

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee  
held at the Town Hall, Peterborough on 25 January 2011

**Members Present:**

Councillors – North (Chairman), Hiller, Serluca, Thacker, Todd, Winslade, Ash, Lane and Harrington

**Officers Present:**

Simon Machen, Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering Services  
Nick Harding, Group Manager, Development Management  
Janet Maclennan, Senior Development Management Officer  
Carrie Denness, Principal Solicitor  
Gemma George, Senior Governance Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lowndes (Vice Chair) and Burton.

Councillor Winslade attended as substitute.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

4.2 Councillor Thacker declared that she knew Mr Drewnicki, a speaker on the item, but this would in no way affect her decision.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2010**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2010 were approved as a true and accurate record.

**4. Development Control and Enforcement Matters**

The Committee agreed to vary the speaking scheme for item 4.2, Land to rear of Cowgate / King Street, Queensgate Shopping Centre. There were numerous objectors in attendance who had registered to speak therefore the scheme was varied to allow up to 10 minutes for the objectors and 10 minutes for the applicant.

- 4.1 10/01345/FUL – Partial demolition and conversion of existing main building to form 4 dwellings (2x1 bed and 2x2 bed flats), full demolition of existing out buildings and construction of 21 dwellings (6x2 bed houses, 2x3 bed houses, 1x4 bed house and 12x2 bed flats) together with access, car parking and landscaping, and;  
10/01346/CON – Partial demolition and conversion of existing main building to form 4 dwellings; full demolition of existing out buildings and construction of 21 dwellings**

The Committee was advised that the item had been withdrawn from the agenda and would be considered at a forthcoming meeting.

**4.2 10/01426/FUL – Extension to provide additional retail floor space, development of new service corridor and lift core in basement service yard, construction of new mansard roofs and elevation works to King Street and Queen Street elevations – Land to the rear of Cowgate / King Street, Queensgate Shopping Centre, Westgate, Peterborough**

Planning permission was sought for an extension to the Queensgate Shopping Centre. This would provide new floor space at the upper ground floor and first floor levels (over the existing service road) and the re-configuration of existing floor space. The development would also comprise a new service corridor and new lift shaft into the existing basement service yard. The proposal also included the erection of a new mansard roof which would be situated over the proposed extension and existing flat roof to help form additional retail floor space. A new mansard roof was also proposed over the existing management suite to help form ancillary office accommodation. The provision of new floor space along with the re-configuration of existing floor space would create one large unit which would be accessible from the existing malls and between floors. A smaller unit would be provided over two floors. Some changes were proposed to the elevations, in King Street this included the replacement of the Argos 'Customer Collection Point' with a shop front and in Queen Street the glazing above the existing entrance to Argos from Queen Street was to be removed and infilled with brick to match existing. The existing doorway to Argos from Queen Street, which currently provided a public access into the shop unit, would be replaced with a new shop window

The application site was located on the southern edge of the Queensgate Shopping Centre in the heart of Peterborough City Centre. The rear of the properties which fronted onto Cowgate were located immediately to the south of the site and located to the west was a service road leading to the roundabout at its junction with Bourges Boulevard. The application site was comprised of existing retail units in the shopping centre. The site was within the central retail area and just north of the City Centre Conservation Area.

The Planning Officer addressed the Committee and gave an overview of the proposal. Members were advised that the main issues for consideration were the policy context and the principle of development, the design and visual amenity, whether the proposal would impact on the historic environment, whether the proposal would enhance the public realms of the city centre, highways implications and S106 contributions. The planning recommendation was one of approval.

Members were advised that with regards to the proposed internal changes to the building in King Street, no planning consent was required. There had been a number of objections received against the proposal which stated that there was the opportunity for greater permeability between the Queensgate Shopping Centre and Cowgate. This could be achieved by including an additional entrance point between the Centre and King Street. However, because planning consent was not required for the internal changes at ground floor level it would be unreasonable for the authority to refuse planning consent because an additional entrance door was not to be created.

Members were further advised that the additional new build, which would provide 1500 square metres of additional floor space, and the internal changes to the existing floor space, would improve the range of scope of retail offer in the city.

