

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery	
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Stephen Kelly, Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development	

## Changes to the Design Review Service in Greater Cambridge

### Executive Summary

1.1 Design Review advice is an important and valued, if discretionary, service and it is recognised as such in the National Planning Policy Framework. Design review in Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is provided by two panels with different processes and different charges:

- The Design Enabling Panel (DEP) was set up in 2014 by SCDC to review significant planning applications and pre-applications within SCDC area boundaries. There is a charge for using the panel. The panel has never been reviewed.
- The Design and Conservation Panel (DCP) was set up in 2006 (based on an earlier panel established in 1973) by CCC to review significant planning applications and pre-applications within Cambridge City boundaries. It was last reviewed in 2013 by the independent architect Barry Shaw. It is currently provided as a free service.

1.2 The DCP and DEP are administered by the two councils that have come together to form the shared planning service and they have been operating for over 5 years without a review. For those reasons, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) committed to reviewing its design review service in its 2020/2021 Business Plan. Last year, GCSP appointed the independent expert Esther Kurland, from Urban Design Learning (UDL), to review the two panels. The findings and recommendations from this review

were submitted to GCSP in March 2021 (Appendix A). This report seeks approval for the proposed arrangements (including charges) set out in the Terms of Reference (Appendix B), which are informed by the recommendations of that review.

- 1.3 The proposal is to replace the two separate design review panels with a new single panel, operating in a consistent manner across the CCC and SCDC areas, and with a common charging regime. The service will be cost neutral to the councils as it will be funded from charges paid by applicants, with the potential for generating some surpluses. This service offer will sit alongside the statutory planning application process (where fees and process are determined nationally) and which is unaffected by these proposals.
- 1.4 The Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel (GCDRP) is intended to be an independent, peer review of significant development proposals that will work alongside other discretionary and statutory tools and processes of the development management process. It supplements the community engagement and consultation that is expected to take place as well as pre-application meetings. Our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out GCSPs functions in relation to preparing planning policy, including Neighbourhood Planning, determining planning applications and how local community groups should be involved. The SCI is unaffected by these proposals, however GCSP keeps under review how it carries out its engagement. There may be potential to set up a separate community review panel in the future, however this would need to be considered as part of a broader review of community engagement and capacity building in our communities.
- 1.5 This proposal is also being considered in parallel by CCC at their Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee in June.

## **Key Decision**

2. No

## **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that Cabinet agree the proposals to;
  - (a) Replace the Design Enabling Panel to create the Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel and approve the Terms of Reference (including charges) set out at Appendix B from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022.
  - (b) Grant delegated authority to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery to make minor changes to the Terms of Reference set out at Appendix B.
  - (c) Note the findings and recommendations from Urban Design Learning set out in Appendix A.
  - (d) Note the Milestones for Implementing the GCDRP set out in Appendix D.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. The GCSPS design review service has not been reviewed in over 5 years. There are currently two different panels administered by the shared planning service, with different processes, remits and charging schedules. The intention is to move to a single panel and charging schedule encompassing current best practice in Design Review processes. It will also provide a consistent service, which applicants/agents seek, it will be more straight forward to administer, and it will ensure the service covers its costs. It will support improving the delivery of our service and how we monitor its performance.
5. It is important that delegated authority is given to allow the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery to make minor changes to the Terms of Reference given that the report is also going to Cambridge City Council's Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee who may resolve to make minor changes to the Terms of Reference. Granting this delegation will mean that the matter does not have to come back before Cabinet to approve minor changes to the Terms of Reference.

## Details

### Background

6. The GCSP design review service has been operating using two existing panels: the DCP, administrated by CCC for the Cambridge City area; and DEP, administrated by SCDC for the South Cambridgeshire area. These panels are formed of built environment professionals who work in the public interest to provide independent expert advice to developers, design teams, planning officers and Planning Committee, to improve the design of buildings and places within the GCSP area.

5.1 The DCP meet monthly to review a range of schemes within the CCC area.

The panel mostly reviews student accommodation, hotels, and commercial buildings. In the three years from January 2017-January 2020, the panel carried out 37 reviews, and of these, 15 were of schemes that returned to the panel for a second or third review. During this period, 32 reviews were carried out for projects during the pre-application stage and 5 reviews were carried out for projects after an application had been submitted to the council. The DCP is a free-to-use service and does not recover its costs.

