## **Planning Services Improvement Action Plan**

Flowing from Roger Dudman Way Review

Steering GroupPanel: Councillor Bob Price, Vincent Goodstadt, David Edwards.

In attendance: Michael Crofton Briggs, Niko Grigoropoulos

The independent review confirms that the City Council met its statutory obligations in handling the planning application. However, there are recommendations on embedding best practise. There are six principal sets of recommendations:

Recommendation	Action / Programme	Owner	Milestone Not started/ In hand/ Complete/Tested	Progress/Achievement
I. Planning Procedures				
Improving the clarity of the informal and formal liaison arrangements and the documentation of the pre-application process;  Para 56. SLA with University strengthened – clear documentation what material presented and what comments made.  Improving clarity of the informal and formal liaison arrangements and the documentation of the pre-application process	A1. Review of current Service Level Agreement with the University of Oxford.	MHancock	A1. Complete April Testing by Sept	A1. System established for agendas for meetings with University Estates Office to be circulated in advance and Note circulated and agreed afterwards.  Standard Operating Procedure(SOP) completed,
	A2. New SLA overall / Handbook	MCrofton Briggs	A2. In hand - Target by Sept	A2. Protocol with University being reviewed. Likely to be called a Handbook and overseen by a joint University, College and City C task Group.

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	A3. Review of current internal procedure guidance, to confirm documentation of preapp process. PPA – to be picked up in the protocol.	C Golden	A3. Complete June Testing by Sept	A3. Pre-app validation and allocation process has been reviewed and updated. Reflected in new SOP for preapps.
	A4. Include in internal guidance the process to secure Design Review by the Oxford Design Review Panel.		A4. Complete June Testing by Sept	A4. Internal guidance note produced for Officers about how to get applications to the Oxford Design Review Panel
	A5. Consider a triage stage: with each preapp request allocate a category or type which determines level or amount of resource, audit, clarity, processes	C Golden A Murdoch	A5. Complete June Testing by Sept	A5. A pre-application Triage form has been drafted to be used for all Major and Minor pre-application enquiries.
Providing a clearer auditing regime of the submitted documents against the requirements in the published guidance in the registration process on major applications;  Para 58. Clear audit at validation of documents submitted for major applications against requirements.	B1. New Internal procedure guidance on validation processes  Take what we do already and document this, so it can be in idox to be seen. If a discretionary document explain this.	MHancock& CGolden	B1. Complete.June Testing by Sept	B1. Reviewed and updated.  New validation form to be completed and added to the file &to be available to view online.  This will then be kept on the public file. SOP prepared.
	B2. Training and implementation		B2. Complete. July	B2. Local List Checklist rolledout

		to Officers at officer training forum
B3. Also process to go back and keep audit up to date as other information is submitted.	B3. Complete July Testing by Sept	B3. See above re. SOP.
B4. Carry out a review as to whether any further minor change is required to procedure.	B4. In hand Target by Sept	B4. Review the SOP and then decide if any minor changes required after implementation.

A review of the EIA-related procedures		MMorgan		
	C1. Review EIA procedure i. advice in pre-application, ii.		C1. Complete	C1. Initial improvements
Para 66. Review EIA procedure i. advice in	Quality of forms and documentation used,		June	made autumn 13.Full
pre-application, ii. Quality of forms and			Testing by	review produced. Just
documentation used, iii. Training and			Sept	needs some editing.
briefing of officers in respect of Screening				
process.				
			C2.	
	C2. Training and briefing of officers in respect of Screening		Commenced	C2. Further training to be
	process		July	completed in July/Aug.
			Target Sept	
			C3. Not	
	C3 Plain English version. (The FOE 2005 campaigners' guide		started	C3. To do
	is helpful in this respect )		Target Sept	
	· · · · ·			
			C4. Not	
	C4. Legal Advice on screening and scoping		started	C4. Legal advice required
			Target Sept	on Screening and Scoping
				Opinions, to inform basis of
				determination.
EVTDA: automol validation on aggregationing	D1 Investigate which planning muth sities have described	N.	D1	D1 MCrofton
<b>EXTRA:</b> external validation or accreditation of improvements and procedures	D1 Investigate which planning authorities have done this and what advice is available from national organisations	N Grigoropoulos/L	D1. Complete	Briggsreceived proposal
of improvements and procedures	such as PAS or POS	Godin	July	from Planning Officer
	Such as PAS of Pos	Godin	July	Society Enterprises for a
				formal Review.
	D2Scope out project, what help needed. Agree Action with		D2.	D2. Agreed to ask V
	Steering Group		CompleteJuly	Goodstadt to review this

