (such as architectural glass, lighting, sculptural railings or some other art installation) or a mixture of the two. It is intended that the Committee Triumvirate be kept informed of progress on the matter of public art.

Whilst no specific changes to the SPG are proposed as a result of Scrutiny Committee's comments, they will be helpful in supporting officer's ongoing discussions with developers on specific proposals for the St Peters Lane area.

Consultation

Copies of the draft SPG were sent to some 60 consultees. A press release was issued and an article detailing the guidance was published in the Leicester Mercury on Wednesday 8 January 2003. Responses were received from a number of parties as follows.

Leicester Regeneration Company

General

The LRC would like greater reference in the SPG to the Masterplan, particularly to proposals to improve the city centre's retail circuit and to develop the new Waterfront area.

It is accepted that greater cross referencing to the LRC Masterplan would be helpful. Additional text will be added to achieve this.

Detail

Para. 3.2.2. Suggested slightly revised wording reflecting up to date work on retail assessment by Roger Tym and Partners.

Revised wording to be included.

Para 5.1 Would like to see the Council's commitment to using CPO powers strengthened in the guidance.

Your officer's view is that the text is sufficiently clear and unambiguous in stating that the Council will use its CPO powers if necessary to enable comprehensive development. No change to the guidance is recommended.

Para. 5.3.1. Suggested change of wording to strengthen requirements for integration of major development with the wider area.

Given the importance of this issue (which was also raised by Scrutiny Committee) the wording will be 'firmed up' as requested.

Para. 6.1 Suggested that this section also makes reference to ideas for the environmental and other improvements to the Ring Road as other off –site capital works requiring financial support.

Recommended that this reference be included in the text.

Para. 6.3 Concerned that the reference to a 1% contribution to Public Art is too high given other planning requirements.

The SPG is clear that the 1% figure should be regarded as a target to be sought in negotiation rather than an absolute requirement. No change in the SPG is recommended.

In addition to the above the LRC also suggest a number of minor wording amendments to the text of the SPG to improve clarity.

These will be included in the final document.

City Centre Manager

Expressed concerns regarding the level of car parking to be provided within the area. Whilst recognising the policy context to seek to encourage journeys by public transport, it was important that sufficient car parking was available to support retail demand.

The concerns are noted but I think the SPG strikes the correct balance in terms of parking provision. No amendment to the Guidance is recommended.

Treatment of the east-west bus link will be of great importance if an attractive pedestrian friendly environment is to be created.

Accepted that this will represent a tough design challenge, but no changes to the SPG are required to facilitate it.

Stresses the importance of integrating new development with existing attractions such as The Lanes specialist shopping.

The enhancement of such links is already a key feature of the SPG.

Para. 7.4 Concern that any new tree planting did not lead to particular problems for retailers.

Accepted that all new planting had to be designed sensitively within the street scene. The SPG will be amended to refer to this requirement.

Leicestershire Constabulary

Supportive of the document and have no comments to make.

Environment Agency

Supportive of the document and have no comments to make.

East Midlands Electricity

Commented that they have some high voltage lines running across the site that could affect the siting and location of the open space provision.

This issue will be addressed at the detailed planning stage with potential developers.

Severn Trent Water

No comments to make on the guidance.

Donaldsons (acting on behalf of Hammersons - owners of the Shire Shopping Centre)

The company has made a number of suggested revisions, the majority of which are minor changes to the text to improve clarity.

The company's representations do not undermine the principles or main objectives of the SPG. It is anticipated that most of their suggested text changes can be incorporated into the final document.

National Car Parks Limited

NCP raised a number of concerns:

That proposed comprehensive development in the area will lead to the removal of the existing NCP car park and adjoining bowling alley, retail unit and night-club.

Comprehensive development is necessary to secure the proper planning, design and required infrastructure changes in the area. The relocation of the St. Peter's Lane car park will initially be a matter for NCP to negotiate with any developers that may come forward wishing to acquire their site. Whilst it would be desirable not to lose uses such as night-club and bowling alley, there is no reason why the buildings which presently contain them should be retained.

That comprehensive development discriminates against small retailers and other locally distinctive uses.

Comprehensive development should provide the opportunity to incorporate a range of retail and other units to accommodate smaller occupiers and maintain a diverse city centre mix.

That 'Secured by Design' car parking is not necessarily the only or best approach to safety and security.

Whilst the SPG recommends Secured by Design as a benchmark standard, it does not necessarily rule out other approaches, providing similar standards of safety and security are met.

That the period of consultation is too short to enable a properly considered response.

Whilst a 6 week consultation period which included the Christmas holidays is tight, it is not regarded as unreasonable given that the draft guidance is based very much on the existing St. Peters Lane SPG which was adopted less than three years ago.

Councillor Connelly

Welcomed the aims of the guidance and suggested that any new open space / civic square be designed so as to allow for an ice rink in the winter.

This idea is strongly welcomed. It is hoped that any new space/square will be adaptable to a number of uses, although the precise nature of these uses will depend largely on the siting, layout and size of any space.

