

Development Plan Steering Group – Tuesday 17th March 2009 @ 9:30am

Councillors Present: Reid (Chair), Baker, Blencowe, Holness, and Ward (Vice Chair)

Also present: David Roberts (Head of Policy & Projects)
Sara Cass (Planning Policy Manager)
Eithne Flanagan (Sustainable Construction Coordinator)
John Preston (Historic Environment Manager)

1. Minutes

The minutes from the 9th December 2008, 16th December 2008 and 20th January 2009 were fully approved.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Herbert and Cllr Blair (Alt).

3. Declaration of Interest

No interests were declared.

4. Public Questions

None.

5. Response to the Government's 'Definition of Zero Carbon Homes and Non Domestic Buildings' Consultation

Cllr Reid expressed that there were important principles to discuss here. Eithne Flanagan (EF) introduced the item. EF explained that the consultation document was focusing on whether part of the zero carbon requirements could be met by a range of off-site measures. Standards proposed were where a minimum of 70% was expected to be delivered onsite, before off-site options could be considered.

Cllr Ward questioned whether there was anything we could do to upgrade existing properties, as an off-site measure. EF stated the consultation proposed this could be done via S106 funds. However, there was nothing to ensure the property would have to be within the Cambridge area. Cllr Ward stated that the government's aim was to bring us up to scratch, but mechanisms and resources would need to be in place.

Cllr Reid asked whether there were double counting regulatory issues. The general view was that the previous EcoHomes rating scheme was regulated by the BRE. The consultation was proposing that an accredited competent person, in other words the private sector, could approve these off site measures. However, there were grave concerns the private sector would not be able to provide adequate regulation and accountability.

The relationship was not made clear as to the relationship with Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs).

Cllr Holness queried what happened when the Government received the consultation document. The Government usually took six months to come back with a response. Due to proposed transitional arrangements, the document suggested that a high proportion of new build dwellings would not be meeting zero carbon until 2019. Cllr Reid asked whether it would affect someone wishing to build an extension onto their property. In other words, would they be required to ensure the extension conformed with zero carbon? Officers replied that the consultation document would not cover extensions as it had to be a whole new dwelling. Cllr Ward mentioned the rapid renovations of old houses that were taking place in Cambridge, where for example, an old house was being turned into six flats. Cllr Reid stated that there were some councils such as Uttlesford that made it a condition of approval for extensions that energy efficiency improvements had to be made to the existing property. EF stated that she would look into this matter and see whether the consultation document covered extensions and re-modelling as there were so many developments happening around in Cambridge. John Preston stated that we should look at part L of the Building Regulations.

Cllr Blencowe highlighted his concerns that if the property being upgraded as part of the off-site measures was not in the locality, how could its delivery be ensured? Cllr Reid mentioned the importance of carbon improvements to be made within the LA area, as we are monitored against our carbon performance.

EF noted that most of the issues raised by Cllr Herbert were already addressed in the response. However, in relation to question number 10 from his email she stated that she would address the matter.

ACTION: EF to look into whether the consultation document covered renovations and alter the response as required in line with Cllr Herbert's comments.

6. Historic Environment Strategy: Supplementary Planning Document

John Preston introduced the officer report and stated there were three things to cover. These were namely the background to the report, the approach to the report, and the approach to the initial consultation.

With regard to the background of the report, it had taken two years for ODPM to see whether the conservation document would gain status. However, as it fell under another Act, it was decided it could not have status.

There were suggestions that there should be a sound strategic basis for Cambridge's historic environment. JP stated how there was emphasis on dealing with the 'nitty gritty' but not the overall view. There was a need to get a hold of priorities.

In reference to paragraph 1.3d) of the Historic Environment Strategy Supplementary Planning Document, the report was agreed last year with the agreement that the subsequent work would last until the middle of 2009. However there was nothing scheduled to take place after that as they were awaiting for the Heritage Bill to come through. Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG) combined that document along with PPG16, which concerned archaeology. Therefore the work that was being put forward would enable them to provide feedback on what they were doing.

JP stated that he was keen to take the planning document to area committees and to other stakeholders, and to work alongside universities and colleges.

The PFI proposals, for example on street lighting had been very helpful. JP mentioned how Cambridge was an internationally renowned historic city with World Heritage status. Discussions with Design and Conservation panel for climate change and growth had taken place. There was an approach to take the item forward for drafting. JP stated he had done a quick presentation of the proposal at south area committee and suggested going down to the remaining area committees.

Cllr Reid questioned how we could define this work and whether the definition had changed as time went on? JP stated that the definitions had changed a great deal. Looking at buildings, such as those made in the 1960s was a tricky challenge. The key was to take the combination of architectural and historical values into consideration. When Downing College for example, had been in the process of restoring part of its building, it resulted in an argument between the Georgian interest group and the Victorian interest group over which period the restoration should relate to.

Cllr Holness referred to social housing estates stating that we had to consider the whole area of Cambridge and not presume it was based on fine

architecture. For example the council houses on Kendal Way clearly demonstrated the 1930s vision of the working class way of life. Cllr Ward referred to the terrace housing in Romsey stating that 30 years ago, people would have referred it as the 'slums', however it was clearly not the case today.

JP stated that the consultation gave them the opportunity to look at the whole historic environment of Cambridge, which in turn highlighted an increasing concern at national level. There were practices of council homeowners changing certain features of their property once becoming the freeholder of the property in order to express ownership.

