

**To:** West Area Planning Committee

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2014

**Report of:** Executive Director, City Regeneration and Housing

**Title of Report:** Roger Dudman Way Review: Independent Report and Recommendations

## Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** To receive the final report and recommendations from the independent review

**Key decision?** No

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Colin Cook

**Policy Framework:** Efficient and effective Council

**Recommendation(s):**

1. To receive the final report of the independent review overseen by the Working Group and note the findings and recommendations.
2. To endorse the proposals to address the recommendations with an action plan and embed best practice.
3. To thank Mr Vincent Goodstadt, the independent reviewer and Dr Lucy Natarajan for their work, and the members of the Working Group for their contributions.

Appendix:

Roger Dudman Way Main Report and Recommendations

## BACKGROUND

1. Following the approval in February 2012 of the proposal by the University of Oxford for graduate student accommodation at Castle Mill, Roger Dudman Way, West Area Planning Committee decided that it wished to commission an independent review of the planning procedures to identify where processes could be improved. A Working Group comprising a cross-party group of Councillors together with members of external interested organisations was established to oversee the review and an independent expert, Vincent Goodstadt, a past President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, was appointed to undertake the assignment.

## REPORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. 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. The final report and recommendations, which includes an executive summary, are attached. There are six principal sets of recommendations covering:
  3. **1. Planning Procedures**
    - Improving the clarity of the informal and formal liaison arrangements and the documentation of the pre-application process;
    - Providing a clearer auditing regime of the submitted documents against the requirements in the published guidance in the registration process on major applications;
    - A review the EIA-related procedures.
  4. **2. Consultation Processes.**
    - Further development of pre-application guidelines;
    - Post-application guidance on planning processes.
  5. **3. Visual Impacts & Quality of Design**
    - Developing greater technical capacity (IT and skills) to take advantage of the rapidly evolving potential for interpreting design and integration with established GIS systems;
    - Improving the advice on the design evidence used to support application, in particular in the preparation of Design and Access Statements;
    - Enhancing member 'training' on design and planning;
    - Investigating and adopting the best new field-based approaches to assessing the visual impact of new development.
  6. **4. Committee Reporting**
    - A systematic documentation of the policy evaluation including clarification of the extent and nature of any departure from policy;
    - A more evidenced-based approach to the presentation of the choices before committee, and the impact of mitigation through conditions in reports; and

- The use of alternative means of addressing design considerations (e.g. in terms of visualisations and where necessary site visits).

7. **5. Planning Conditions**

- An auditable process for determining the appropriate enforcement action;
- A review of the use of standard planning conditions, and updating of them where necessary;
- Inter-agency co-ordination to address the issues set out in the main report;
- The use of a range of media should be considered to provide accurate and accessible information that addresses these concerns.

8. **6. Wider Planning Issues**

- Enhancing the planning service in terms of planning process, policy and strategy
- Progressing and formalising a more strategic approach to the future development needs and engagement with the Universities and Colleges.

9. The recommendations are set out in full in the attached report. Officers will be preparing an action plan to address the recommendations. The report notes that the City Council is already taking action in areas identified in the report.

10. The proposal is that a small steering group is established, including one or two specialist experts as required, to oversee the implementation of the action plan on a task and finish basis. Councillor Cook, the Executive Member with responsibility for planning, will consult with Members on the detail of the steering group and the programme.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

11. The Committee is recommended to:

- To receive the final report of the independent review overseen by the Working Group and note the findings and recommendations.
- To endorse the proposals to address the recommendations with an action plan and embed best practice.
- To thank Mr Vincent Goodstadt, the independent reviewer and Dr Lucy Natarajan for their work, and the members of the Working Group for their contributions.

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