5.2 The DEP meets every six weeks to review schemes within the SCDC area.

The work of the panel is mainly made up of housing, hotels, and commercial buildings. In the three years from January 2017- January 2020, the panel carried out 67 reviews, 11 of which were repeat reviews. During this period 53 reviews were carried out for projects during the pre-application stage and 14 reviews were carried out for projects after an application had been submitted. The DEP charges users £650+VAT per review, and this does not cover the full cost to the council of administering the panel.

5.3 There is also a third panel, the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel (CQP), which was set up in 2010 to review major growth sites across the County of Cambridgeshire. The CQP is administered by the Cambridgeshire County Council. It has its own governance arrangements and focuses on strategic growth across the region. The CQP operates beyond the administrative

boundaries of the shared planning service and therefore it is outside the scope of the recommendations of this report.

5.4 The two design review panels administered by the councils that have come together to form the shared planning service have different referral criteria, membership arrangements, processes, governance and charging schemes. Neither panel has been reviewed in over 5 years. The DCP was last reviewed in 2013 and the DEP has not been reviewed since it was set up in 2014. The GCSPS Business Plan 2020-2021 includes a commitment to review the operation of the existing panels and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the discretionary design review service. The objectives included an aspiration for a single unified process and charging scheme that adds value to the process for all stakeholders and results in high quality outcomes.

5.5 GCSP appointed an independent expert consultant to review the two panels. Between November 2020 and February 2021 Esther Kurland and her team at UDL observed panel meetings and carried out surveys and interviews with users of the service including agents, applicants, and their design teams; chairs and members of the two panels; Members and planning officers, and stakeholders including parish councils and residents' associations. UDL also looked at the potential role of the community in the proposed GCDRP and recognised the potential for a separate community review panel in the future, which could be considered as part of a broader review of community engagement and capacity building in our communities. The feedback from this engagement, and an assessment of the operation of the design review service against established best practice approaches, have informed the recommendations of this report.

## **Considerations**

5.6 Design review is an established process that will help GCSP deliver high quality development to the benefit of the Greater Cambridge area and its residents. It is strongly encouraged by Government policy through the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 129 of the NPPF (2019) states that 'Local Authorities should ensure that they have access to and make use of

appropriate processes for assessing and improving the design of developments, which include design advice and review arrangements'. It goes on to say that 'in assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels'. The benefits of design review are also reflected in the Living with Beauty report (January 2020).

5.7 The panel review offers an independent and impartial evaluation of the design of significant proposals, at the pre-application and application stages, by a panel of built environment experts. The advice of the panel is advisory, with the aim of identifying where improvements can be made, to influence the planning process and improve the quality of buildings and places for the benefit of the public. The advice of the panel is reported in a letter, attached to committee, and delegated reports, to give decision makers the confidence and information to support innovative, high quality designs and to resist poorly designed schemes.

5.8 Design review provides an opportunity to engage with developers at an early stage to address key issues rather than at the planning application stage when this will otherwise result in delays and the need for re-consultation in many cases. It can therefore help save applicants, agents, and developers time and cost by ensuring they submit high quality schemes and applications that stand a greater chance of being granted approval within the statutory timescales. For the Planning Authority, improving the quality of application submissions in this way, can also improve process efficiency whilst helping to drive up the quality of the outcome secured. Design review does not replace the on-going dialogue that it is possible to have with design officers through pre-application meetings. Design review and pre-application advice from officers are most effective when working together and in parallel with community engagement.

5.9 The independent review into the GCSP design review service looked at the potential role of the community in the proposed GCDRP. The review concluded that the purpose of the panel is to provide an expert and independent peer review process that is distinct from the community

engagement which takes place during the pre-application stages. GCSP have established mechanisms in place to ensure that the community are engaged during the pre-application design stages and GCSP's expectations for this are set out within the GCSP Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). GCSP keeps under review how it carries out its engagement e.g. the focus on harder to reach groups as part of the local plan consultation. There may be potential to set up a separate community review panel in the future, however this would need to be considered as part of a broader review of community engagement and capacity building in our communities.

