

PLANS GROUP REPORT

The immediate effect of Covid-19 Lockdown was a drop in planning applications received by the City Council with a gradual reduction in applications in April and May and a larger reduction in June. The lower rate continued through to the date of this publication in September. It is widely expected that there is going to be a slow-down in the economy generally and this will result in less construction and fewer planning applications over the full year. However there has been activity in the first nine months of 2020.

61 Bridge Street (former Poundland)

Conversion of upper floors to residential and additional floor and recladding elevations. No objection in principle made as this scheme brought a significant improvement to the street scene at this prominent corner. We suggested a number of amendments some of which were adopted. Approved by City Council.

Adventure Play Scheme

Sutton Heath Road, Southorpe. This extensive use of land and construction of buildings in open countryside has serious implications regarding traffic safety and visual impact. We objected as did others including Highways England. Decision is awaited.

Glinton 34 homes outside village

It is galling that some developers, despite the allocation of land for development nearby, still seek to gain planning permission on agricultural land outside villages and contrary to the Local Plan. We added our oppositional voice to the local clamour. Decision awaited.

Fletton Quays Plot 2. Office Block

An application came forward for an office block on the former Aqua House site, the last large development site. We raised objections to the architectural form and bland design of a seven/eight storey block on this prominent site. The submitted scheme was approved with very minor amendments, although our concerns about the bulky monolithic character of the design were acknowledged by the PCC planning officers.

North Westgate update

We reported last year that in early 2019 there was a change of approach by the City Council with regard to North Westgate and that they and private developers, Hawksworth Ltd, would be working together. Some land assembly has taken place and it was gratifying to read this July that the City Council had agreed to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in support of delivery of the Hawksworth scheme approved in 2018.

Ferry Meadows Activity Centre

A decision on the climbing activity centre on a lakeside site in Ferry Meadows Country Park is still awaited. Delay is mainly down to the need to address a long list of additional information requested by the PCC planners. The latest news is significant. Milton Estates have strong objections to the scheme and have written to the Ministry to request an Environmental Impact Assessment. If granted this could significantly delay the decision.



Proposed Ferry Meadows Activity Centre

The Embankment and Peterborough University Phase 1

There has been no meaningful public consultations or involvement in a ‘Master Plan’ for the university on the Embankment. However, some publicity was given by the PCC and Combined Authority in April about a ‘Master Plan’ for the total campus on a large portion of the Embankment. This plan did not have any information about the rest of the Embankment and we expressed our disappointment in an article in the PT. We are pleased to see that the City Council is now intending to produce such a plan. It will need to address difficult issues of access, the location of the Football stadium in the context of Cathedral views, delivery of a pedestrian/ cycling river bridge, the final shape of the University and the retention of a meaningful area of open space. The University project retains its target of first students in 2022. Following the appointment of Anglia Ruskin University as academic partner, a planning application for phase 1 has just (August 2020) been submitted.

The Solstice

This outline application for redevelopment of the Solstice nightclub on the Northminster Road/Brook Street corner proposed seven floors (56 units) of apartments above a retail ground floor. The return frontage into Brook Street showed three floors (77 bedrooms) of student accommodation. Our immediate concern was height. Whether at 8 storeys or the proposed maximum of 33.6m, the building would break into the majestically long east-west profile of the Cathedral when seen from Stanley Recreation Ground. This is one of our best Cathedral views. No photo-montage was submitted to illustrate this impact.

A further concern is the fact that, in advance of a proper planning brief for the Northminster area, the scheme is contrary to the City Council’s Local Plan which states that such a brief is necessary to define, inter alia, the protection of important views of the Cathedral. English Heritage also opposed the application. Decision awaited.

Other planning matters

A number of important proposals have been coming forward involving consultations in advance of formal applications. This is to be welcomed but in some cases the time to comment is very short and in one case much too close to the submission of the application to allow for any fundamental changes. The Solstice and Werrington Centre affordable housing were two such proposals.

Werrington Centre consultation. This is a proposal for 92 affordable apartments on the Staniland Court site by a local Housing Association. We really did not take to this! It was too dense, too tall, out of character with the existing centre (architecturally) and ignored the main pedestrian desire lines of the site. Comments were sent in March, since when no application has come forward.

We would like to thank all our members on the Plans Group panel and especially our non-committee member volunteers, Keith Lievesley and Derek Brown. The other members of the panel are: Henry Duckett, Peter Lee, Kem Mehmed, Peter Sargent, and Peter Beasley. After seven years of valuable contribution to the group Pauline Sidebottom called it a day. Pauline also resigned from the committee and we enjoyed a ‘thank you’ lunch at a city centre restaurant. Bill Samuel has also had to resign, in his case on health grounds. His vast experience is a big loss. One or two new volunteers would be welcomed, please have a think about it and volunteer now!

Kem Mehmed and Peter Lee