In summary, the Planning Officer stated that the principle of development was in line with local and national planning policy and guidance. The scale and design of the extensions to the development were in keeping with the current appearance of

the Queensgate Centre and would not detract from views of the Cathedral or have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area. The extension would not reduce the existing level of permeability and accessibility between the Queensgate Centre and the surrounding area and the site was accessible by a range of means of transport. The development proposal had been supported by a Transport Statement and a Travel Plan and there was no indication that the development proposal would result in any adverse highway implications. During the construction phase there would inevitably be some disruption, but this was unavoidable, as with any development in the city centre. Members were informed that a Construction Management Plan had been conditioned.

Members' attention was drawn to additional information contained within the update report. It was highlighted that following re-consultation for revised plans which showed minor amendments, two further letters of objection had been received. Each of these letters advised that original objections submitted against the proposal still stood.

Mr Mark Mann, an objector and Planning Consultant from Savills, acting on behalf of GE Capital Real Estate, addressed the Committee. In summary the concerns highlighted to the Committee included:

- GE Capital Real Estate owned a number of properties in Cowgate and King Street and whilst the development was generally supported, there were concerns with regards to the lost opportunity to enhance this part of the city
- Policy PPS4 'Planning and Sustainable Economic Growth' outlined the Governments Policy towards economic growth. It stated that 'its overarching objective was sustainable economic growth' and that priority should be given to regeneration
- In Policy EC10, the guidance advised that authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications, and applications that secured sustainable economic growth should be treated favourably
- An opportunity to improve the character and quality of the area had not been taken
- It was a missed opportunity with regards to the revitalisation of Cowgate
- Policy CS14 in the emerging Core Strategy encouraged retail development in the city centre on the basis that 'it would enhance the vitality and viability of the city centre as a whole', there were doubts whether this proposal would do so in this instance
- Policy CS15 promoted improvements in the public realm, with particular focus on the pedestrian environment. This proposal was not consistent with this Policy
- The City Centre Action Area Plan along with the Peterborough City Centre Public Realm Strategy set out a number of key principles that needed to be applied to new developments including, 'a finer grain of street and spaces would be created in new developments to add vibrancy and to reflect the city's medieval street pattern'. The historic grain of this part of the city had been ignored with the building of the Queensgate Centre
- King Street originally linked Cowgate to Westgate, and the provision of an enhanced access into Queensgate from King Street would help to re-address this loss
- It would be possible to provide a new entrance into King Street that would not involve having to go directly through a unit. Details of stairs and lifts had yet to be outlined and a new access could be provided from King Street directly into the main atrium of the Queensgate Centre. This would alleviate concerns which had been highlighted by the applicant with regards to security in the larger unit if an entrance was provided

Mr Tony Barker, an objector from Barker Storey Matthews, representing the Cowgate Traders Association, addressed the Committee and responded to questions from Members. In summary the concerns highlighted to the Committee included:

- The Cowgate Traders Association welcomed the additional floor space in the city centre
- The existing door from Argos onto Queen Street was to be removed and replaced with a shop front. This would mean that the only access to the store would be from the Queensgate Centre itself
- The existing access, although only a customer collect access, from Argos was to be removed
- When the Argos store had first opened, nearly 20 years ago, it had been conditioned that there would be an entrance directly onto King Street. This had been removed by a subsequent application
- By removing a direct access from the existing Argos store onto Queen Street and the new St John's Square, there would be an adverse impact on traders located in Exchange Street, Queen Street, Church Street, Cowgate and King Street
- By removing the doors, the scheme would reduce the permeability
- Putting a new entrance point into King Street would be a great opportunity for the local authority to ensure the regeneration of that part of the city centre. There were, at that point in time, a number of vacant shop units in Cowgate
- There was a concern around the window displays, as the drawings only highlighted metal shutters. True window displays were needed as blank windows would do nothing for retail in the area

Mr John Drewnicki, an objector and Chairman of the Cowgate Traders Association, addressed the Committee and responded to questions from Members. In summary the concerns highlighted to the Committee included:

