

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE

held on 7 January 2025

Present:

Cllr L Lyons (Chair)
Cllr G Cosnahan (Vice-Chair)

Cllr D Jordan	Cllr J Pearce
Cllr R Leach	Cllr T Spenser
Cllr C Martin	Cllr M Sullivan

Absent: Councillors A Javaid and S Mukherjee

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

4. 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.

4a. 2024/0811 Former BHS, 81 Commercial Way

[NOTE 1: The Planning Officer reported that since the report had been written, Network Rail had submitted a consultation response setting out that they and South Western Railway have concerns over the cumulative impact of development within the cluster around Woking railway station and therefore that Network Rail are keen to see funding towards station improvements secured from developments near to the station. The Planning Officer explained that this application followed the March 2024 refusal of previous PLAN/2023/0911, which proposed an identical form and quantum of development, that Network Rail made a similar consultation response to that previous application although had again provided no evidence nor sufficient justification to substantiate their request for a sizeable financial contribution. Given this background and context the Planning Officer set

out that it would not be reasonable to require the applicant to provide such a financial contribution in this instance and that any such contribution would very likely reduce the number of Affordable Private Rented dwellings which would be provided as part of the proposed development]

[NOTE 2: The Planning Officer advised the Committee of an amendment to condition 35 (on p.255 of the report) to include the additional italic text shown below:

++ No piling must take place pursuant to the development hereby permitted until a piling method statement (detailing the depth and type of piling to be undertaken and the methodology by which such piling will be carried out, including measures to prevent and minimise the potential for damage to subsurface sewerage infrastructure, and the programme for the works) *and piling layout plan including all Thames Water wastewater assets, the local topography and clearance between the face of the pile to the face of a pipe* has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (in consultation with Thames Water). Any piling must thereafter be undertaken only in accordance with the terms of the approved piling method statement *and piling layout plan*.

Reason: The proposed works will be in close proximity to underground sewerage utility infrastructure and piling has the potential to significantly impact / cause failure of local underground sewerage utility infrastructure. This condition is required by Policy CS16 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024).]

[NOTE 3: The Planning Officer advised that since the report had been written the Environment Agency had raised concerns that the proposed development would result in the discharge of pollutant water into the River Wey thereby risking failure to meet statutory water quality objectives for the waterbody. The Planning Officer advised that further engagement had since taken place between Officers and the relevant statutory sewage undertaker, Thames Water which had since provided an updated consultation response raising no objection subject to a Grampian condition in respect of sewage treatment works infrastructure. The Planning Officer therefore recommended that conditions 54 and 55 (on page 263) of the report were deleted and replaced with new condition 54, being the Thames Water recommended Grampian condition, as detailed below;

New Condition 54:

++ No development shall be occupied until confirmation has been provided that either:- all sewage works upgrades required to accommodate the additional flows from the development have been completed; or - a development and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Thames Water to allow development to be occupied. Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is agreed no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed development and infrastructure phasing plan.

Reason: Sewage Treatment Upgrades are likely to be required to accommodate the proposed development. Any upgrade works identified will be necessary in order to avoid sewage flooding and/or potential pollution incidents in accordance with paragraph 187(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) and Policies CS9 and CS17 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012).]

[NOTE 4: In accordance with the procedure for public speaking at Planning Committee, Mr Mervyn McFarland attended the meeting and spoke in support of the application.]

The Committee considered an application for the demolition of existing building and redevelopment of the site to create a residential-led development comprising up to 272 apartments (Use Class C3) and up to 550 sq.m. of retail and commercial floorspace (Use Class E) at ground level, shared residential amenity spaces, building management facilities, plant space, refuse and cycle stores, in a building which ranges in height from a single storey ground floor (with mezzanine in the central block) to a ground floor with a maximum of 25 storeys above. Works to create new public realm within and highway works to Church Path, Church Street East, Chobham Road and Commercial Way, including alterations to and provision of new parking, servicing and delivery bays (Environmental Statement submitted).

Following request for clarification on the deleted and replaced conditions 54 and 55, the Planning Officer advised the Committee that the Environment Agency had raised concerns that the proposed development would result in the discharge of pollutant water into the River Wey thereby risking failure to meet statutory water quality objectives for the waterbody, so further consultation was undertaken. As a result, conditions 54 and 55 were recommended to be deleted and replaced with a new condition 54 to address the concerns.

Following a question on parking data, Beverley Kuchar commented that the Council managed the town centre car parks and kept up to date data on parking availability. In total there were 4500 spaces and approximately 50% were available for use. There was still significant capacity in the town centre for parking. The planning application site was also served well by public transport. The Chairman commented that the application was policy compliant regarding parking.

Some Members commented that it was clear the development would help meet Woking's housing need and the Government targets. Some were resistant to tall buildings in Woking town centre, but agreed it was preferable to development on the Green Belt.

Looking for reassurance on the external fabric of the building, the Planning Officer confirmed that the main external material was brick, so there would not be the same concerns as with metal cladding.

Following a question, the Planning Officer confirmed that the wind component had been assessed and it met the required criteria. It was noted that the results of two locations were windier than expected, and these had been mitigated with the inclusion of balustrades.

In response to a question, the Planning Officer confirmed that a sprinkler system would be added at a later stage if required.

It was noted that this application had come forward following the submission of additional information following the March 2024 refusal of previous PLAN/2023/0911, publication of the new NPPF and as a result the revised housing target.

RESOLVED

That planning permission be GRANTED subject to:

- i) The prior completion of a Section 106 Legal Agreement to secure the requirements as set out at the conclusion of the report;
- ii) Planning conditions as set out at the end of the report; and

- iii) Authorisation be given to the Strategic Director - Place (and their authorised deputies) to take all necessary action(s) in connection with points 1-2 above.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 7.50 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____