

Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration)

Working Group

Inquiry to consider Student Accommodation in the City

Terms of Reference

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) in early 2013 expressed concern that planning approval had been given for a change of use of offices to form student accommodation at Pennine House, Russell Street as this was a complete departure from the traditional areas for student accommodation. The Board requested briefing papers on this issue.
- 1.2 At the last Scrutiny Board meeting of the 2012/13 municipal year on 30th April 2013 Members considered a report of the Director of City Development which explored issues underpinning the preparation of a new planning policy for student housing development in the city. It also listed current planning permissions and enquiries for purpose built student accommodation in the city.
- 1.3 A report from the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods entitled 'Update on the analysis of current housing market trends within the Leeds 6 postcode areas' was also considered at that meeting.
- 1.4 The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services reported at this meeting that a cross Council initiative was to be established on the issues relating to the housing market in traditional student housing areas.
- 1.5 As a consequence of those discussion the Scrutiny Board recommended that its successor Scrutiny Board in 2013/14 undertake an inquiry into student accommodation in the city.
- 1.6 Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) is asked to:
 - a) establish a Working Group comprising of all Members of the Board to undertake this inquiry.
 - b) consider whether it wishes to co-opt up to two non-voting co-opted members to this Working Group for the period of this inquiry.

2.0 Context of and Drivers for the Inquiry

- 2.1 The context of and drivers for the inquiry are:
 - Concern at the introduction of student accommodation into the Prime Office Quarter of the city.

- Desire to contribute to the issues underpinning the preparation of a new planning policy for student housing development in the city.
- Public examination of the Council's Core Strategy in the summer of 2013 whereby the 'soundness' of the plan policies will be considered by an independent inspector who will hear from objectors and from the Council.

3.0 The Scope of this Inquiry

3.1 The scope of this inquiry is to review and consider

- The report by re'new which has been commissioned by the Director of City Development to examine the demand and supply for student accommodation in Leeds. It has been asked to propose policies and management arrangements to better assess the future provision of student housing and the suitability of locations based on consultations it had carried out with key stakeholders including higher education institutions, UNIPOL and others active in the student market.
- The identification of other key stakeholders and others active in the housing market who have not been consulted by re'new and whether further information is required following analysis of re'new's report.
- The implications of a criteria based planning policy for student accommodation in the city with a move away from traditional student areas and an increase in planning applications for student development in locations which are considered unsuitable by adjoining occupiers and local residents.
- The identification and location of current planning applications and enquiries for student accommodation in the city and whether there is a need for the development of supplementary planning polices for these specific areas.

4.0 Comments of the relevant Directors and Executive Board Members

4.1 The relevant Directors and appropriate Executive Board Members have been requested to comment on these terms of reference and these will be reported to Members of the Scrutiny Board (Housing & Regeneration) Working Group at its first meeting.

5.0 Timetable for the Inquiry

5.1 The inquiry will take place over at least three sessions of the Working Group with a view to issuing a final report in October 2013.

5.2 The length of the Inquiry is subject to change.

6.0 Key Issues and Questions

6.1 There are a number of key issues and questions including:

- What is the demand and supply for student accommodation in the city including traditional student areas?
- What arrangements are in place to help regenerate traditional student areas where there is a decline in students wanting to live in those areas?
- Where is the current demand for student accommodation and is there an oversupply?
- What actions, if any, can the Council and our partners take to influence market forces that encourage the provision of student accommodation in areas that are not considered unsuitable by adjoining occupiers and local residents?
- The need to avoid duplication of effort on this issue following the announcement by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support at the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) on 30th April 2013 that a cross Council initiative would be established to consider issues relating to the housing market in traditional student housing areas.

7.0 Submission of Evidence

7.1 There will be at least three evidence gathering sessions and further meetings will be scheduled as required:

Session One – July 2013 Date and Time to be Confirmed

The purpose of this session is to:

- Approve the draft terms of reference for this inquiry following consideration by the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) in June 2013.
- Receive the report of the Director of City Development on Student Housing and the report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods on an analysis of current housing market trends within the Leeds 6 postcodes. These were discussed at the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) meeting on 30th April 2013 which requested this inquiry. A copy of the relevant minutes for that meeting will be attached to those reports.
- Consider the report by re'new on the demand and supply for student accommodation in Leeds.
- Hear the representative from re'new, Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer and Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager.

- Identify other key stakeholders and others active in the housing market who have not been consulted by re'new and whether further information is required following analysis of re'new's report.
- Confirm witnesses to attend the next meeting of the Working Group.

Session Two – August 2013 Date and Time to be Confirmed

The purpose of this session is to consider:

- Any information requested from the last session.
- A paper by the Chief Planning Officer on the implications of a criteria based planning policy for student accommodation in the city with a move away from traditional student areas and an increase in planning applications for student development in locations which are considered unsuitable by adjoining occupiers and local residents. The report to include the identification and location of current planning applications and enquiries for student accommodation in the city and whether there is a need for the development of supplementary planning polices for these specific areas.
- Discuss the key issues as appropriate.
- Hear from Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer and from other key stakeholders and others active in the housing market who have been invited to attend today's session having been identified at the last meeting of the working group.
- Confirm witnesses to attend the next meeting of the Working Group.
- Identify recommendations for inclusion in the Scrutiny Boards final report.

Session Three – September Date and Time to be Confirmed

The purpose of this session is to consider:

- Any information requested from the last session.
- Hear from witnesses identified at the last meeting of the Working Group.

Draft Final Report – Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) October 2013

- Consider the Board's draft final inquiry report and recommendations

8.0 Witnesses

- 8.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the inquiry:

- Chair of the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Partnership Board
- Officers from Environment & Neighbourhoods Directorate as necessary e.g. Megan Godsell on housing policy and Maggie Gjessing on housing delivery issues
- Officers from City Development Directorate as necessary e.g. Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer, Robin Coghlan on Planning Policy issues and David Feeney on overall Core Strategy
- Representatives from Children's Services 11-19
- Representative from re'new
- Representatives from Universities, Unipol and other student unions
- Representative from Homes and Community Agency
- Private sector representation

8.0 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 8.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 have been developed to ensure our legal duties are met under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to achieve it's ambition to be the best City in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.
- 8.2 Equality and diversity will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Inquiry and due regard will be given to equality through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.
- 8.3 The Scrutiny Board may engage and involve interested groups and individuals (both internal and external to the council) to inform recommendations.
- 8.4 Where an impact has been identified this will be reflected in the final inquiry report, post inquiry. Where a Scrutiny Board recommendation is agreed the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity, conducting impact assessments where it is deemed appropriate.

9.0 Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements

- 9.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored by Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration).
- 9.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for how the implementation of recommendations will be monitored.

10.0 Measures of success

- 10.1 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included

in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

10.2 Some initial measures of success are:

- Identification of actions that will help to contribute to the regeneration of traditional student areas where there is a decline in students wanting to live in those areas.
- Identification of policies and actions that will encourage the provision of student accommodation in areas that are not considered unsuitable by adjoining occupiers and local residents.