REPORT OF: Development Manager

TO: Planning Committee - Wednesday, 12 February 2020

(Author: Lucy Buttery, Principal Planning Officer)

SUBJECT: Review of Implemented Planning Decisions

PURPOSE: To report on the conclusions of the Performance Monitoring Panel and to invite the Committee to submit any comments back to the Panel.

RECOMMENDATION:

1) That the Planning Committee considers the Performance Monitoring Panel’s conclusions and to agree any comments Members may wish to report back to the Panel.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Local Government Association’s Probity in Planning guide highlights that it is good practice for councillors to visit a sample of implemented planning permissions to assess the quality of the decisions and the development. It is suggested that this should improve the quality and consistency of decision-making, strengthen public confidence in the planning system, and can help with reviews of planning policy.

1.2 At South Holland District Council, this review is undertaken by the Performance Monitoring Panel. Part 3, Section D (Delegations to Committees) of the Constitution states that the Performance Monitoring Panel shall ‘revisit a number of implemented planning decisions’.

1.3 The Panel had previously carried out a tour of the District on 8th November 2016.

2.0 THE TOUR

2.1 The latest tour took place on 5th September 2019 with morning and afternoon sessions taking in different areas of the district. Eight Members took part and were present for the whole day.

2.2 A selection of eight residential developments were visited after prior discussion with the Chairman of the Panel. The sites chosen comprised both small and large-scale schemes with some under construction and some now complete.

2.3 For the day, Members were provided with an electronic information pack outlining the background and key issues relating to each site as well as a block plan of the site. Paper copies of this pack were provided where required. Verbal assistance was given on site where necessary and Officers noted Members’ feedback for each site.

2.4 A debriefing was held after the tour to review the day and draw conclusions.
3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND AGREED ACTIONS

3.1 The main conclusions drawn from the exercise were that the sites visited - although all major residential schemes - varied in terms of their quality. As well as good quality schemes, it was considered that there were instances of development being let down by a lack of attention to detail and a lack of forethought. There were recurring themes throughout the day, such as the siting and standard of refuse collection points and the positioning of meter boxes.

3.2 It was noted that schemes that were of concern at the planning application stage had actually turned out better than expected once completed on the ground.

3.3 At the Performance Monitoring Panel on 12th November, Members discussed the report, and the following issues arose:
   - Those members that had attended agreed that the day had been useful and well organised, and that it was helpful to actually visit and see the sites, and to see the challenges that were faced.
   - It was agreed that the comments detailed in Appendix A were too much of a precis of comments made by members. More comments on each of the sites were required and members discussed this. Also, the précising of some of the comments did not make it clear whether they were beneficial or detrimental and required more explanation.
   - It was suggested that some commercial developments could be visited as part of the next review.
   - It was queried whether the comments from the tour could be incorporated into the work of the Planning Design Task Group once formed.
   - A camera should be taken on future tours to photograph any issues identified for later reference and for the benefit of members who couldn’t attend. Additionally, better quality photographs should be taken of sites when an application is presented to Planning Committee.
   - A 3D Computer Aided Design of what a building would look like would be useful in the future consideration of applications.
   - Care should be taken in the future to avoid scenarios where the maintenance of drain easements would be problematic.
   - A more general comment on infill plots was made in respect of some plots where larger properties are being built on plots that are too small for them.

3.4 A full account of comments made in respect of the sites visited can be found in Appendix A.

3.5 The Performance Monitoring Panel agreed:
   a) That the conclusions from the tour be reported to the Planning Committee and that the report include fuller comments on the sites visited; and
   b) That the Review of Implemented Planning Decisions should be undertaken on an annual basis in the future.

Background papers:- None.

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Appendices attached to this report:
Appendix A Summary of Comments from Tour (Updated January 2020)