



Report sponsor: Verna Bayliss, Acting Director
of Planning and Transportation
Report author: Andrew Waterhouse, Spatial
Planning Group Manager

Procurement of consultants to undertake a Tall Buildings Strategy

Purpose

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement to commission consultants to prepare a 'Tall Buildings Strategy' for the city centre. This will eventually replace the existing Tall Buildings Strategy prepared in 2008 and build upon work recently commissioned from consultants to develop a robust evidence base. This emerging work includes an assessment of the potential heritage implications of tall buildings, including an assessment of the city centre's skyline where important views have been identified. In undertaking this work, it has become apparent that it needs to evolve to consider a range of other planning and urban design considerations into a comprehensive Tall Buildings Strategy.
- 1.2 This is a sensitive issue, giving rise to strongly held and differing opinions on the future role of tall buildings in the city. It will therefore be important to ensure that the work is undertaken by a specialist in the field with an established track record of similar projects. It will also be important to ensure that it builds in effective opportunities for consultation and stakeholder engagement and that the consultant is seen not just as an expert in the field, but also as an independent voice in this debate.
- 1.3 A detailed brief for this work, addressing the issues identified in paragraph 4.7, is being drawn up. Agreement is being sought for the Acting Director of Planning and Transportation, subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Public Protection, to finalise this brief as part of the procurement process.
- 1.4 It is hoped to procure the consultants in April this year and for a draft report to be available in the summer. As part of this work, it is envisaged that consultation with stakeholders, including at least one workshop, will take place in late May or early June.
- 1.5 The cost of the work will be in the region of £35,000 to £40,000. The work will be funded equally between the Local Plan Reserve, Development Control and Regeneration Projects. Delegated approval is being sought to transfer from the Local Plan Reserve and, if not granted, will be underwritten by the Planning Service.

Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the commissioning of a 'Tall Buildings Strategy'.
- 2.2 To agree to the Acting Director of Planning and Transportation, subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Public Protection, to draw up a detailed brief based on the principles set out in paragraph 4.7.

Reasons

- 3.1 To agree that the project is progressed to the next stage.
- 3.2 To agree the tender documentation to be finalised.

Supporting information

- 4.1 Derby has a tradition of low rise buildings in the city centre and beyond. However, this is changing, especially in certain locations in and around the city centre where new high rise buildings have either been built over the last few years or have been granted planning permission. These include the Jury's Inn hotel on St Alkmund's Way completed in 2009, student accommodation on Agard Street and Cathedral Road and developments around Derby Riverside, including the recent decision of Planning Control Committee to be minded to approve a residential scheme of up to 17 storeys on Phoenix Street.
- 4.2 These schemes are unlikely to be isolated developments, but rather part of a growing trend of higher densities, including building upwards as viability continues to be a challenge on brownfield sites and greenfield land becomes more scarce. It is also recognised that Derby needs to attract more business and other uses into the city centre to ensure that it remains competitive and vibrant. There is a clear need for more modern, quality office floor space and a greater diversification of uses to help counter the decline of traditional city centre activities. City centre living offers an opportunity not just to diversify the local economy, but also to bring people, money and vibrancy into the area. At the same time, there is a need to ensure that Derby's high quality historic environment in parts of the city centre and elsewhere, including the World Heritage Site, are properly respected and, where appropriate, protected.
- 4.3 The recently revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that there should be a 'significant uplift' in the average density of residential development in town and city centres and other areas well served by public transport, unless there are 'strong reasons' why this would be inappropriate. This does not in itself have to mean tall buildings, but these will inevitably be part of the response to national policy, particularly in city centres.

