

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE

held on 6 April 2021

Present:

Cllr G G Chrystie (Chairman)
Cllr S Hussain (Vice-Chair)

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|----------------|--------------------|
| Cllr T Aziz | Cllr N Martin |
| Cllr A J Boote | Cllr L M N Morales |
| Cllr G S Cundy | Cllr M A Whitehand |
| Cllr L S Lyons | |

Also Present: Councillors M Ali and D Harlow.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 March 2021 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, Peter Bryant, Director of Legal and Democratic Services declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 6b. 2020/1201 Church Gate, Premier House, Church Street West and 28-37 Vale Farm Road, Woking 6e. COND/2021/0026 Sheerwater Estate, Albert Drive, Woking and 6f. COND/2021/0038 Sheerwater Estate, Albert Drive, Woking – arising from his position as a Council appointed Director of Thameswey Developments Ltd. The interest was such that it would not prevent the Officer from advising on the item.

In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, Peter Bryant, Director of Legal and Democratic Services declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7. Scheme of Delegation – arising from his position as a Council appointed Director of various Council companies. The interest was such that it would not prevent the Officer from advising on the item.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

5. PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT APPEALS

The Committee received a report on the planning appeals lodged and the appeal decisions.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

6. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee determined the following applications subject to the conditions, informatives, reasons for refusal or authorisation of enforcement action which appear in the published report to the Committee or as detailed in these minutes.

6a. 2021/0059 Land to the north of Old Woking Road and east of Station Approach, West Byfleet, Woking

[NOTE: The Planning Officer noted that a written update had been circulated to the Committee and uploaded to the website in advance of the meeting.]

The committee considered a Reserved Matters application pursuant to Outline planning permission ref: PLAN/2020/0801 dated 22/12/2020 to seek approval of details relating to the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of the development comprising redevelopment of the site to provide extra care retirement units (Class C2) and communal amenity floor space, flexible retail, food and drink (Class E), drinking establishment (Sui Generis) and hot food takeaway (Sui Generis), community floor space (Class F.1/Class F.2) and car parking spaces, together with the provision of basement space, cycle parking, highway works, public realm improvements and other associated works. Application also seeks approval of details pursuant to conditions 04 (statement of compliance), 06 (surface water drainage), 11 (sustainability assessment), 12 (energy and water consumption), 14a (noise) and 35 (biodiversity enhancements) of PLAN/2020/0801 dated 22/12/2020.

Following a query from the Chairman regarding materials, the Planning Officer confirmed that details of these had not been provided (as it was not required at this stage of the application) and that condition 2 required, inter alia, a mock-up of the brick and metal work to be approved by the LPA.

Following an additional query from the Chairman, the Planning Officer confirmed that vehicular access and egress were both from Madeira Road and that this had been approved as part of the outline planning application.

It was noted that for all built elements, apart from the library, prior approval had been granted for demolition on the site.

Councillor A Boote, Ward Councillor, spoke in support and was very pleased with the detailed reserved matters application that had come forward. Councillor A Boote also thanked the developer for carrying out first class community engagement regarding the scheme. Councillor A Boote was supportive of the overall application but had some concerns regarding the balconies on Block A which looked awkward and out of place opposite the heritage site and conservation area, and also the protruding balconies on Block C which she thought were intrusive and caused a loss of privacy.

The Planning Officer commented that these concerns had been raised before and he was aware of them. Regarding Block C the Planning Officer commented that the separation distance between those balconies and Drayton Court was 18.5m which could not be considered to cause a significantly harmful overbearing relationship, which was also an across the street relationship. This was the District Centre of West Byfleet and this needed to be borne in mind when assessing distance relationships. The Planning Officer commented that Block A was not in a conservation area and the view of the balconies was a subjective judgement. It was noted that the Committee could not amend specifics of the application and it must be considered as it had been presented to them. The Planning Officer stated that he thought these balconies added character and interest to the building and did not think that they were harmful.

Members raised some confusion regarding the separation distances detailed in the Outlook, Amenity and Privacy SPD as it referred to a 30m and also a 15m separation distance relationship. It was noted that a 30m relationship would not be expected to be achieved here. The 15m distance applied to a front to front relationship and that was what this was. Planning Officers confirmed that the application complied with policy. Some Members queried whether this was a front to front relationship and if the room configuration in the dwellings across the road was known. Thomas James, Development Manager, clarified that the Outlook, Amenity and Privacy SPD allowed for flexibility in large village centres. The Committee were reminded that this was a reserved matters application and that the outline and parameter plans had already been approved by the Committee. If the Committee did consider this to be a minor breach of policy they also needed to consider whether this was outweighed by the benefits of the application. It was noted that the application had gone through several Design Review Panels and that Officers were satisfied that this development was of high quality.

Following a query the Planning Officer advised the Committee that Woking Borough Council was currently working with Surrey County Council regarding a new location for the library.

Members commented that the existing site was an eyesore and that it was the perfect sustainable location for retirement living with excellent transport links. It was considered to be a well-planned and thought out scheme.

In accordance with Standing Order 22.2, the Chairman deemed that a division should be taken on the motion above. The votes for and against approval of the application were recorded as follows.

