

NOTES OF MEETING – 4 APRIL 2006

Present:

Councillor Garrity
Mike Richardson – Head of Development Control
Richard Gill – Chair of CAP
Steve Bowyer – Member of CAP
Judith Carstairs – Urban Design Group
Jeremy Crooks – Urban Design Group
Matthew Reeves – Committee Services

Clarity on the role of CAP

It was noted by those present that confusion had arisen about the working arrangements between the Panel and Development Control.

Mike Richardson noted that there had been a big change over recent years from a majority of planning applications being considered by the Development Control Committee to now approximately 90% being considered by Officers under delegated powers. It was noted that the Terms of Reference didn't reflect this change.

He also commented that the current scheme of delegations did not mean that an objection from CAP required an application to go to the Development Control Committee. The current agreed position as he saw it was as follows:-

Where CAP recommended refusal and the Development Control Officer recommended approval – if the conservation officers agreed with CAP then it will be reported to Committee, if however conservation officers disagree with CAP then the application will be considered under delegated powers.

Officers noted that over recent years there had been no noticeable increase in the number of Development Control decisions diverging from CAPs view, despite the higher level of delegation.

Richard Gill raised a query about whether the Panel could be kept informed if officers didn't agree with the Panel. Officers agreed to consider ways that this could be done.

Officers also agreed to look at ways in which the 'Decisions Made by Leicester City Council' report could be developed to give more information with regard to how the Panel's comments were taken on board.

Format of CAP meetings

Officers explained that due to the recent budget, the planning service was faced with making large amounts of cuts. Against this background it was intended to change the way CAP operated as preparation for the meeting was taking a prohibitively long time.

Different options were considered by the meeting. It was suggested that, future meetings have a changed seating layout to encourage a round the table discussion. It was also suggested that the PowerPoint presentation be limited to photos, with the plans displayed on the wall, with copies of photos of the site, prior to the meeting. These would be placed on the table as the item was discussed. It was also agreed that the Chair would summarize the view of the Panel and give reasons for the view of the Panel.

Steve Bowyer queried whether this summary could be replicated exactly in the Development Control report. Mike Richardson said that this would place CAP in a different position from other consultees, whose representations were summarised in the reports. He agreed to remind DC Officers of the need to include a summary of CAP's comments including why CAP objected to an application.

Other Procedural Matters

Steve Bowyer also queried whether CAP minutes should be forwarded to members of the Development Control Committee. He also queried about whether the Panel could make a recommendation to the Committee to consider a particular application. Councillor Garrity and Officers urged against this, noting that the minutes of the Panel were already available to all Councillors. It was also noted that it was hoped to take fewer reports to the DC Committee in view of the need to meet government targets. It was also noted that the Panel would probably consider fewer items of business on the 'A' list in future, as this part of the agenda had been growing significantly in recent years.

Steve Bowyer also queried whether CAP could play a role in policy development. Officers commented that it was common practice to consult CAP when developing conservation policy. Due to resources, it was unlikely that CAP could be given any wider role. The Panel's views would for example be sought on developing policies such as one on windows which was currently being developed.

AGREED:

- (1) that the procedure is clarified with regard to giving the Panel an indication of when Officers views diverged from the Panel;
- (2) at a future meeting, the format of the Panel meetings be changed to create a more informal atmosphere, to include different room layout, a PowerPoint presentation of photographs and with plans circulated round the table at the meeting;
- (3) that the process as to how CAP's comments are taken forward is as detailed in the body of this note.