

Minutes of MS Teams Meeting held between RSUA Members and Head of Planning CC&GBC held 08 November 2022

Attendance:

Denise Dickson - Head of Planning - (DD)
Julie Sullivan– RTPI Northern Ireland Administrator - (JS)
Lucy Mulgrew – Policy & Public Affairs Officer RSUA – (LM)
Murray Bell - Local RSUA Rep – Bell Architects Ltd – (MB)
Clive Henning - (CH)
Damien McLaughlin – HERE Architects – (DML)
Gemma Jobling – JPE Planning (GJ)
Scott Kennedy – Bell Architects - (SK)
Anita Doyle – Des Ewing Architects (AD)
Nathan Armstrong – Nathan Armstrong Architect - (NA)
Brian McKervey – DfC HED – (BMK)
Rory Rankin – McAdam Design – (RR)
Graeme Montgomery– Montgomery Irwin Architects - (GM)
Judith Hamilton – (JH)
Kieran McCambridge - (KMC)
Una Somerville – Somerville Consulting – (US)
Eoighin Farren – Farren Architects - (EF)
Jordan Mitchell – Bell Architects – (JNM)
Edelle Henry – McGurk Architects – (EH)
Paul McAllister – Paul McAllister Architects - (PMA)
Fergal Rainey – McGurk Architects – (FR)
Carol Gourley – C.McIlvar Ltd
Michael Martin – Like Architects – (MM)
Joanne Hassan – Western Trust HSCNI – (JH)
Irwin McNeill – Rapport Architects – (IMN)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 DD opened the meeting, welcoming attendees to the quarterly meeting. She acknowledged the large attendance and commented on the benefits of holding the meeting on-line.
- 1.2 Lucy Mulgrew introduced herself to the meeting. She highlighted a meeting held between RSUA and Dfl Chief Planner Angus Kerr in relation to permitted development rights and non-material changes. She advised that Dfl have stated that the issue of second homes is a matter for Council and not Dfl.
- 1.3 DD advised the meeting that she was disappointed to hear those comments from Dfl and referred to legislative changes made in Scotland, England and Wales. She informed the group that she had brought a report through the Planning Committee and it was agreed that she write to Dfl Chief Planner on the issue of second homes and short-term lets requesting changes to legislation similar to Scotland and Wales. DD stated that Dfl has a role to play in terms of legislative changes and council will also address the issue through the local policies plan. MB suggested that the RSUA should also write to Dfl on this issue. DD agreed to forward a copy of the letter sent to the Dfl Chief Planner and the accompanying legislation from Scotland and Wales to LM.

2.0 Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- 2.1 DD tabled the minutes from the meeting held 15 June 2022 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 MB advised that he had not had the opportunity to review the minutes. DD agreed to await receipt of further comment on the minutes before publishing on the Planning section of Council's website.

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 awaiting date for next meeting. On receipt an Information Leaflet on NMCs will be produced - **ongoing**
 - Issue leaflet on NMC – DD - **complete**
 - Review CLUD leaflet for inaccurate information – DD reviewed and issue relates to the fee acknowledgement letter which refers to ability to view online. This letter is the standard template used by all Councils and a request has been submitted to have this corrected – **complete**

- RSUA to explore training for planning officers on NZEB – CF - LM advised training video available and will forward for Planning staff - **ongoing**
- Discuss with Belfast City Council approach to Airbnb – DD advised BCC consider on a case-by-case basis – **complete**
- Correspond with new DfI Minister/Chief Planner on amending legislation/licencing of Airbnb – DD advised report brought to Planning Committee and letter issued to DfI Chief Planner seeking changes to legislation – **complete**
- Consider timeframe for DfI to review PAD process – DD advised that she had considered this and that the timeframe for DfI is likely to be in the longer term. She therefore advised that she would proceed to review the PAD process – **complete**. CF stated that it is important to have a timeframe for moving ahead with the review of the PAD process. DD agreed to issue a draft paper to RSUA and RTPI for circulation to attendees prior to the next meeting for input – **complete**
- Circulate Duff v CCGBC judgement -CF **complete**
- Seek agreement from DAERA to publish monthly consultation statistics on Planning website – DD DAERA declined request advising for internal management purposes only – **complete**

4.0 *New PADs Process*

- 4.1 DD advised that 3 documents have been circulated – an Information Leaflet, PAD form, and Fee and Service Schedule. She stated that these documents are in their very initial draft stages and is seeking feedback to ensure that the drafts are heading in the direction of travel in terms of the review of the process.
- 4.2 US stated that the existing process is a mixed experience and can become protracted. MB stated that they haven't had time to view the documents due to late circulation. DD asked attendees to provide comments through LM and JS. She stated that the draft process will be discussed with senior planning officers and statutory consultees and will be brought back to this meeting prior to final process being presented to Planning Committee. She stated that this review process must be a joint-up approach to ensure that it works for agents as well as Planning Officers.

