

PLANS GROUP REPORT



Kem Mehmed

The two Plans Groups have had a busy year. Although we have sometimes cancelled meetings due to a paucity of significant applications there has been a number which have taken up much of our time and limited human resources. Fairly extensive comments have been submitted on the applications discussed below.

In the past year we met 12 times, studied over 100 files and made comments on 39 of them. Many of the comments passed to the planning office offered suggestions and opinions on applications and a small number were in support of proposals of good quality. Twenty-two comments returned were objections. Descriptions and summaries of some of our comments have been published in our newsletters and can be found on line together with the City Council decision.

Over the last twelve months the number of planning applications of all types received by the City Council reached a total of about 2200, a 10% reduction on the previous year. Between five and a dozen applications per meeting are selected by the group conveners from the on-line, weekly lists provided by the City Council.



Each Plans Group meets once every four weeks at the Planning Department offices to go through the paper files of the selected applications. Just a month or so ago we had our first Plans Group meetings at the swanky new Sand Martin House on Fletton Quays. A splendid job has been done on the refurbishment and conversion of the railway engine sheds and the Society has booked a well equipped meeting room for the next year there.

Significant Applications:

- Whitworth Mill Conversion, Fletton Quays. We heartily welcomed this proposal but expressed concern over the design and bulk of an external staircase. Some reduction in height was achieved but not entirely as we would like to have seen it. A Revised application was approved.
- Hotel at Fletton Quays. A 160 bed, eight storey hotel with 'sky-bar' was approved despite our objection to the monolithic and 'lumpy' style of the building. The lure of the 'Hilton' name was perhaps too much of a temptation for the PCC members.
- Pearl Centre, Lynch Wood Business Park. This application was for two, 5 storey office blocks and a retail unit next to the existing office complex. It included a new access to Orton Wistow neighbourhood which ignited opposition from virtually all quarters including PCC Highways. The applicants withdrew the application and a revised attempt is expected soon.

*Refurbished Engine Shed
Fletton Quays*

- Replacement of the Oundle Rd HQ of British Sugar with housing and a Lidl store. This involved demolition of the dark glass 'box' building which is a rare example of quality recent architecture in Oundle Road. Whilst not opposing the housing we objected to the demolition of the Arup-designed glass building and its replacement with a very ordinary store. (The Arup building had received an RIBA award in 1975 and acclaim in architectural and specialist glass journals of the time). We also informed the Twentieth Century Society and urged the City Council to consult them. That Society produced an extremely persuasive, helpful and informative letter pressing the Council to refuse the application unless the Arup building was converted (e.g. into the Lidl store) rather than demolished. We await the decision.



British Sugar headquarters, Oundle Road

- North Westgate Area. A comprehensive scheme to redevelop the last remaining major site and eyesore in the city centre was received from Hawksworth plc whose owner has been assembling property on the site over the last two decades. The society welcomes the scheme, has some reservations on details of access and servicing but major concern over whether it can be delivered without the support of the PCC. This is apparently not forthcoming as they wish to promote their own scheme. Decision awaited.

- Former Marks & Spencer building, Bridge Street. The upper floors of the shop and office are proposed for conversion to apartments. We objected on the loss of retail and office space and inadequate provision for car and bike parking and rubbish collection. Decision awaited.
- Bridge Street Police Station, Hotel. A proposal to demolish the buildings on this traffic island site and build a Premier Inn on much the same footprint led to a short campaign to delay permission until a rerouting scheme for part of Rivergate carriageway was produced and the hotel footprint slightly adjusted. This would have enabled the roadway between the police station and Customs House to be pedestrianised and landscaped. Everyone liked the idea but decided that the chance to see the site developed immediately must not be missed and approval was granted.

Other planning matters, including the Peterborough Local Plan and the Guildhall Walk right of way application, were addressed by the Society's committee. In both cases outcomes are awaited.

We would like to thank all our members on the Plans Group panel and especially Peter Hughes who for health reasons has resigned. So we have to make our usual appeal for more help. The panel now comprises; Henry Duckett, Peter Lee, Kem Mehmed, Peter Beasley, Peter Sargent, Pauline Sidebottom, Bill Samuel, Keith Lievesley and David Turnock. Please don't think about it, volunteer now!

Kem Mehmed and Peter Lee