5.10 Nationally, there are different approaches to managing and administering design review services. Some Local Planning Authorities provide their service in-house, whereas others use external providers. The GLA, Design Review Survey (2018) showed that 86% of London Authorities were operating, or were in the process of setting up, design review panels (DRPs). Of those London Authorities who used Design Review to support good quality outcomes, two thirds had panels managed in-house by officers, with the remaining third subcontracted to external partners to administrate and manage. Overall, 76% of Design Review services, whether inhouse or external, charged fees to users (applicants). Given that planning application fees are set nationally, and historically have not covered fully the costs of delivering the application process, design review charges can play an important part in helping authorities to offset the costs of providing planning advice.

### **Review Process**

5.11 The brief for the independent expert consultant to carry out the review was agreed by the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, in consultation with senior officers and the existing panel chairs. The agreed objectives were to assess the way in which the existing design review panels operate and provide recommendations for an effective, consistent, and cost neutral approach to design review across the two boundaries.

5.12 The consultant considered 3 options as part of the review and recommendations:

1. Continuing with the status quo of two design panel formats for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils
2. A single design panel for both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council
3. Two design panel formats for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils with a common administrative arrangement

5.13 The independent review was carried out in several stages:

- a. A baseline report was prepared by officers in consultation with the DEP and D&C panel chairs and managers. This report collated factual data on the two panels, including their terms of reference, operational processes, costs, expertise, and projects reviewed over the last 3 years. This report was issued to the consultant and formed part of the evidence base for their review.
- b. The consultant observed meetings of the Design and Conservation Panel, the Design Enabling Panel, and the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel (not part of review) to understand how the design review process operates across GCSPS.
- c. The consultant analysed three, randomly selected, case studies from each of the DCP and DEP to assess the quality of the review letter and the impact of the reviews on the planning process.
- d. The consultant conducted semi-structured interviews with the chairs of the DCP, DEP and CQP, members of the senior management team (Joint Director of Planning, Assistant Directors and BNE Manager), the two panel managers/administrators, the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, the chairs of the planning

committee of both councils, and two planning agents to understand the stakeholders' experience of the existing panels and their requirements for design review.

- e. The consultant conducted surveys with stakeholders including DCP and DEP members, those who have brought schemes to the panels in the last 12 months; planning officers; planning committee members; residents associations and parish councils. A summary of the feedback received is set out in Appendix C.
- f. The consultant conducted interviews with the panel managers of other design review panels that operate across multiple local authority boundaries to understand what has worked well.
- g. The consultant analysed the findings from points a-f against established best practice approaches to design review, including the potential role of community in design review, and made recommendations to GCSP for a consistent, cost neutral efficient, and effective service. The findings and recommendations were presented to GCSP in a report (Appendix A).

5.14 The review proposed the following 3 strategic changes to the existing design review service and set out detailed recommendations for achieving these.

**1. Create a single Design Review service with specialist sub panels:**

because there are significant differences in approach between the panels, leading to differences in attitudes from those involved and the quality and consistency of advice. This is likely to be undermining the potential usefulness of reviews for the shared planning service.

**2. Refresh and improve delivery systems:**

because Design Review has expanded and matured across the country since the panels were set up, leading to improvements in established best practice. The Cambridge service would benefit from updating its Terms of

Reference and day to day practices to reflect what others have found to work well elsewhere.

**3. Integrate Design Review with wider Design Quality approaches:**

because Design Review is only one tool and can work best when clearly integrated with all other design related planning work from policy writing to pre app negotiations, community engagement to committee deliberations.

**Proposed Approach**

5.15 The terms of reference (Appendix B) propose to implement the recommendations of the review and create a single panel: Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel (GCDRP). The GCDRP would replace both the Design and Conservation Panel and Design Enabling Panel. It is proposed that the new GCDRP will operate across the Greater Cambridge area, managed by the shared planning service and overseen by an Independent Advisory Group. Given the volume of applications, it is recommended the Panel should have two chairs, two vice-chairs and a single pool of 20-30 panel members with diverse expertise. Where appropriate, sub-panels may be formed from the panel membership to respond to the different development pressures or types of schemes within Greater Cambridge areas.