5.0 *New NI Planning Portal:*

- 5.1 DD advised that the new Planning Portal is aimed to be launched on 05 December 2022. She advised that the current system will be closed on 18-20 November to allow transfer of data to the new Portal. The transition period will be for 2 weeks during which time members of the public will be able to have a read only access to the current Portal but will be unable to submit online representations. Representations can continue to be submitted via email or hard copy format during this time. DD advised that Planning Officers will be

unable to issue neighbour notifications, consultations or decisions during the transition period.

- 5.2 DD stated that 2 newsletters have issued from Dfl and a third will issue on 14 November. These have also been issued by Council to all agents who have submitted an application to CCGBC in the last 2 years and are available to view on the website.
- 5.3 DD reminded attendees that even though they may have registered on the current Planning Portal, they will be required to register again on the new Portal when it is live. She stated that Dfl had rolled out training to some agents and that there will be a video demo of how to submit an application online – scheduled for release on 14 November. DD advised that she will also see if these videos can be uploaded onto the Planning section of Council’s website for ease of access. She stated that if there are any issues to please contact the Planning Office and they will try to assist.
- 5.4 MB advised that the training had been rolled out only to a small number of architects and there had been issues that resulted in the training being cut short. He was not aware of a date for reconvening the training. DD agreed to raise this issue at the forthcoming PPGB meeting.
- 5.5 PMA stated that the new system is going to save agents money in printing plans by enabling applications to be submitted online. DD advised that the drive is to move to electronic records with no hard copy files and the register will be electronic. She stated that communication between the case officer and agents will also be stored on the new system rather than in hard copy files so the process will have greater open and transparency.

6.0 AORB:

Dfl Consultations

- 6.1 DD referred to two recent consultations issued by Dfl
- Review of permitted development rights which covers air, ground and water source heat pumps and reverse vending machines – launched 28 October 2022 with closing date of 23 December 2022.
 - Consultation to improve quality of planning applications – launched 07 November with closing date 06 January 2023
- 6.2 DD stated that the consultation to improve quality of planning applications related to the validation checklist but that the proposal is to enable Councils to develop their own checklist. She stated in her opinion it would be better if the validation checklist was developed by Dfl and applied to all councils as she considered that if each council develops their own this would be more difficult for agents in ensuring they are submitting the correct information subject to the nuances of each council.

6.3 PMA agreed that more standardisation is required across councils to assist in an efficient process for agents. LM stated that she could see the benefits of both sides and agreed efficiency is the priority. US stated that consistency is key.

Progress of older applications

6.4 MB referred to comments he had received regarding the slow progress of applications in the system outside of those that are meeting the statutory target.

6.5 DD referred to the Dfl published statistics for Q1 of 2022/23 highlighting the excellent performance by CCGBC on the processing of major planning applications. She advised that performance on processing local applications continues to improve also. However, in light of discussions at the last meeting on 15 June, Planning staff have made a concentrated effort in October to issue as many of the older applications as possible during that month. She highlighted that this will have a negative impact on performance on the processing of local applications during that month but stated that due to comments received that focus for that month was on the issuing of these applications. DD advised that Planning staff will review where they are again with applications in November and continue to issue applications prior to closing of current system on 18 November.

6.6 DD concluded by stating that we need to work together to improve the planning system as not one person holds all the answers but collectively we can work together to improve the system for both agents and their clients and Planning staff.

7.0 Date of Next Meeting:

7.1 The date of the next meeting is set for 15 February 2023.

ACTIONS

Issue	Action	Owner
Minutes	Minutes of 15 June 2022 - comments to be sent through prior to publication	All
	Publish minutes of meetings on Planning section of Council's website	DD
Renewal Applications	Leaflet on renewal process/raise inconsistencies in	DD

	approaches at Principals Working Group	
Nzeb	RSUA to forward training video on Nzeb to DD	LM
Airbnb/2 nd homes	Forward letter to Dfl re: second homes and short term lets to LM	DD
PADs process	Submit comments to JS and LM	All
	DD to consider and bring further draft back to next meeting	DD
New Portal training	Raise issue of training of agents at next PPGB meeting	DD