In favour: Cllrs T Aziz, A Boote, G Chrystie (Chairman), G Cundy, S Hussain, L Lyons, N Martin, L Morales and M Whitehand.

TOTAL: 9

Against: None.

TOTAL: 0

Present but not voting: None.

TOTAL: 0

The application was therefore approved.

RESOLVED

That authority be delegated to the Development Manager (or their authorised deputy) to APPROVE reserved matters subject to:

- i) The matter of surface water drainage being addressed to the satisfaction of the Council's Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer (and inclusion of appropriate condition(s)); and
- ii) Recommended conditions as set out in this report.

6b. 2020/1201 Church Gate, Premier House, Church Street West and 28-37 Vale Farm Road, Woking

[NOTE 1: The Planning Officer noted that a written update had been circulated to the Committee and uploaded to the website in advance of the meeting.]

[NOTE 2: In accordance with the procedure for public speaking at Planning Committee, Mr Jeremy Butterworth attended the meeting and spoke in objection to the application and Mr Mike Hooper spoke in support]

The Committee considered an application for the demolition of Church Gate, Premier House (both fronting Church Street West) and Nos. 28-37 Vale Farm Road (Incl.) and erection of a building ranging in height from Ground plus 16 storeys to Ground plus 4 storeys to provide 243 residential apartments (Class C3), commercial space (Class E), ancillary spaces, landscaped amenity areas, parking spaces, vehicular and pedestrian accesses and cycle store including refurbishment works to existing playground on Vale Farm Road.

Councillor M Ali, Ward Councillor, spoke in objection to the application and asked the Committee to consider this as a non-town centre development as a third of the proposal was not within the town centre boundary and should not be allowed the same concessions that such an application would attract. The proposal would not provide any affordable housing, many of the dwellings only just met the minimum floor space requirement and at 17 storeys it would be higher than any of the surrounding buildings. Councillor M Ali also commented that there was an issue with density, loss of daylight, inadequate separation distance and under provision of parking. The cumulative effect of all these issues would be significant and the development would be incongruous to the surrounding area. Councillor M Ali asked that the Members of the Committee considered refusal of the application.

Councillor T Aziz, Ward Councillor, commented that he did not see any meaningful engagement with local residents, despite the applicant stating that some had taken place. Councillor T Aziz agreed with his fellow Ward Councillor that there were a number of issues with this application, including height, mass and bulk. He reiterated the point that one third of this application did not fall within the town centre boundary and therefore it should not be considered a town centre application. Councillor T Aziz was unhappy that a number of affordable family units would be demolished to make way for this development, yet not a single affordable unit would be provided on site. He also raised concerns regarding the mix of housing with 70% one-bedroom units and 30% two-bedroom. Councillor T Aziz also commented that amenity, privacy and daylight was an issue.

Members commented that consideration needed to be given to how buildings related to each other and whilst this straddled the town centre boundary it was adjacent to Victorian

housing. This development would be significantly taller than those in the surrounding area and the Committee was very concerned that the affordable housing that was currently on site would be absorbed into the proposal, but no replacement would be provided. The impact on affordable homes in the Borough would be minus ten if this development was approved. Most Members agreed with the Ward Councillors comments that the bulk, mass, scale and height of the development was out of scale with the location.

Other Members commented on the loss of daylight for Birchwood House, which would have a huge impact especially as many of these were single aspect dwellings. The Committee commented that forty seven of the surrounding properties windows would be put into shade by the development, they were very concerned about the separation distances and loss of light.

It was noted that this application had been through the Design Review Panel process, however it had attracted criticism. The Committee hoped that in the future developers would look more closely at Planning Policy and not try to stretch the credibility of these to such a degree.

Councillor T Aziz proposed and it was duly seconded by Councillor G Cundy to refuse the application based on size, mass and bulk; loss of affordable housing, density too high, inappropriate housing mix with too many one bedroom units; loss of daylight and overlooking; and no S106 being submitted.

In accordance with Standing Order 22.2, the Chairman deemed that a division should be taken on the motion above to refuse. The votes for and against refusal of the application were recorded as follows.

In favour: Cllrs T Aziz, A Boote, G Chrystie (Chairman), G Cundy, S Hussain, L Lyons, N Martin, L Morales and M Whitehand.

TOTAL: 9

Against: None.

TOTAL: 0

Present but not voting: None.

TOTAL: 0

The application was therefore refused.

RESOLVED

That planning permission be REFUSED.

6c. 2020/0492 The Meadows, Bagshot Road, Woking

[NOTE: The Planning Officer advised the Committee that two additional letter of objection and one of support had been received which mainly reiterated the comments already summarised within the representations section of the report.]

The committee considered an application for the erection of a building of up to five storeys comprising fifty four one-bedroom and two-bedroom extra care apartments (Use Class C2) with ancillary and communal facilities and provision of landscaping, bin and cycle storage, parking, highway works, access and associated works following demolition of existing buildings.