	D3. Implement agreed action		D3. In hand for Oct/Nov	Improvement Plan actions when complete and evidence of 'testing' can be provided.  D3. To do
EXTRA: Review of how we organise the electronic application file. Data management	E1. Devise guidance on data management, initially for application files. To aid audit, retrieval and clarity.  Proposal could be to put data in sub-sections that relate to the stages in the process in IDOX (pre-app; submission, consultation, negotiation, changes, committee report, decision, compliance with conditions.). And label each piece of data better. To include all sections including Heritage, photos,	L Godin/C Golden Support from L Godin and ICT	E1. In hand Target Sept	E1. Meet up with ICT to understand capability of uniform and idox. Future upgrades will help too  Still to prepare guidance for officer and training.  Also discuss with NW to ensure consistency with Heritage decisions.
II.Consultation Processes.				
A Further development of pre-application guidelines: Para 91. Best practice – resource intensive, so most appropriate for majors.	A1. Workshop or brainstorm to explore options and best approach. Scoping of pre-application guidance on consultation	M Hancock C Golden	A1. Complete April	A1. Discussed at Officer forum and team meetings
Para 98.  1. Allow more time between project inception and the proposed commencement date  2. Engage other appropriate parties (including members) in pre-application discussions, and not just officers;	A2. Prepare internal procedure guidance -		A2.complete June Test by Sept	A2. Internal procedure guidance note produced for pre-application consultation best practice.  A2. Early internal case conferencing of all

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3. Provide opportunities for presentations				potentially sensitive cases.
and briefings to members; 4.Encourage a two-stage consultation on major applications; and 5. Set down clearer guidelines on the desired documentation.	A3. External applicant protocol. Consider how best to persuade prospective applicant the value of initial consultation while scheme is still at option or conceptual stage and capable of change in response to consultation. Linked to  A protocol/guidance note for developers on the consultation they need to do for different sized developments.		A3. Complete June Test by Sept	A3. Advise applicants via pre application protocol to undertake 2 rounds of public consultation, and Ox Design Review presentation in significant cases.  Options considered and a guidance note produced for applicants to be attached to email and letter correspondence and a section for the website written.
	A4. Work with Members on greater participation at this stage		A4. In hand. Sept	A4. Pre application briefing for members.
B EXTRA: Review of Statement of Community Involvement Current SCI was adopted in 2006 and does not reflect the most up to date regulations in relation to policy documents so there was a case for review in any event but RDW adds to this.	B1. SCI review would, covers pre-application consultation. Starts with PID, scope and public engagement/involvement	M Jaggard	B1. Started July Target by Sept	B1 Lindsay Beveridge Start with PID and scope of review.
EXTRA. A question to Council on 3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb asks that Council review the methods it	B2. Review of SCI through statutory process			B2. Part of B1 above

uses to consult the public on planning applications				
C. Post-application guidance on planning processes.  Para 99  1. A more structured approach to the weekly lists to enable the ready identification of major developments;  2.A more effective provision of Site Notices;  3.Additional means for communicating the	C1. Ensure all actions documented in internal procedure guidance –weekly list, Site notices, consultation on revised drawings,	C Golden	C1. In hand some complete. July Target by Sept	C1. Weekly list template being changed to make it easier to spot Major planning applications. Protocols written for all. Means of documenting each action explained in the protocol.
scale and massing of major developments; 4. Consultation on revised drawings; 5. The provision of feedback to respondents on planning decisions; and 6. The planning processes to be more integrated with other regulatory processes.	C2. Provision of post-application guidance notes for applicants/page on our website. Major developments, feedback on planning decisions		C2Target Aug Test by Sept	C2. Post-application guidance notes for applications as a page on our website – drafted – not on our website yet.
	C3. Clarification about what is/isn't an NMA/MMA.		C3. Target Aug Test by Sept	C3. Guidance notes and information on our website – drafted – not on our website yet.
	C4. Integrate planning process with other regulatory processes by; Use pre-commencement conditions less, where important sort out before decision made. Already there with contamination		C4. Not started Target Sept	C4. Guidance note to prepare

