

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CITY CENTRE FORUM

MINUTES of the meeting held at LB31 - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 24 November 2014 from 15.40 - 16.32

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Edwards (Chair)
Jeff Allen (Vice Chair)
Councillor John Hartshorne
Councillor Anne Peach
Adam Tamsett
Councillor Dave Trimble
Councillor Jane Urquhart

Absent

Janine Bone
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Jon Collins
Councillor Georgina Culley
Councillor Chris Gibson
Simon Gray
Councillor Brian Grocock
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Nick McDonald
Councillor David Mellen
Inspector Shaun Ostle
Steve Pashley
Jennifer Spencer
Tom Waldron-Lynch

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Matt Gregory - Policy and Research Manager
Chris Henning - Director of Economic Development
Catherine Mayhew - City Centre Co-ordinator
Noel McMenamin - Governance Officer

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Chris Gibson
Councillor Brian Grocock
Councillor Nick McDonald
Councillor David Mellen

David Bishop
Janine Bone (Adam Tamsett substituting)
Jennifer Spencer

37 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

38 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

39 STUDENT HOUSING

Matt Gregory, Policy and Research Manager, gave a presentation on City Centre student housing, providing the following information:

- (a) student numbers in Nottingham have risen from under 40,000 in 2003/04 to a peak of 52,000 in 2011/12. Figures had since stabilised at 50,000, of whom 37,000 have term-time addresses within the Nottingham City boundary;
- (b) current planning policy promotes Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). PBSA bedspace numbers had doubled from 10,000 to 20,000 since 2003/04;
- (c) benefits to Nottingham of PBSA included providing a wider range and quality of accommodation, reducing demand for traditional multiple-occupancy student housing and so helping release those properties for family use, and driving many of the City Centre development projects during the economic downturn;
- (d) recent anecdotal evidence suggests that the PBSA market may be approaching saturation, carrying the risk of less popular schemes being converted to poor quality general housing. Despite this, there is, for now, continued market demand for PBSA;
- (e) it is estimated that 30% of the 4,000 City centre flats built for the general housing market are also occupied by students;
- (f) recent change to national legislation makes it easier to convert office space to residential use, but experience to date is that only poor quality office stock has been converted;
- (g) amendments to the merging Local Plan policy will ensure future PBSA schemes are responding to identified need, and are designed to a high standard.

During discussion, Committee members made the following points:

- (h) Mr Gregory explained that a comprehensive survey of PBSA provision, including rents information, was not yet completed. However, voids so far were a small percentage of total provision, suggesting saturation had not yet been reached;
- (i) Mr Gregory advised that it was premature to decide whether to halt new schemes to prevent oversupply until the PBSA survey was completed;
- (j) Forum members spoke favourably about the Graystacks student accommodation development on Castle Boulevard, which combined cutting edge design with a communal living experience favoured by students

themselves. Student accommodation developers should be signposted to the development as the benchmark for future PBSA development, although foreign students still appeared to prefer stand-alone units.

- (k) Forum members acknowledged that a balance between quality of finish, quantity and density, cost and future adaptability was difficult to achieve;
- (l) a Nottingham BID representative expressed the view that the City Centre needed more Grade A office space, that developers were given an easy ride through being able to get out of providing or upgrading office space, and warned that Nottingham was in danger of developing a reputation as a 'campus town' rather than as a regional 'retail' capital;
- (n) Mr Gregory expressed the view that there wasn't a City Centre threshold for student accommodation, either in absolute terms or as a percentage of total accommodation. Several Forum members believed that a threshold did exist, and Mr Gregory undertook to confirm;
- (o) Mr Gregory was not aware of recent developments regarding a proposal for a multi-storey student accommodation development on the Cowie's site, London Road;
- (p) several Forum members spoke of the need to avoid City Centre student accommodation oversupply so that areas didn't suffer disproportionately from out-of-term student absences.

RESOLVED to

- (1) note the presentation and discussion which followed;**
- (2) request Mr Gregory to**
 - (a) inform the Forum and relevant decision takers of the outcomes the ongoing student accommodation survey; and**
 - (b) confirm whether there was a threshold in place for City Centre student accommodation, and, if so, what it was.**