5.16 It is envisaged that the Panel would usually meet twice per month and review up to two schemes per meeting, although additional meetings and reviews may be organised when required. Meetings will normally be held in Council offices in either Cambridge or South Cambridgeshire unless they are required to be held remotely, for example due to social distancing restrictions being in place. The panel will charge applicants to use the service and the fees will cover the cost of providing the advice and generate additional surplus for design training for officers and Councillors, which is now common practice around the country. Feedback would regularly be sought from users of the panels to inform further service improvements. Up-to-date information about the panel and its membership would be published on the GCSP website.

**Remit**

5.17 The GCDRP will be one of two panels operating within the GCSPS area: the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel and the Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel.

1. The [Cambridgeshire Quality Panel](#) was established in 2010. It is administered by Cambridgeshire County Council and governed by its own terms of reference. Within the Greater Cambridge area, it reviews strategic scale allocations within the adopted local plans including: infrastructure projects such as stations, transport interchanges, road bridges; all new schools; school extensions where they give rise to significant effects on the locality; large public buildings which are likely to establish, or need to fit in with an already established form of high architectural quality. In Cambridge City, this Cambridgeshire Quality Panel reviews sites that are covered by the City Fringes Joint Development Control Committee. The Cambridgeshire Quality Panel may also review policies, guidance and documents that have a strategic and spatial implications at a sub-regional scale.
2. It is intended that the GCDRP would review major or significant planning and pre-planning applications for sites within the Greater Cambridge area, that fall outside of the remit of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel. The GCDRP will normally review:
  - schemes because of their scale, size and use of development (including developments of over 10 dwellings, a site with a gross area of over 0.5 hectares, or any building over 1000m<sup>2</sup>);
  - the site is particularly sensitive; and/or the proposals are significant because of a local issue, specific impact exceptional challenge, or public benefit;
  - The GCDRP may also review any policies, guidance and documents that related to these sites.

For full criteria details of the schemes to be considered refer to the Term of Reference (Appendix B)

## **Governance and Monitoring**

- 5.18 In accordance with good practice, it is recommended that an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) is established to oversee the panel to ensure its effectiveness and accountability in the public interest. It would also make recommendations to adjust working practices and make minor adjustments to the terms of reference, these would be made to and require the approval of the Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Members.
- 5.19 It is recommended that the IAG comprise two independent built environment experts with significant experience and external to the panel (such as chairs or experts of other design review panels), the 2 panel chairs, senior officers from the planning service, the lead members and planning committee chairs of both councils.
- 5.20 It is envisaged that the IAG would meet once a year to review an Annual Report of the panel's activities, planning impact, and an analysis of survey feedback collected after each review. The Annual Report and IAG meeting minutes will be publicly available on the GCSP website.

## **Management**

- 5.21 The GCDRP will be managed by the Council's Built and Natural Environment Team. There are two main roles required to administer the panel: a Panel Manager (which will equate to 0.25 FTE of an existing Principal Urban Designer) and 0.25 FTE Admin Support. The panel manager, supported by the administrator, will be responsible for organising panel meetings, preparing the Annual Report. Importantly, the panel manager will liaise with panel members, officers, and Councillors to promote the use of design review within the service and provide design training sessions and site visits.
- 5.22 The benefits and disbenefits of administering the panel in-house, versus using an external provider, were considered as part of the review. Interviewees value the existing in-house arrangements because this is seen to facilitate the sharing of knowledge of projects and policies, between officers, councillors, and panel members (Appendix C). The review recommended that this positive

aspect of the in-house service could be improved through the appointment of an urban design officer as panel manager, who will take ownership over the panel, raise the profile of design review with councillors, panel members and officers to integrate it into the councils' wider design management processes. Administering the panel in-house means that surplus income could be invested in design training, advice and site visits to the benefit of the planning service as a whole.