<b>D. EXTRA:</b> Application of project management procedures to applications.	D1. Consider merit of treating a major application as a 'project' with associated, but proportionate, project management? e.g. (as a minimum) set up a project plan with key stages and milestones that covers pre-and postapp stages.	N Grigoropoulos	D1. In hand Target Sept	D1. Agreed with F Byrne to pilot project management procedure as part a major application (PPA)
E. EXTRA: Produce a full list of all Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS)	E. Bring together all existing procedure notes SOPS, plus a list of those in preparation. Undertake a gap analysis. Review all to ensure fit for purpose. Consider how to make available for easy use by all officers.	L Godin	E1. In hand Target Sept	E1. Confirmation reached on what processes documented following BPI of application processes.
III. Visual Impacts & Quality of Design It is recommended that existing initiatives to improve the design capacity of the Council should be complemented by action to enhance the use of in-house expertise and to provide members with greater support in their considerations of design issues and visual impacts by:	Para 145 – expanded below			
Developing greater technical capacity (IT and skills) to take advantage of the rapidly evolving potential for interpreting design and integration with established GIS systems;	A1. Prepare guidance or a requirement spec. for applicants based on current technology to improve visualisation of proposed development. Verified views, digital imagery, computer generated 'fly through'.  Importance of Verified views. Encourage applicants to produce models Have hard copies of the plans on boards from applicants for Members to view before the committee meeting.	C Golden	A1. In hand Target Sept	A1. Prepare guidance, publish and use

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	Confirm that 'wire line' drawing no longer acceptable.  Exploring more immediate and site specific options, such as the use of Google Sketch Up to helpunderstanding of scale and massing.  A2. Feasibility study to understand what is possible.  Scope out project, what help needed Business case Project plan Action Plan	L Godin Support from MCB	A2. In hand But Target 2015	A2. Westgate BLD have a BIM model that has been seen at their London offices Contact made with Mr Gaskin at Brookes, discussed a proposal for a 3D virtual model of the City.
Improving the advice on the design evidence used to support application, in particular in the preparation of Design and Access Statements	B1. Review of our current advice and assessment of DAS, to include understanding of latest Gov guidance.	C Golden	B1. Complete June Test by Sept B2. Complete	B1. Completed.
	B2. Internal procedure guidance		June Test by Sept B3. Complete June	B2. Written. To be tested, reviewed and given to Officers.
	B3. To check latest Government Guidance and our Validation Checklist.  B4. Potential to have a Design section on the planning		B4. Complete June Test by Sept	B3. Done.  B4. Section for the website

	pages of our website. This could include guidance on how to complete a good Design and Access statement as well as information on latest schemes and the Oxford Design Review Panel.			written. A guidance note for applicants also written.  Design section for the website written.
Enhancing member 'training' on design and planning;	C1. Explore with Members how they would like to achieve this.	N Grigoropoulos	C1. In hand. June Complete Sept/Oct	C1. Post elections training been provided on probity and the planning system and SHLAA and SHMA and housing provision.  Meeting arranged for July with lead Cllrs to discuss Member training for the year.
	C2. Potential role of Oxford Design Review Panel or its members		C2. In hand June Complete	C2. Date set
	C3. Set up post development site visits to help Members review decisions – good examples and also where improvements could have been made.		C3. Not started Target Sept	C3. Set a date
Investigating and adopting the best new field-based approaches to assessing the visual impact of new development This is reference to poles, balloons or scaffolding.	D1. Run a pilot on a Council own scheme. Evaluate pilot Options paper for future scope and operation, with opportunities and risks.	N Grigoropoulos	D1. In hand Target Sept	D1. "Swiss poles" pilot carried out and an evaluation to be included with Elsfield Hall report. Following 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase of pilot amendments being considered to Elsfield Hall scheme and further

	D2. Importance of plans showing the context of a proposal, i.e. neighbouring properties, for smaller applications.		D2. In hand July Target Sept	consultation and use of poles. Amendments received. Application awaiting determination  D2. Dialogue with Cllrs. Guidance to be written and included as part of validation process.
EXTRA: Design Review	E1. In partnership with Cabe establish the Oxford Design Review Panel.	M Crofton Briggs	E1. Complete April	E1. Completed
	E2. Work with case officers to introduce the appropriate proposals to Design Review and how to make best use of the Panel's report. Templates for use with each project		E2. Complete May	E2. Cabe met case officers to review initial reviews. Quarterly meeting with Chair of ODRP and David E on 20 May
	E3. Leaflet to explain to developers and to inform the public		E3. Complete June	E3. Leaflet and Document about the Service drafted and published on Website.
EXTRA: Improve internal design expertise	F1. Skills audit and schedule, L&D opportunities (could include a parallel design panel then compare and contrast with the panel's conclusions)  Options paper to 'fill' gaps to include possibility of employing a permanent urban designer.	C Golden & AMurdoch	F1. In hand June Target Sept	F1.Discuss what level of design skills DC Planners should have so that can write up the Skills Audit.