Councillor M Whitehand, Ward Councillor, commented that she was disappointed with the Planning Officers' recommendation for refusal. Councillor M Whitehand thought that development of the site would be positive as it was currently derelict which caused a number of problems. Although it was situated in the Green Belt, Councillor M Whitehand did not think the development of the site would have a harmful effect on the Green Belt; with the trees remaining in place on the curtilage of the site, it would still appear a green/wooded area. Councillor M Whitehand's opinion was that the reasons for refusal listed in the report did not carry sufficient weight for refusal and thought it would be possible to overcome the issues relating to parking and bin storage.

Some Members agreed with the Ward Councillors view that there should perhaps be an exception with regards to this development as it had very few objections lodged and would provide another Care Home facility in the Borough. The Planning Officer commented that the provision of care facilities within the Borough could not be considered a 'special circumstance' as Surrey County Council had been clear that Woking were currently meeting their need for extra care.

A number of Members supported the Planning Officers recommendation to refuse the application and considered it to be inappropriate development; The proposed development was within a designated green belt area, was materially larger than the dwelling it would replace and it was not in a location that had been identified for development in the Site Allocation DPD. Planning Policy provided strict criteria regarding development in the Green Belt and some Members thought that this would set a worrying precedent for Green Belt development and that there were no special circumstance here to warrant approval.

Following further discussion, Thomas James, Development Manager, advised the Committee that if they were minded to approve the application, then they would need to very clearly articulate how the four reasons for refusal had been overcome. This would be important as the application would subsequently need to be referred to the Secretary of State for approval. The Planning Officers opinion was that there were no special circumstance with this application that could outweigh the significant harm to the Green Belt. The LPA was not against development of the site, but this was not considered to be a suitable proposal.

Following a query regarding the provision of bins and this being a reason for refusal, the Planning Officer confirmed that the site was so constrained that there was not enough space for communal bins.

Comparisons had been made to the parking issues at other care home facilities in the Borough and it was noted that these examples could not be taken into consideration as they had been agreed before the current parking policy was in place.

The majority of Members agreed that the derelict site was in a very poor state, but did not consider this reason enough to approve the application.

RESOLVED

That planning permission be REFUSED.

6d. 2020/0947 117 Princess Road, Maybury, Woking

The Committee considered a Section 73 application to vary Condition 2 (Approved Plans) of permission ref: PLAN/2019/0206 (Erection of two two-storey dwellings (two- bedroom) following demolition of part of No. 117 Princess Road and erection of a part two storey, part single storey rear extension and single storey front extension to No.117 and associated landscaping and parking).

The Members of the Committee were divided on this application. Some Members were confused as to why it was back before the Committee for consideration as it had already been refused by them previously and nothing material had changed regarding the application. The Officers report stated the only reason for the recommended refusal was by reason of the lack of separation to boundaries and placement of door openings; some Members did not see this as a cause for significant harm and thought that the application should be approved with the appropriate conditions set.

Councillor L Morales proposed and it was duly seconded by Councillor T Aziz, to approve the application.

In accordance with Standing Order 22.2, the Chairman deemed that a division should be taken on the motion above to approve. The votes for and against approval of the application were recorded as follows.

In favour: Cllrs T Aziz, A Boote, G Chrystie (Chairman), S Hussain and L Morales.

TOTAL: 5

Against: G Cundy, L Lyons, N Martin and M Whitehand.

TOTAL: 4

Present but not voting: None.

TOTAL: 0

The application was therefore approved.

RESOLVED

That planning permission be GRANTED and authority be delegated to the Development Manager to approve the appropriate conditions.

6e. COND/2021/0026 Sheerwater Estate, Albert Drive, Woking

The Planning Committee considered partial approval of details pursuant to Condition 33 (Travel Plan) for phase Red only of planning permission PLAN/2018/0337 for the Sheerwater Regeneration.

Councillor L Morales asked if the LPA could ensure that local cycle routes were signposted. The Planning Officer explained that this was a very small aspect of this

application but that this request would be passed on to the developer. It was noted that consultation would always be carried out on travel plans.

RESOLVED

That the details submitted be approved.

6f. COND/2021/0038 Sheerwater Estate, Albert Drive, Woking

The Committee considered partial approval of details pursuant to Condition 47 (refuse management plan) for phase Purple only of planning permission PLAN/2018/0337 for the Sheerwater Regeneration.

RESOLVED

That the details submitted be approved.

7. SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Under the scheme of delegation, applications for approval of details reserved by condition submitted by Woking Borough Council and their companies/entities needed to be reported to Planning Committee for determination. For the period between 6 April and 8 June committee meetings, no decisions on these applications could be made which would result in delays on Council projects. To avoid these delays and to ensure these applications were determined in a timely manner, it was proposed to allow these types of applications to be delegated to the Development Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee for a temporary period.

Following a query, Peter Bryant confirmed that this delegated authority was only for the determination of conditions; major applications could not be determined under this authority.

RESOLVED that the Planning Committee RECOMMEND to Council applications for approval of details reserved by condition submitted by Woking Borough Council and their companies/entities are delegated to the Development Manager for determination in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee (or, in his absence, the Vice-Chairman) for a temporary period until the first substantive meeting of the Planning Committee in the new Municipal Year (8 June 2021).

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 0.30 am

Chairman: _____

Date: _____