When looking at the majority of housing, it was clear there had to be a compromise between addressing climate change, yet at the same time retain the character of a house. Therefore it was vital to see whether coherent radical solutions were being looked into. Cllr Reid stated that we had to look into what we would be achieving today and whether it would provide a firm solid response. JP stated that he was happy to endorse what he was suggesting, and would subsequently test the waters in the national response. The target date would be 2010.

Cllr Blencowe questioned whether historic was the right word to use as JP's work involved looking at historical buildings in Cambridge as a whole that included council houses. Therefore use of the word 'historic' did not seem appropriate as it appeared to be confined to buildings of historic architectural significance. Cllr Baker stated that as the word 'historic' had already been submitted in the report, it had to be used, however the public had to be educated as to its meaning. Cllr Baker referred to paragraph 3.13 of the report and stated that he did not understand whether the word 'landscape' implied open spaces.

JP stated that in order to consider what was special about a place, one had to look at the positive aspects and see what people really valued. Cllr Reid noted that the public tended to recognise the value of the streets and the area before the Local Authority did. JP mentioned when the original Mill Road conservation area was carried out, it was decided not to include Romsey on the conservation plan. However, there was now much more emphasis on local value. Cllr Reid stated that we needed to learn lessons from our immediate past. We had to be much more rigorous than our predecessors had been as we tended not to recognise the strength of what was happening in the public sector.

ACTION: TO FEEDBACK AFTER COMPLETED ATTENDANCE AT AREA COMMITTEES.

7. Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

Sara Cass introduced the item and stated that it had gained a lot of momentum over the past few years. The Local Authority was now required to produce a robust evidence base in order to ensure that Spatial Strategy in the Core Strategy was sound. There was a need to look at funding sources and gaps in funding. Therefore it was essential to look at key providers and service providers.

SC mentioned there was a need to plan contingencies and consult people in order to move it forward. This in turn would help justify the request to ask for funds, and would also enable stakeholders to plan for their future requirements. SC proposed the plan to appoint consultants in order to help deliver the strategy. There was mention of Huntingdon District Council who had carried out a similar strategy whereby they invested £120,000. Cambridge City Council was thereby looking into joining forces with South Cambridgeshire District Council. SC explained that the intention is for the cost of the study to be split between the City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire Horizons although officers are also looking into the possibilities of Horizons funding all of the study. The proposed next steps were hoping not to take no more than 12 months to complete and to look into existing and future requirements. Cllr Reid asked whether it covered transport issues. SC stated that it covered all social, physical and green elements.

Cllr Baker questioned what was the purpose of assigning the consultancy when we already knew the facts. Why could we not carry out the research in-house and why it would take 12 months to carry out? SC stated that they had observed the operations of other Local Authorities and had found for example where consultancies had been appointed, they were assigned an area to look into and subsequently broke it down into various categories. SC stated that for Cambridge, the consultancy would probably look into each ward and assess what provision would need to be made for the future. SC stated that a consultancy would need to be appointed in order to pull the information together and identify any gaps. SC also explained that the consultancy option was being proposed because there are limited resources in house to cover this.

Cllr Blencowe mentioned that we had so many studies, and Horizons had in fact done a study on this matter. He questioned what there was to be added that was not already there in existence? SC stated that the consultants would be able to pull together all the information and the Horizons study did not cover everything that we need it to. Horizons did not rate all of the information within the long term delivery plan and it doesn't go into great

amounts of detail. Cllr Ward stated that we had to try and work out how this would all evolve, and whether it intended to replace our S106 policies. He questioned whether the County Council could be persuaded to do a 'what do we actually need' analysis? SC agreed and stated that it was a starting point and the brief for consultants should provide more detail of the work required. It was something that would continue over time and continue to evolve. There was a need to do this from the very beginning in order to enable the spatial strategy to be delivered from the outset.

Cllr Reid questioned whether the consultants work would answer questions or just tick a few government boxes? Was this enough and should the County be part of this? She stated that she did not think the Horizons report was very good on certain items such as dealing with carbon issues. She expressed her interest in wanting to be very clear in the kind of work one would like to see in 20 years time and whether it would be able to address carbon issues. Therefore it raised quite a lot of worries.

Cllr Ward stated that if the government wanted it to be a box ticking exercise, then that was something we would have to do cheaply and quickly. However the overview and the timescale did not match up. SC stated that this was the starting point on what we would need to demonstrate. Cllr Ward stated that we had to be careful not to repeat work that the County Council or Horizons had already done. SC stated that the purpose was to collate all the information by pulling it together and demonstrating that our reports were sound. Cllr Reid agreed and stated that we needed to see everything pulled together, critiqued and then to see where to go from there.

Cllr Blencowe mentioned whether the budget was going ahead? SC stated this report was just looking for officers to be authorised to go out to tender and award a contract for the work. Cllr Reid suggested bringing the brief for tender back to the next Development Plan Steering Group, and possibly to Joint Strategic Implementation Growth committee (JSIG) and also to Simon Payne in order to discuss. Cllr Reid stated that the budgets were in place.

SC mentioned the housing shortfall work by South Cambridgeshire District Council, and stated that they had met last week and agreed that all the sites in the original consultation were to go forward. This included Powells garage in Shelford, Orchard Park and the NIAB area. Cllr Reid recommended that a brief email be sent to all councillors informing them of the areas which now fell under South Cambridgeshire District Council, and to include a link to the website in the email.

ACTION : SC TO GUIDE PEOPLE AND COUNCILLORS ON THIS AND PROVIDE THEM WITH NEXT STEPS.