	F2. Internal design charettes - design workshops for the DC teams to focus on more daily design issues.		F2. Not started Target Sept	
IV. Committee Reporting It recommended that the presentation of the planning issues of major applications to committee should be strengthened by				
A systematic documentation of the policy evaluation including clarification of the extent and nature of any departure from policy  Para 167 systematic record of evaluation against all policies that seen as material	A1. Internal meeting to explore and scope out Internal procedure guidance to explain how officers should record evaluation against all policies	M Armstrong Policy Team	A1.In hand Target Sept	Agreement to hold policy surgeries weekly. To clarify and explain policy context. Need to draft standard text in reports.  Discussed with LH and AR to scope -to be drafted.
	A2. Understand issue of Departure and greater level of explanation necessary.	Policy Team. A Roche/ L Goddard	A2. Not started Target Sept	A2.
	A3. Advice note prepared.		A3. Not started Target Sept	A3.
A more evidenced-based approach to the presentation of the choices before committee, and the impact of mitigation through conditions in reports	B1. Review of report writing guidelines, to provide extra guidance to authors on such matters as evaluation, analysis of choices and weight.	N Grigoropoulos	B1. Not started Target Sept	B1.

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Para 187 report could have been clearer in evaluation and analysis of the choices that were put before committee.	To include a dialogue with key members.  B2. Workshop or brainstorm to explore options and best approach.		B2. Not started Target Sept	B2.
Eg report asserted need for student accommodation but could have gone further to explain why and give current achievement against 3,000 policy,	B3. Internal procedure guidance based on review of existing report template. Augment to include advisory notes to report writers.		B3. Not started Target Sept	B3.
	B4. Lead policy officer assigned to majors in an advisory capacity; to flag up other sources of information; to be sounding board for discussions about choices and weight to be attached to different policy objectives		B4. Not started	B4.
The use of alternative means of addressing design considerations (e.g. in terms of visualisations and where necessary site visits).  Relates to section 3 above, and how	C1. Better visualisation for Members: Augment power point with other means such as models and exhibition boards (favoured method of the Design Panel) See III. Visual Impacts & Quality of Design above	C Golden/ N Worlledge	C1. In hand Target Sept	C1.
illustrate and communicate design considerations to Members.	C2. Internal procedure guidance. Publish external guidance and standard to be followed such as verified views.		C2. Not started Target Sept	C2.
V. Planning Conditions It is recommended that enforcement procedures and coordination (on conditions) should be strengthened through:				

An auditable process for determining the appropriate enforcement action Para 205 Review with legal of current process. Eg. Is there the discretion to take no action absolute?	A1. Necessity to document decision especially when no action, and formally to secure sign off by a senior reviewer.  Internal report template and procedure guidance	M Morgan	A1. complete Test by Sept	A1 Re- introduction made of proforma to provide audit trail.  Proforma also to write off
Eg. need clear decision process to decide to take no action.				enforcement cases
A review of the use of standard planning conditions, and updating of them where necessary	B1. New schedule of standard conditions,	M Armstrong /M Hancock	B1. In hand Target Sept	B1. Updated standard conditions to be finalised.
	B2. Structure decision notices to set out conditions in four categories (no additional submission, pre-commencement, pre-occupation, post completion)		B2. Not Started Target Sept	B2. Need to amend recommendation and decision screens in Uniform accordingly
Inter-agency co-ordination to address the issues set out in the main report  Review how much is left to pre-commencement conditions and what is	C1. Internal discussion to understand issue, explore options and agree guidance to officers.	N Grigoropoulos	C1. In hand Target Sept	C1.
agreed before decision made.  Eg. Assess importance of issue and when needs to be agreed before consent given	C2. Confirm approach with agency partners		started Target Sept	C2.
The use of a range of media should be considered to provide accurate and	D1. Open a running list of 'complex' issues that might	L Godin with help from	D1. In hand	D1. Prepare a draft a