- 4.4 If this is to be the case, and current pressures for high density developments and tall buildings continue, there is a need for a clear strategy enshrined in planning policy to ensure that they are located in appropriate locations, respect their surroundings and demonstrate high quality design. Otherwise there is a danger of unplanned and unsympathetic development that does not respect the historic environment and does not create the high quality environment we need to attract businesses into Derby. Our intention to address this issue was set out in the consultation material associated with the 'Issues and Options' Local Plan Part 2 consultation in January 2018. Indeed, some work of this nature has already been undertaken.
- 4.5 In 2008, the Council in conjunction with Derby Cityscape, commissioned consultants to develop a 'Tall Buildings Strategy' to inform the implementation of the Derby Cityscape City Centre Masterplan. The Tall Buildings Strategy produced in 2008 has provided useful evidence to inform decision making, especially the accompanying 3D model. However, it has not been formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) or fully incorporated into Council policy, limiting the weight it can be given in decision making. A recent review of the 2008 work has identified a number of weaknesses in the study, largely due to its age and consequential changes in context.
- 4.6 More recently, the Council (in conjunction with Historic England) and partly in response to the recent raft of tall building proposals, has commissioned consultants to start building up an evidence base to underpin a future strategy and local plan policy. This work includes an assessment of the potential heritage implications of tall buildings, has assessed the city centre's skyline and identifies important views to and from it. Having almost completed this work, it has become apparent that using it to help develop a tall buildings strategy is essential to properly assessing the role of and impacts of tall buildings, including their role in economic regeneration, making the best use of land and supporting local plan policy. This work will:
- enable the planning service to robustly evaluate the role tall buildings can play in considering the City's overall housing and employment land supply.
 - robustly assess the merits of planning applications for tall buildings across the city.
 - support the development of a 'sound' Local Plan Part 2 policy.
 - inform our approach to Council led regeneration projects.
 - provide the development industry with certainty about the Council's approach to the development of tall buildings.

4.7 Given the specialist nature and sensitivity of this issue, with often differing opinions on the future role of tall buildings in the city, it will be important to ensure that it is undertaken by a specialist in the field with an established track record of similar projects. It will also be important to ensure that this work builds in effective consultation and stakeholder engagement and that the consultant is seen not just as an expert in the field but also as an independent voice in this debate. It is therefore proposed to appoint consultants with acknowledged expertise. Quotes will be sought from three different consultants, who will be expected to provide:

- An update to the policy and contextual review.
- Urban design analysis of the city centre, taking account of structure, morphology, distribution of activities, townscape character, transport accessibility, existing building heights, topography and heritage assets.
- A review of the views analysis already completed and completion of any further heritage analysis, including discussion of city image.
- Detailed assessment of areas of known or future pressures to understand existing character, opportunities and the scope and role that tall buildings could play in future development. This should include use of the Council's 3D model to test different heights and understand impacts on heritage context, views and townscape.
- Identify preferred locations for tall buildings and establish the principles of siting, design and public realm within these, including opportunities for comprehensive master planning areas for growth.
- Identify areas of greatest sensitivity and constraint for tall buildings.
- Define application and design scrutiny requirements for tall building proposals.
- Make recommendations for potential policy approaches to be included in the Local Plan Part 2.
- Facilitate effective engagement with all relevant stakeholders to understand local values, address controversial issues and to build capacity and consensus.

4.8 A detailed brief for this work, addressing the issues identified in paragraph 4.7, is being drawn up and will be agreed by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Public Protection and the Acting Director of Planning and Transportation.

Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 A range of internal and external stakeholders will be consulted on the emerging strategy. The work itself will include consultation workshops to ensure a wide range of views are sought and taken into account.

Other options

6.1 It was considered whether to undertake this work in-house, but the work requires a specialist with expertise in this field. An external consultant will also be seen by some stakeholders as more impartial than officers.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 The cost of the work will be in the region of £35,000 to £40,000. The work will be funded equally between the Local Plan Reserve, Development Control and Regeneration Projects. Delegated approval is separately being sought to transfer from the Local Plan Reserve but, if not granted, will be underwritten by the Planning Service.

Legal implications

- 8.1 The strategy will form non statutory guidance and be used to inform statutory planning policy through the Local Plan Part 2.
- 8.2 The Council's normal procurement procedures will be adhered to.

Other significant implications

- 9.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Stephen Teasdale	23 rd January 2019
Finance	Amanda Fletcher	28 th February 2019
Service Director(s)	Verna Bayliss	23rd January 2019
Report sponsor	Verna Bayliss	23rd January 2019
Other(s)		

Background papers:

List of appendices: