



# Planning Committee Development Group – Minutes of the meeting held 22 February 2021 at 3pm

## Present:

- Cllr John Batchelor (JB)
- Jeff Membery (JM)
- Cllr Richard Williams (RW)
- Chris Carter (CC)
- Cllr Heather Williams (HW)
- Sharon Brown (SB)
- Cllr Anna Bradnam (AB)
- Kate Yerbury (KY)

## 1. Apologies

None.

## 2. Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to participants in advance of the meeting. The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

*Note: due to IT issues the minute were late.*

## 3. Review of input from other members (survey responses etc)

No further responses had been received.

## 4. Review of outstanding actions

AP1. no comment

AP2. documents related based on city – by Sharon



AP3. Officers to look at time taken – carry forward.

AB: Recommend removing AP3 and AP4 following a breakdown provided by 'John'.

Note: JB gave a breakdown on how he wants to move forward. Remove AP3 and AP4. JB: note how we run meetings, take breaks, and reasons for refusal.

AP5. Officer has had initial discussion, more work needed. Action to be carried forward

Notes: SB: had initial discussion, more work needed. Need to carry this forward. AB: This should include new complex applications not just older applications.

AP6: Action waiting on further guidance from Health & Safety and National Guidance. Action carried forward

JM: site visits, concerns over safety, will wait on national guidance for health and safety. AB: helpful drone imagery with voiceover explaining what we are seeing, also saw a video of someone on foot and again would be helpful to have a voiceover explaining what we are looking at.

Action: Officers to investigate possibility of future video footage to include voice over or on-screen annotation to show what the viewer is watching.

AP7: Work is ongoing to develop a template. Action carried forward.

SB: on-gong work is going into the template for this.

AP8: Officers to provide a highlight recording of best practice both at SCDC Committee but also neighbouring Planning Authorities Committee meetings.

AB: on JDCC was invited to review city. Prefer SCDC PAS reviews itself without external input. Can Sharon make sure, not appropriate for SCDC to comment on JDCC.

HW: it is good to observe to get good tips on how to run the meeting, not for us to comment. JM: we are looking at best practice, what works well in committee.

HW: could we not watch a committee online to observe, could officers put together a highlights tape? HW: HDC have same legal and have watched their meetings, very interesting.

JB: links to planning committee to look at for best practice. SB: East Cambs is quite efficient, agree with Heather at looking at best practice. AB: That changes action point 8.

JB: watching our own committee could also be helpful. JM:

some officers may need to consider their avatars for public meetings to ensure they are professional.



## 5. Review process for disagreeing with officer

Officers has created a report providing guidance on the review process when Members, Parish Councils other Statutory Consultees disagree with the Officer Recommendation.

Chart one is amendment to a vote – this highlights the stage at which legal is involved and gives adjournment opportunity to consider things such as conditions. Chart two is substantive recommendation vote – goes against an officers recommendation, allows for minded reason for refusal, legal risks, adjournment for drafting reasons, and discussion by members (e.g. when a member voted on the Darwin Application).

Members recommended the inclusion of an additional ‘arrow’ in the flow process between ‘Officers read out’ and ‘draft’ in the event members are not satisfied with the Officers proposal. An additional arrow between ‘Adjourn’ and ‘Officer suggest draft’ for the same reason as above, to ensure that members are satisfied with proposed reasons.

**Action: include a copy of process flow charts** as part of the Chair’s Guidance notes.

Notes: SB: have created a structured process for taking a vote for when this arises in committee, so everyone is clear of what will happen. JB: members in agreement – is this all members? SB: refers to members who are minded to refuse, it is referred to members who are minded to refuse. JB: so not necessarily the whole committee. AB: what if the situation has more than one reason for refusal (e.g. too high, too big, too wet) does everyone need to be in agreement? Do they vote on each reason? SB: may only be one member but would need to demonstrate at appeal that that one member noted this reason – minded to raising awareness around consensus and being clear over concerns AB: at Bourn one member had concern, some supported, some didn’t. This process makes sense, if using reason for refusal need consensus. HW: do we need a roll call on each reason? Should it go back to draft If members all disagree? At bourn, I was happy on all reasons but 1. SB: can be situations where