accessible information that addresses these concerns (to the general public) Planning involves complex issues. Consider how we explain and communicate these. Consider briefing notes or similar for the general public, eg distinction between contaminated land and land containing	benefit from lay explanation.  Use of section on Web for general planning guidance	C Golden	Target Sept.	'Planning Terminology Explained' list. This list has been started and is being updated.
contaminates.	D2. Check whether explanation is available somewhere else, if we can link to all the better.		D2. In hand. Target Sept	D2 Link to the Planning Portal's A-Z Glossary to be put on the website.
EXTRA: Monitoring of pre-commencement conditions	E1. Assess role for AIs and BC to report on impending commencement.  Correlation with needs for CIL monitoring?  See conditions above: Structure decision notices to set out conditions in four categories (no additional submission, pre-commencement, pre-occupation, post completion)	M Armstrong	E1. In hand Target Sept	E1. Use CIL re commencement  Extra code on conditions relating to threat to health and safety issues eg land contamination  Use of informatives  Proactive Enforcement
	E2. Review means of communication to applicants their responsibility?		E2. Not started Target Sept	E2

VI. Wider Planning Issues				
Enhancing the planning service in terms of planning process, policy and strategy	A1. Improve clarity on 'departure' from the plan.	M Jaggard	A1. In hand Target Sept	A1. Draft note for DC officers
Para 214, 215, 216	A2. Is the City full? Lack of space leads to pressure to build higher with impact on urban form and views.  Consider when appropriate to review the capacity of the City to absorb growth. —associated to issue below.  Would tie into 3D virtual model of the City in 3 above.		A2. In hand Target in part Sept	A2. City own SHLAA, assistance from consultants As below
	A3. Need to have answer to question 'when will Core Strategy be reviewed?' (agree not an option NOT to do a review )  Consideration relates to SHMA output Universities dialogue, SEP, Growth Fund and wider Oxford Growth Strategy matters.  The imminent publication of the SHMA and the work that flows from that under the duty to cooperate (including discussions that we are instigating with the Planning Inspectorate) will help to inform decisions on the timing of any review of our own Core Strategy		A3. In hand Target decision on ? post national election 2015	A3. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment review (March) provides clarify on the capacity to absorb growth and the pressures on building higher. Now agreed this to be independently assessed to reassure other Oxford LAs. Consultant appointed

Progressing and formalising a more		M Crofton	B1. Complete	
strategic approach to the future development needs and engagement with the Universities and Colleges	B1. Hold a College and University workshop and Prepare a brief to go out with invitation to sameProposition:	Briggs	March	B1. Initial meeting with colleges and University 17 Mar
Para 219 Work with the Universities and colleges towards a 15 yr business plan. The future of the Universities depends on the City it is in as much as on global competitiveness.	B2. Joint commissioning of consultants - Where next for Oxford, the University and Colleges over a 5 to 15 yr horizon? / Oxford Growth Strategy?		B2, In hand Target Dec	B2 Agreed to form a task group, to:  * Commission consultants for the Framework  * Compile the Handbook.
Help the Universities and Colleges take community engagement seriously.	B3 Evaluate strategy produced and use to feed into consideration of the Core Strategy and Oxford Growth Project.		B3 not started	B3. Can only start when B2 complete
	B4. Guidelines for University and College community engagement		started Target Dec	B4. Work with the Task Group
c. <b>EXTRA</b> : 1990 Act: impact of development on a Conservation Area  Argument to the review that even development in the foreground of a long distance view of a conservation area has an impact on that conservation area even though that development itself is not in close proximity to the CA.	C1. Assessment of this challenge and what this means for Planning Policies.  Bring this into the preparation of the Design and Heritage SPD?	M Jaggard and N Worlledge	C1. In hand Target Spring 15	C1.

## Overview consideration by the Steering Group, once Actions stated as complete and tested

1. Has there been an Integrated Approach?

The Action Plan above deconstructs the report into components but there is also an exercise to put the parts back together. Key Matters overlap such as:

- i. pre-application process, developer consultation/ involving elected councillors
- ii. embedding of the design process/visualisation/techniques/policy/independent review by ODRP and internal expertise
- iii. all procedures are documented; transparent and audited
- 2. Has the Improvement Action Plan do the job has it optimised on the opportunity?
- 3. Is there a clear Vision or Strategy for Growth of the City emerging from the work with the University and major partners in the sub-region? a vision for the City region feeding into the review of Local Plan (Core Strategy)

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