## **Charging**

5.23 The GCDRP will be a pay-to-use service with a charging schedule that fully recovers its costs.

5.24 The purpose of design review advice is to ensure that applicants can prepare and submit high quality applications which can be supported without the need for amendment. The cost of service should incentivise early engagement and repeat reviews for the panel to have the greatest influence on the design process. To this end it is envisaged that the GCDRP offers 3 types of review with different rates:

- a full design review with a site visit (fee £4,000 +VAT)
- a subsequent design review without a site visit (fee £3,500 +VAT)
- a desktop chairs review (fee £2,000 +VAT)

Where possible the same Panel Members will be used for subsequent reviews.

5.25 In recognition of the discretionary nature of the service, and to encourage users to engage with the service, in exceptional cases, the fees may be reduced by up to 50% where the service wants to support community organisations, charities, and small businesses in accessing the panel. For schemes which are particularly complex and/or required a bespoke review format (such as specialist sub panel) the fees outlined may be increased to cover additional administration costs. Reviews for projects outside of the GCSP area will also incur a fee increase and the amount charged will depend on the specific project requirements.

5.26 The setting of discretionary charges is covered by the Local Government Act and such charges cannot be levied to deliver a profit for the provider. The recommended rates are based on an analysis of design review charging schemes and panel members remuneration rates at other comparable local authorities. Charges have been formulated based on an analysis of costs of officer time required to administer the design review panel, including the time set out within the terms of reference for monitoring and training and engagement activities. Fees and review types will be monitored as a standing item at the annual IAG meeting, to ensure the GCDRP remains attractive to applicants and financially viable. Any changes to charges would be considered as part of the annual review of service-wide charges.

### **Panel member recruitment**

5.27 The membership of the current DEP and DCP have not been refreshed in line with their terms of reference and as a result both panels are lacking in diversity and in some areas of expertise e.g. environmental sustainability. Existing panel members will therefore be stood down and encouraged to re-apply for a place on the new panel if they wish to continue.

5.28 It is proposed that the GCDRP would be made up of 20-30 members, 2 Chairs and 2 Vice Chairs. GCSPS will openly recruit a diverse panel of nationally respected professionals from Cambridge and across the UK, with expertise that cover the range of specialisms within the field of the built and natural environment. Applications from panel members will be scored according to a marking scheme, with chairs and vice-chairs interviewed for the role.

5.29 It is proposed that Panel Members and Chairs would be appointed for a period of 3 years and refreshed thereafter following a review of attendance and performance. Panel members and Chairs will be paid for their attendance and travel expenses.

### **Improved Stakeholder Experience**

5.30 Feedback from review will be in the form of a letter authored by the Chair that will be shared with applicants and officers involved in assessing the application. It will be written in plain English and structured under the headings

of the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter's four 'C's: Community, Connectivity, Climate, Character. Planning officers should attach the review letter in full to the planning officer/committee reports and articulate where the scheme has and has not considered the panels comments and why. The Chair may occasionally be asked to attend Planning Committee meetings when requested by the lead member. The role of the GCDRP is advisory but the comments are a material consideration as set out in the NPPF.

- 5.31 In the interest of transparency and public accountability, information about the panel will be published on a dedicated web page including, Terms of Reference, a Handbook for the management of the Panel, a Quick Guide for applicants, an annual report and minutes from the annual Independent Advisory Group meeting. Once an application has submitted to GCSP, the review letter will be published on the GCSP website to inform consultation responses.
- 5.32 The quality of the service will be monitored through recording the impact of reviews on the planning process and through surveys of stakeholders. This information will be collated in the Annual Report, scrutinised by the Independent Advisory Group. The information will help to inform how the panel evolves and address any issues raised. It will also be used to highlight the benefits of the panel to the wider community. A site visit of completed projects reviewed by the GCDRP may also inform the annual review.

## **Options**

7. Option 1: Make no changes to the current arrangements.  
Option 2: Keep two design review panels with aligned processes and charging schedules and a single administration.  
Option 3: Approve this report's recommendations

## **Implications**

8. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

## **Financial**

9. These proposals do not impact planning application fees - which are set nationally. Instead, the proposals seek to address the service's need to manage the cost of its discretionary services and aim to increase a greater proportion of that cost through charges. For design review advice, (where the service provided can lead to significant financial benefits accruing to property/land owners and developers) the charging schedule reflects a need to support community organisations and small businesses, whilst reducing the subsidy provided by both Councils for this service for more substantial development projects – and help respond to the growing pressure on costs and income facing both Council Planning Services.