- Approximately 30 years ago, the Council had made a fundamental error in judgement in making the current Queen Street mall the back doors to an enlarged C&A store
- Shop windows should not be blanked out with security shutters, or just left completely blank. This would do nothing for the area and would not be conducive to good local trading
- The Cowgate Traders welcomed a larger retailer to set up in Peterborough, but consideration should be given to all planning matters especially around allowing unrestricted access to all areas, thus ensuring full integration and increased footfall in all areas
- It was felt that there had been no consideration for the traders outside of Queensgate

Mr Neil Crawford, a Senior Project Manager from Hammerson, representing the applicant, addressed the Committee and responded to questions from Members. In summary the issues highlighted to the Committee included:

- The investment was extremely important for the city centre as a whole. It represented a £13 million pound investment which would create 100 jobs and help to attract a new major retailer to the city centre
- More shoppers were needed in the city centre in order to compete with Cambridge, Leicester and other cities
- This development would meet the need for modern retailer accommodation in the city centre

- This development would increase the number of shoppers and would increase the dwell times of those already visiting. This would benefit the whole of the city by improving its competitiveness
- The opportunity did not exist to create a public access as part of the proposals. The constraints faced with regards to implementing an access were outlined in detail in the committee report
- There was no public access from King Street at the present time and the situation would not change as a result of the proposal
- The entrance to Argos, which was to be made into a shop front, was located about 5 metres away from the mall entrance onto Queen Street. It was therefore highlighted that it was unlikely to have a negative impact on the shoppers footfall
- The new floor space being promoted in the area would mean that footfall passing through the mall entrance and along Cowgate was likely to increase significantly to the benefit of all
- It was believed that the proposal would bring further momentum to the revitalisation of the city centre following the works carried out in Cathedral Square

The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering Services addressed the Committee and stated that sympathy was extended to the traders situated along Cowgate and there were discussions currently being held in order to identify what could be done to assist them in general terms, outside the bounds of the current planning application. However, with regards to the current application, if it was refused on the grounds of there not being an entrance into King Street where there wasn't one currently, this would potentially leave the decision open for judicial review.

The Planning Officer addressed the Committee in response to questions raised by Members. It was highlighted, that in the Planning Officer's opinion, the door to Argos had not previously been closed off due to the nature of Argos' operation in that it did not have stock displayed where it would be easy for it to be stolen. Members were also advised that if they were minded to approve the application, an additional condition could be imposed requiring the new shop fronts to have active window displays in them.

Following debate, Members commented that, although it could be perceived as a missed opportunity, an additional access could not be insisted upon to resolve a mistake made many years ago. Going forward, sympathetic retail development was to be encouraged, particularly in the city centre and if Peterborough was to grow during these challenging times this proposal should be welcomed.

Following further debate, a motion was put forward and seconded to approve the application, with an additional condition to be added requiring the new shop fronts to have active window displays in them. The motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:** (Unanimously) to approve the application, as per officer recommendation subject to:

1. The conditions numbered C1 to C7 as detailed in the committee report
2. The imposition of an additional condition requesting that the new shop fronts have active window displays in them

**Reasons for the decision:**

Subject to the imposition of the conditions, the proposal was acceptable having been assessed in the light of all material considerations, including weighting against relevant policies of the development plan and specifically:

- the principle of additional retail floor space within the city centre was supported. The development would add to the viability and vitality of the central retail area and the city centre as a whole;
- the scale and design of the extension would be in keeping with the Queensgate Centre and would not detract from views of the cathedral and would leave the character and appearance of the Conservation Area unharmed;
- the extension would not reduce the existing accessibility and connectivity to surrounding city centre locations; and
- the site was accessible by a choice of means of transport and the proposal was supported by a transport statement and travel plan and would not result in any adverse highway implications.

Hence the proposal was in accordance with policies CBE2, CBE3, CC1, CC15, CC17, DA1, DA2, DA7, DA19 and T1 of the Adopted Peterborough Local Plan (First Replacement) 2005 and PPS1, PPS4 and PPS5.

13.30 – 14.40  
Chairman