

Maintaining balanced neighbourhoods through planning Draft Terms of Reference and Inquiry Plan

1. Scrutiny Panel:

Scrutiny Panel A

2. Membership:

- a. Councillor Derek Burke
- b. Councillor Matthew Claisse
- c. Councillor Les Harris
- d. Councillor Mary Lloyd
- e. Councillor Catherine McEwing
- f. Councillor Sharon Mintoff
- g. Councillor Adrian Vinson

3. Purpose:

To examine the contribution planning can make to maintaining balanced neighbourhoods and the quality of life for their residents.

4. Background:

- To address concerns related to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), the Council, in 2011, introduced an Article 4 direction to require planning consent to create new HMOs and has produced a Supplementary Planning Document to accompany this change. This policy has been in place for over 18 months and now is an opportunity to reflect on its effectiveness.
- In addition to HMOs there are wider issues relating to planning enforcement. The Council has recently undertaken an internal audit of this area and this review provides members with an opportunity to identify where improvements can be made in addition to the action plan developed following the audit.
- In May 2013 the Government relaxed certain Permitted Development Rights. These include the following;
 - increasing the size limits for single storey domestic extensions and conservatories;
 - the change of use of office to residential use.

The Government has also recently consulted on another proposal, although there has been no decision as to whether this change will happen:

- the change of retail to residential use

Members have an opportunity to explore the proposals, their potential impact on Southampton and how, if at all, the Council want to respond to the proposals.

All of the above must be considered in light of the budget pressures the Council is facing.

5. Objectives:

- a. To review how effectively the City Council's Article 4 and HMOs Supplementary Planning Document is working.
- b. To increase understanding of the various Government proposals to relax permitted development rights, including those relating to extensions, office to residential conversions and changing retail use without consent, and to consider if a local response should be developed.
- c. To consider the Council's approach to planning enforcement.

6. Methodology:

- a. Outline of current national policy and local activity including:
 - Key findings from recent internal audit of Planning Enforcement
 - Review recent decisions of the Planning Inspectorate
 - Government Policy
- b. Engage members, partners and community representatives
- c. Identify and consider best practice and options for future delivery:
 - National best practise examples
 - Local success stories

7. Proposed Timetable:

Six meetings November 2013 – May 2014

8. Inquiry Plan (subject to the availability of speakers)

Meeting 1: 28th November 2013

- Introduction, Context and Background

To be invited:

Cllr Letts

Senior officers from Planning

Meeting 2: 9th January 2014

- To review the effectiveness of the Councils Article 4 and HMO Supplementary Planning Document

To be invited:

Residents Association Representative

Landlord Representative

Universities / Student Unions

Senior officers from Planning and HMO licensing officer

Meeting 3: 6th February 2014

- Consider the Councils approach to planning enforcement

To be invited:

Cllr Blatchford, Chair of the Planning Committee

Senior officers from Planning

Meeting 4: 6th March 2014

- To increase understanding of the various proposals to relax certain permitted development rights

To be invited:

Senior officers from Planning

Meeting 5: 3rd April 2014

- To summarise the inquiry's evidence and highlight emerging recommendations

To be invited:

Senior officers from Planning

Meeting 6: 8th May 2014

- To approve the final report of the inquiry and recommendations