It is intended that the charging scheme is reviewed in 12 months' time from the launch of the panel, when feedback from and stakeholders and data on the costs of running the service will be analysed to ensure the service is cost neutral and attractive to applicants.

An analysis of the projected income and costs associated with administering the panel has been carried out. Scenario testing has shown that the income generated by the panel over a 3-year period is expected to cover the cost of setting up the panel and for annual training for planners and elected members and forum events for agents. Financial risk is limited because panel members are paid per review and therefore the overheads are reduced if the panel carries out fewer reviews.

## **Legal**

10. None

## **Staffing**

11. There are currently two separate design review panels and officers are working with two separate processes. Aligning the processes to a single panel

will reduce officer time and improve capacity as well as addressing will overall workloads.

Officer time will be needed to deliver the new arrangements service including recruitment to the proposed new Panel, whilst maintaining a Design Review service until the transition is complete.

Two part-time roles required to administer the revised service – which equate to 0.25 FTE Principal Urban Designer (Grade 6) and 0.25 FTE Admin Support (Grade 4). It is envisaged these will be existing roles within the Built and Natural Environment Team, with the charges going towards the cost recovery approach for that team.

### **Risks/Opportunities**

12. Improving the design review service will help to mitigate both the authorities and applicants' risks with the planning application process, and in turn should support both applicant and the Councils to reduce the costs of failure demand, including the risk of planning appeals or poor quality and inappropriate development, and contribute towards the improved reputation of the service.

### **Equality and Diversity**

13. GCSP will improve the diversity of the membership pool of the design review service by recruiting a new panel of professionals from Cambridge and across the UK, with expertise that cover the range of specialisms within the field of the built and natural environment. Recruitment will encourage applications from people with protected characteristics. Applications from panel members will be scored according to a published marking criterion. Chairs and vice chairs will be interviewed for the role.

The approach to charging does recognise that there may be some applicants e.g. a community group that may have more limited ability to access the service and allows for reductions in fees in these circumstances.

An EQIA has been carried out for this proposal (Appendix E).

## **Climate Change**

14. Delivering timely, and early advice, notably around the adopted policy framework which seeks to support the move towards a low carbon and climate sensitive future will have a positive impact upon the Council's objectives.

The new Panel will ensure that the relevant expertise is incorporated on matters such as environmental sustainability and the proposed reframing of the Panel comments around the 4 'cs' of the Quality Charter - which includes climate - should ensure applicants focus on this important objective in the scheme design.

## **Health & Wellbeing**

15. None

## **Consultation responses**

16. As part of the independent review, semi-structured interviews and discussions were carried out with the chairs of the DCP, DEP and CQP, members of the senior management team (Joint Director of Planning, Assistant Directors and BNE Manager), the two panel managers/administrators, the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, the chairs of the planning committee of both councils, and two planning agents.

In addition, the consultant carried out surveys with stakeholders including DCP and DEP members, those who have brought schemes to the panels in the last 12 months; planning officers; planning committee members; residents associations and parish councils.

Whilst the review was underway, details were advertised in the Councils' website and any interested parties were asked to contact us to participate.

The service improvements that are proposed to be introduced result from the feedback received, particularly with regards to improving communication to

promote the service more widely and encourage reviews earlier in the pre-application process; providing a consistent approach to design review across the service; ensuring panels continued development through monitoring and training. A summary of the feedback received is set out in Appendix C.

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

### **Growing local businesses and economies**

17. Discounts are in support of businesses which otherwise may find commercial development design review advice prohibitively expensive.

### **A modern and caring Council**

18. Improved processes will make it easier for businesses to obtain quality design review advice.

## **Background Papers**

19. None

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: DCP and DEP Findings and Recommendations Report

Appendix B: GCDRP Terms of Reference

Appendix C: Summary of Engagement Feedback

Appendix D: Milestones for Implementing the GCDRP

Appendix E: Equality Impact Assessment

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