

PLANS GROUP REPORT



Kem Mehmed

Our two Plans groups continue to share the fortnightly monitoring of planning applications. Where comment is made it can be to support, oppose or offer suggestions for the City Council case officer to take into account in negotiating an improved scheme. For the first time this year we are seeing the Civic Society's comments included along with the planning application and other consultees views (the 'Planning Application Documents') on the City Council's web site. This is welcome, although they still sometimes appear listed under the name of the person submitting them (usually Kem Mehmed or Peter Lee).

British Sugar. The year began with some great news! Our application to have the British Sugar 'glass box' on Oundle Road listed was confirmed by Historic England in February. Alas just six months later a revised assessment by that same body, following a challenge by the building's owners, led to the Dept of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 'de-listing' the building. It now has no legal protection from demolition. A shame as the building could readily have been converted into a Lidl store.



Pearl Centre scheme. Last year's contentious office and retail scheme adjoining the Pearl Centre on Lynch Wood, which included a road access onto Wistow Way was eventually withdrawn and a revised application, omitting the access, submitted. This was approved in July despite strong objections with a slight reduction in the height and size of the proposed office blocks. We will be keeping an eye on the reserved matters application when the detailed design comes in. In the meantime the original Pearl Building was listed Grade II including its landscaped gardens. The war memorial (St George Sculpture) was listed Grade II*. Good news.

Fletton Quays. We raised objections to the architectural form and bland design of a 100 apartment block tacked onto the previously approved Hilton Hotel, which we also objected to. The apartment block was approved with very minor amendments.

North Westgate. During the early part of the year there was a change of approach by the City Council with regard to North Westgate and the private developers, Hawksworth. They are now working together in progressing a scheme. We can only hope that this bears fruit.

Activity Centre. An Olympic-scale climbing centre on a lakeside site in Ferry Meadows Country Park has been the most controversial application of the year. Although most objectors would support the facility in principle there were heartfelt objections to its siting on the edge of Gunwade Lake. Such a imposing structure, incorporating a bulky main building and a 100 ft tower would alter the tranquil countryside character of the core area of the park to the detriment of the quiet enjoyment of the visiting public. We decided not to formally object to the application but made some positive suggestions on detailed design and landscaping. We also requested a more rigorous assessment of alternative sites both within and outside Ferry Meadows. A decision is awaited.

Office to flat conversions. These continue to come forward mainly in the City Centre. The loss of office space and jobs to flats is alarming. The morning rush-hour in the City Centre is almost non-existent! Some conversions have needed planning permission but most have come forward under the ‘Prior Notification’ scheme where very little control can be exercised. Clifton House, Bayard Place, 57-73 Broadway and much of the former Marks and Spencer building in Bridge Street are to change to residential. The minimal space allocated to the flats is a concern for most applications. The only scheme we felt able to actively support was the recent co-living plans for the long-vacant former County Court building in Cattle Market Road.

An asphalt batching plant close to the residential Gladstone area was proposed at the railhead off Maskew Avenue. The facility included a tall conveyor structure. Material would come in by rail and go out at all hours by road to be used in emergency and regular road maintenance. We objected as did many local residents. The application was withdrawn.

Guildhall Walk.. A Planning Inquiry into a proposed Order making Guildhall Walk (beside Barclays) a formal public right of way was held in October. The case was put by the Society, six witnesses and numerous witness statements, but the Planning Inspector found that Barclays had taken sufficient steps to demonstrate that the route had not been continuously open to the public for the required period. We have been assured that the landowners will continue to be considerate in keeping it open for most of the day and evening hours.

University. There is still no sign of public consultations or involvement in a ‘Master Plan’ for the university on the Embankment. However, international management consultants, Mace, were appointed by the Combined Authority in July and they have announced an intention to have a planning approval in early 2020 and first students on site in 2023.



Local Plan. The new Local Plan for Peterborough’s continued growth to 2036 was formally adopted by the City Council in July 2019. This was good news for the many who had opposed a major new township beside the A47 at Castor (now deleted). But of even greater significance is the fact that Peterborough now has an up-to-date local Plan whose land allocations should meet numerical housing need. The alarming period during which major applications for development were lodged on the basis that the City Councils 5-year land supply figures were wrong has come to an end. This had produced the 80-house extension to Barnack at Uffington Road, allowed on appeal and currently under construction.

We would like to thank all our members on the Plans Group panel and especially our non-committee volunteers Peter Beasley, Keith Lievesley and Derek Brown. In addition to these three the panel now comprises; Henry Duckett, Peter Lee, Kem Mehmed, Peter Sargent, Pauline Sidebottom and Bill Samuel. One or two new volunteers would be welcomed, please have a think about it and volunteer now!

Kem Mehmed and Peter Lee