

Minutes of MS Teams Meeting held between RSUA Members and Head of Planning CC&GBC held 04 October 2023

Attendance:

Denise Dickson - Head of Planning - (DD)
Julie Sullivan– RTPI Northern Ireland Administrator - (JS)
Lucy Mulgrew – Policy & Public Affairs Officer RSUA – (LM)
Ciaran Fox – RSUA Chair - (CF)
Murray Bell - Local RSUA Rep – Bell Architects Ltd – (MB)
Clive Henning - (CH)
Gemma Jobling – JPE Planning (GJ)
Scott Kennedy – Bell Architects - (SK)
Graeme Montgomery– Montgomery Irwin Architects - (GM)
Eoighin Farren – Farren Architects - (EF)
Carol Gourley – C.McIlvar Ltd (CMI)
MW Architects – (MWA)
Jimmy McAdam – McAdam Stewart - (JMA)
Jordan Mitchell – Bell Architects – (JM)
Una Somerville – Somerville Consulting – (US)
Fergal Rainey – McGurk Architects – (FR)
Stefan Downey – (SD)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 DD opened the meeting, welcoming attendees to the meeting. She apologised in the time delay since the last meeting due to local elections and summer leave.
- 1.2 DD stated that the focus of today's meeting is on the PAD process to bring discussions to a conclusion and agree way forward.

2.0 Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- 2.1 DD tabled the minutes from the meeting held 15 February 2023 advising that when agreed these will be published on Planning section of Council's website for those who cannot attend to view what has been discussed and for open and transparency.

2.2 No issues of accuracy were raised by those in attendance and the minutes were accepted as agreed for publishing.

3.0 *Action Points from Previous Meetings:*

3.1 DD went through the action points from previous meetings and updated as follows:

- Renewal applications to be raised at the PPTO working group – DD advised that this Information Leaflet on renewal applications will be the next to be produced. Commencement of Development Leaflet has been agreed for publication - **ongoing**
- Await comments on draft PADs paper previously circulated – **ongoing** – on main agenda.
- Planning Portal – raise issue on training of agents at PPGB – DD - **complete**

4.0 *Planning Portal*

4.1 Discussions ensued following Planning Portal Action Point above. CF advised that Planning Portal training is no longer required; issue is more in relation to the functionality. He queried how DD considered the new Planning Portal was improving efficiency of the planning process.

4.2 DD advised that the new system recorded more information than the previous system and that efficiencies are being monitored in the administrative element of the process. She advised that the use of the Jotters app on site enables staff to record site description, character of area, constraints etc directly to their officer reports reducing the need to take hand written notes and then type into system when in the office. DD advised that the visibility of consultations issued will become available on the public register shortly, as requested by agents, and acknowledged the restrictions with online submissions advising that it is her understanding that work is to take place to allow the amendment of online submissions.

4.3 CF advised that he had a meeting with DfI in August and raised concerns that most issues raised by agents had not been resolved and are unlikely to be resolved. He advised that he is preparing an updated report and will circulate to DD for wider circulation to Heads of Planning for information.

4.4 GM queried if the outgoing consultations will be visible on the public register. DD advised that this issue is to be resolved shortly. GM raised concerns regarding requests from case officers for hard copies of plans due to issues with the measuring tool on the Portal. DD advised requests for hard copies of drawings for online applications should not be required and she will raise this with staff. If there is an issue with the measuring tool this needs to be resolved. MB confirmed that he too had received such requests mostly for A1 scale drawings.

5.0 *NIW Consultations:*

- 5.1 DD advised that guidance on NIW infrastructure capacity has not been uploaded onto the Planning section of Council's website as progress is ongoing on this issue with movement towards the imposition of a negative condition where pre-enquiry discussions have taken place with NIW and a solution identified.
- 5.2 US stated that the pre-enquiry can be costly and a slow process with NIW. She stated that consistency in the imposition of negative conditions to address NIW issues is required across all councils and asked that this be raised at the Consultee Forum.
- 5.3 CF referred to a recent PAC decision (2021/A0151) in relation to negative condition imposed by PAC in relation to NIW capacity issues and stated that this should be adopted by all councils going forward.
- 5.4 DD advised that CCGBC Planning Department do impose a negative condition allowing commencement of development where engagement has taken place with NIW under pre-enquiry discussions and a solution is available.
- 5.5 CF advised that he had met with NIW and reported that NIW are looking at adopting a de minimis approach on this issue. DD advised that this relates to the Standing Advice that she has been in discussions with NIW to reduce consultations on various minor applications. She advised that the aim was to have this Standing Advice finalised by end of September and she will query the timeframe for its circulation and implementation at the Consultee Forum to be held mid-October.
- 5.6 MB advised that agents are not alerted to updates to Council's Planning website. DD agreed to discuss with PR whether a short social media message would assist in alerting agents to new information/updates to the Planning website.

6.0 *New PADs Process:*

- 6.1 DD went through the updated draft Form, Information Leaflet and Fee and Service Schedule. She advised links are to be inserted and cross-reference of timeframes between Information Leaflet and Fee and Service Schedule requires further checking to ensure consistency.
- 6.2 GJ queried the submission of date and time by agent if consultees are to be invited to a meeting. DD advised that when agents are completing this field they need to factor in notification to consultees to ensure they have availability if requesting their attendance. DD advised that it is envisaged that consultees should only be requested to attend for major applications and that written advice would suffice for local medium scale PADs.

- 6.3 US queried who has the final call in relation to the attendance of consultees at a meeting? DD advised that Planning cannot compel a consultee to attend, can only request their attendance.
- 6.4 MB raised his concerns that only one proposal can be discussed at a meeting as there may be a number of iterations of the proposal that may be beneficial to discuss. DD advised that different iterations of design could be discussed but not different land uses.
- 6.5 CF queried what penalties would be imposed should the timeframes not be met – would the fee be returned? DD advised that the new process will be trialled over the next month if everyone is largely in agreement with the draft documents. This will test the timeframes and she will further consider the query of a penalty of perhaps 50% fee if timeframe not met.
- 6.6 GM queried if agents can request who they wish to deal with their PAD? DD advised that the PAD will be dealt with by a Planning Officer or Senior Officer within the team that the formal planning application will be processed. As much as possible, depending on caseloads and staff leave, there should be consistency between the officer dealing with the PAD and the formal application. She advised that the Planning Officer should discuss the proposal with their Senior Officer prior to a meeting being held where relevant and the letter of response to the PAD process will be signed by the authorised officer within that team to ensure consistency in advice between the PAD and formal application.
- 6.7 MB and CF stated that a PR exercise should be held when the new PAD process is launched. DD agreed this would be a good example of collaborative working and would discuss with Council’s PR.

7.0 *AORB*

- 7.1 CF requested that AORB be deferred until the next meeting given the time constraints of attendees. This was agreed.

7.0 *Date of Next Meeting:*

- 7.1 The date of the next meeting is set for 06 December 2023 in an RSUA location within the Council Borough.

ACTIONS

Issue	Action	Owner
Minutes	Publish minutes of 15 February 2022 meeting on Planning section of Council’s website	DD

Renewal Applications	Issue Information Leaflet on renewal process	DD
PADs process	Trial new draft process; any comments on draft process to be submitted via Julie Sullivan (RTPI) or Lucy Mulgrew (RSUA) for forwarding to DD.	DD, All
NI Water Pre-Enquiry Assessment	Raise issue of negative condition at Consultee Forum and HOP; Publish advise on NI Water Pre-Enquiry Assessment	DD
Social Media PR	Increase social media via Twitter to highlight additional information uploaded onto Planning website	DD