

COUNCIL – 20 JULY 2023

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Executive Summary

The following questions have been received from Members of Public. The individuals who raised the questions have been invited to attend the meeting. The relevant Portfolio Holder will be asked to provide a formal response.

Question 1 – Neil Hughes

“Going forward, would the council agree that all planning applications submitted in a conservation area should be detailed rather than outline (i.e. outline being an application with a number of conditions)?”

Supporting Statement

The contentious outline planning application PLAN/2022/1161 regarding the Phipps / Chequers corner plot in St Johns appeared to be a crafted strategy on behalf of the applicant rather than going through the tighter scrutiny expected of a detailed planning application for a conservation area. In any case, if an outline application is ultimately accepted, the planning officer / committee should clarify (to the objectors) why outline is being accepted, specifically with reference to The Planning Handbook which indicates "outline planning permission is not normally accepted in conservation areas as it is difficult for councils to evaluate the impact of a proposal without seeing the full details", an opinion which is also supported by planning professionals.

Reply from Councillor Liam Lyons

“In relation to the submission of outline planning applications for development within conservation areas, planning legislation and guidance does allow for this, so the Council cannot say no in principle to accepting all such applications. However, the legislation does allow councils to request additional information, if it is considered necessary, to enable an application to be determined. In the specific case you have referred to, officers considered that they had sufficient information to allow the application to be determined as submitted, taking into account it is an allocated site for flatted development of 2-3 storeys, and indicative plans were submitted with the application. The Council retains the ability to scrutinise the detailed plans when they are submitted as reserved matters, and Members may request that these details are considered by committee. So in this case I am happy that officers followed appropriate procedure.

In my view each case should be considered on its merits, and I would expect officers to request further detailed information if, in their view, that information is necessary to determine the application.

You have referred to the Planning Handbook. For clarification, this is not a Woking publication, it is not planning legislation nor government guidance, neither is it part of Woking’s planning policy framework, and as such carries no legal status.”

Question 2 - Talitha Spiers

As I reside in a flat overlooking the area known as the Triangle I would like to know exactly what is going on there at the moment?

Reply from Councillor Will Forster

“The Council is in discussion with Partners including Homes England to bring forward an affordable and sustainable proposal for this site. I hope to bring a report on the outcome of those discussions to the Executive in the Autumn.”

Question 3 – Bella Di Manno

Will the gym and fitness services be affected?

Reply from Councillor Ellen Nicholson

“The Council recognises the significant importance of exercise in maintaining health and wellbeing. The Borough is currently well served by 4 Council-owned leisure facilities, including 5 swimming pools. With the Council facing an £11 million budget gap for next financial year, it is necessary that the Council reviews all its discretionary services (including leisure facilities), so that they can be delivered with reduced subsidy from the Council. We are currently seeking resident’ views on our discretionary services and would encourage you to complete the online survey by 10 August 2023.”

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Date Published: 20 July 2023