

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(VI) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**Report by Councillor Naomi Twedde, Design Advocate**

Madam Mayor, Members of the Council

Design is an important part of protecting and enhancing our beautiful city. The City of Lincoln Council Planning Department have been working hard to retain the uniqueness of Lincoln, but also to help Lincoln to grow and thrive as a city. The Planning Department are passionate about design, and work with developers to get the best design levels possible on all applications. In order to get the best levels of design, planning officers negotiate with developers with real effort focusing on improving the quality of both design and the materials used.

Negotiations on design are one aspect of the planning application process and officers are tasked with taking all planning issues into account when managing the built environment. This often means that a level of compromise is required, but planning officers strive to achieve the best design possible on each application. Some examples of schemes where excellent design standards have been achieved include: the residential development at Chad Varah House on Wordsworth Street, the student accommodation currently under construction at St. Marks, the student scheme on the corner of Beaumont Fee and Park Street and the University of Lincoln's Medical School. The Cornhill and Sincil Street development also continues to be a focus for officer's time, and I think this is a very good example of the impact good design can have on the built environment. Although these schemes are quite different in terms of their design approach, they are all of a high quality and respond very well to their context.

One of my priorities as the Design Advocate and as Chair of the Planning Committee is to improve engagement with local Councillors on large or potentially contentious planning applications. I decided that a Design Forum would be an excellent way of consulting with local Councillors on applications of note within their Wards. The Design Forum consists of the Assistant Director of Planning, the Planning Officer for the application, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee and the local Councillors for the ward in which the application is proposed. Where it was close to the boundary of two Wards, Councillors would be invited from both Wards. The rationale behind this idea was to improve engagement with the public via the ward Councillors, to listen to the views of local Councillors before a decision was made and to ensure we utilised the vast local knowledge that local Councillors have of their Ward and residents.

We planned to formally launch this in May 2020, however this wasn't possible due to the increased demands during the Covid 19 pandemic. This will now be formally launched in May 2021, following the planning training that takes place each year. Despite not being in a position to formally launch the scheme, we have been able to trial the Design Forums on a few larger, or potentially contentious schemes in 2020.

We held a design forum with Carholme Councillors for the application on the former Jack Machin motorcycle garage site at 128 Carholme Road, and with Minster and Castle Ward Councillors for the Bishop Grosseteste student accommodation proposal on Riseholme Road, just to name a couple. I think the forums held so far have been really valuable and have made a positive contribution to the development management process.

The Lincoln Design Awards have been extremely successful and provide an excellent way of celebrating good design for new developments in Lincoln. They also provide an opportunity to showcase exemplar schemes in the City and highlight what is possible in terms of sensitive and contextual design solutions that can sensitively respond to Lincoln's historic townscape. We were due to hold the Lincoln Design Awards in 2021, but unfortunately, we have had to postpone these until 2022 due to the Covid 19 pandemic and associated restrictions. I look forward to holding these next year and celebrating some of the brilliant developments that have taken place in the City since the last Design Awards.

I also want to explore the role of design and how this can help achieve our net zero carbon targets, I think that good design can play a pivotal role in this. One of the ways this might be facilitated, could be to look at examples of best practice and case studies where this is being pioneered elsewhere.

We have seen many challenges over the past year; however, our planning officers have continued to champion excellent design in our beautiful City, and I am confident this will continue in the future. As Design Advocate, I am committed to protecting Lincoln's historic townscape and its associated urban grain. I believe that the best way to achieve this is to promote contextual design that complements the existing urban fabric of the City's long architectural heritage. It is essential that we are able to suitably balance the historic fabric of Lincoln with the City's natural growth, whilst also ensuring that developments in the City respond in a way that reflects the City as it is today.

I would like to finish by thanking officers in the Planning Department for all of their excellent work and support over the past year.

Councillor Naomi Tweddle
Design Advocate