member has issue with 1 reason. HW: 'officers read out' should get back to 'drafting' to ensure encapsulate reason. SB: need clarity for continuity to a committee. HW: just an arrow between 'read out' and 'adjust' JB&AB: chairperson needs some leeway on this, casting vote. JB: agree with Sharon could have complicated reasons. AB: option for chairman to read the room to decide how to manage the meeting. HW: once you document processes, if you don't follow this to a T, does this open us up to risk and criticism? SB: not published, this would be guidance for the chair. AB: just helpful to have guidance of what we should follow. SB: shall I circulate this model to other members for comment? JB: can include as part of the minutes which are circulated to members? HW: extra arrow between 'adjourn' and 'officer suggest draft'. JM: can send to members as an information piece. HW: have to leave. Not a procedure, just a guidance note for chair. AB: for chair to use as they see fit. SB: not protocol so wont be published. AB: not shown to other members. RW: rejoined. JB: the more guidance the better. SB: do not circulate. JM: include under the minutes. SB: that was everything. Arrow for adjourn decision protocol. AB: is there anything JB found useful from Bourn that could be implemented moving forward? JB: adjournments handled well, reasons for refusal. CC: may be useful to understand on minor applications, may not foresee reasons for refusal, as long as we know the reason officers can write this and show members. AB: always depends on sensitivity. Sensitive application, members want to see wording but a normal application members would be happy to use delegated powers. JB: all refusals are sensitive, need to give proper respect. Members need to identify their reason of refusal, officers can help flesh out. RW: happy where possible for officers to write obvious refusals e.g. 'height', saves time wasting words on the obvious. SB: think briefing in advance of meeting. AB: that would be very useful. JB: clarification elements worked well. AB: principle of development and outline plan- weren't able to dispute. Meant lots of people want clarification of transport, but also drainage, connectivity and junction at Broadway. Maybe further discussion would have helped. CC: tried to wrap up all under final issues and judgement on what was important. AB&RW: agree sending out list in advance was really helpful. JM: members have approved when officers recommend refusal, would this process apply then? AB: parish recommend



approval, but officers said no. JB: nothing should come to committee unless it is a difficult decision. Case officer needs to show balanced arguments for and against. AB: do feel for officers, but the evidence for both sides needs to be laid out, so that officers can show reasoning and recommendation on balance. RW: additions to reports, rebuttal to parish councils etc. can find it sometimes taken badly. CC: cant get caught into a back and forth; try to address it. RW: the way the counter arguments are worded to be dealt/presented differently. AB: template by Mike Huntington addresses each issue section by section, numbers each paragraph e.g. Transport, visibility – evidence laid out as numbered paragraphs then the case officer lays out their opinion not always clear what is the case officer comment on the element, raises the view to statutory response. SB: seems like a template issue, needs to be tweaked. AB: noted Bourn Airfield and Waterbeach.

## 6. Parish Councils

Members were asked to consider the role of parish Councils in the Planning Application Determination Process. Members agreed that Parish Councils should be encouraged to play an active role in the planning process.

Notes: JM: Noted that the planning committee gave considerable access to parish councils at SCDC a lot more than in any many other Councils. For example, some other Councils don't have a mechanism for parish councils to call an application into committee. Lots of opportunity at SCDC for involving parish council. What are we looking to achieve? JB: for parish councils its local knowledge, rurality. SCDC is different to most places over 100 parishes. Hard for PC to give considered comments. AB: plus issues with big developments next to small villages. PCs lot of people don't necessarily get to say their POV. AB: This process gives PCs a chance to be heard and at least shape the developments. JB: Bourn came with 36 pages of comments. RW: it's the feeling of participating, important aspect of the process. SB: there is a danger that where the NPPF requires officers to recommend approval of an unpopular development, PCs and other objectors can be very critical and adversarial. AB: very mindful of the stress this puts on the officers and it can also be



the case for local members when. There may be the opportunity to improve the situation if officer reports are amended in the way they comment on PCs reasons for objecting. Reports can sometimes read as though the officer was just dismissing PCs concerns whereas the reality is often they accept them but believe them to be outweighed by other material planning concerns. CC: there is sometimes a temptation to use opposition to an individual development as a continuation of a disagreement over sites allocated in the local plan. This can make the relationship harder.

## **AOB**

Points of clarification, how can we streamline issues for next meeting.