



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2004 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Farmer - Chair
Councillor Kitterick - Labour Spokesperson
Councillor O'Brien - Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Henry
(for Cllr. Almey)
Councillor Thomas

Councillor Fitch
Councillor Willmott
(for Cllr. Waddington)

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31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act applied to them.

No such declarations were made.

37. OFFICE CORE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

The Service Director, Environment submitted a report which covered the preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the Local Plan, for the 'Office Core' (or 'New Business Quarter') area of the city centre.

The Service Director, Environment explained what an SPG was and its legal status.

Members of the Committee made a number of points, as follows:-

- Concerns were expressed that the Committee were not supplied with a written record of the consultation which had taken place on the SPG. Particular concern was expressed about consultation with Elizabeth House residents and it was stated that there needed to be an ongoing dialogue with them. Overall the level of consultation was welcomed.

- It was commented that Labour Group Councillors had not been involved in the Office Core Working Groups;
- The plans did not show a physical link to South Highfields, the development appeared to 'turn its back' on the area, the Leicester Regeneration Company (LRC) Masterplan stated that developments should relate to the city's communities, it was also commented that the buildings should relate in size and style of architecture;
- Particular attention needed to be paid to the station frontage to ensure its retention and an appropriate usage;
- It was felt that full funding was unlikely to be achieved from the Local Transport Plan to re-route the ring road
- The progress being made on the compulsory purchase of St. Georges Tower was queried.
- It was queried how supportive local bus companies were of developing the proposed transport interchange around the station. The timetables of buses and trains being aligned was also an area of concern.
- The guidance needed to be firm about the need to provide affordable housing.
- It was felt that the proposed buildings looked like 'concrete blocks' reminiscent of 1960's architecture. Local buildings like 'Attenborough House' should provide a design guide.
- Overall the proposals had a number of positive elements.
- The aspirations for high quality buildings needed to be stated clearly in the document.
- The amount of area given over to public open space was queried.
- There was little reference to cycling facilities around the station.
- Concern was expressed about the viability of a combined heat and power plant in the vicinity.

Officers responded to these points. It was stated that the deadline for consultation was after the date of despatch for papers for this meeting. A verbal update on the consultation was given and this was shown to be broadly in favour of the document. Both the Council and the LRC had been in contact with DeMontfort Housing Association regarding Elizabeth House and the residents had been supplied with all relevant information. The issue regarding LRC Working Groups had been raised with the Service Director, Democratic Services and the board would be discussing the matter at its next meeting to sort the matter out. Officers stated they would amend the SPG to stress the importance of physical links to South Highfields. Officers noted that obtaining

Local Transport Plan funding could be an issue, but to enhance the case for funding it was important to demonstrate that there was a wide regeneration plan for the area. Officers explained that a case would need to be developed for the potential compulsory purchase of St. George's Tower, this would also need to be shown to be part of a wider regeneration plan. Discussions had taken place and would continue to take place with bus companies about aligning timetables with train services. Bus companies were keen on this but they did not plan very far in advance and future meetings would indicate what changes to services they would make. A fully integrated service would be sought. Buildings of high quality and sustainability to meet the 'Leicester Better Buildings' standard would be sought for the development. As a guide it was stated that the size of the public square would be roughly similar to Town Hall Square. Officers indicated that they could strengthen the policy on cycling in the document. The viability of the Combined Heat and Power plant depended on the creation of an Energy Services Company which was currently being discussed as part of other reports.

The Chair then raised a number of specific comments about the report itself as he felt it didn't include information, which had been requested such as financial implications to the Council about the loss of revenue should the Dover Street car park be built on and the details of the consultation by the LRC on the Office Core. He also felt that the Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Committee should be consulted regarding the traffic implications of the report. He felt that it didn't include the views of the Granby Street traders who he commented, felt left out by the proposals. He also felt the proposals didn't do anything to address the needs of the communities around Dover Street. He also felt the report didn't address how the city's cultural diversity was going to be addressed as part of the Office Core.

Officers in response stated that there were no plans to build on the Dover Street car park and even if there were, the car park could be retained at ground level. Details of the consultation were read out in detail.

Members of the Committee therefore recommended that the report come back to the next meeting with revisions to address the concerns expressed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the report be submitted to Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Committee for their comments on traffic implications;
- (2) that an amended version of the report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee which addresses their concerns, as follows:-
 - i) that more information be supplied about Dover Street car park;
 - i) that greater detail be included in the guidance about cycling;

- iii) that greater detail be included in the report about the development of physical links to local communities;
 - iv) that further information be provided about the transport interchange;
 - v) that further information be provided about the compulsory purchase of St George's Tower; and
- (2) that thanks be passed on to Officers for the consultation carried out on the SPG.