

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE

held on 12 January 2021
Present:

Cllr G G Chrystie (Chairman)

Cllr T Aziz	Cllr L S Lyons
Cllr A J Boote	Cllr L M N Morales
Cllr G S Cundy	Cllr C Rana (Substitute for Cllr N Martin)
Cllr S Hussain	Cllr M A Whitehand

Also Present: Councillors M Ali and K M Davis.

Absent: Councillors N Martin.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 December 2020 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

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. 2020/0568 Land to North and South of Goldsworth Road, Woking

[NOTE 1: It was noted that a written updates had just been circulated by the Planning Officer on this application.]

[NOTE 2: The Planning Officer advised the Committee that two additional letters of objection had been received since the report was published which mainly reiterated the comments already summarised within the representations section of the report.]

[NOTE 3: The Planning Officer advised the Committee that one additional letter of support had been received since the report was published which mainly reiterated the comments already summarised within the representations section of the report.]

[NOTE 4: In accordance with the procedure for public speaking at Planning Committee, Ms Bernadette Fischler attended the meeting and spoke in objection to the application and Mr Matthew Turner attended and spoke in support.]

The Committee considered an application for the demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of the site for a phased mixed-use scheme, comprising 929 residential units (Class C3), communal residential and operational spaces, commercial uses (Classes A1/A2/A3/A4/B1/D1/D2) at ground floor and homeless shelter (sui generis) within 5 blocks of varying heights of between nine and thirty seven storeys (including rooftop amenity) to the north and south sides of the site together with soft and hard landscaping including public realm works, highway alterations to Goldsworth Road, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, ancillary facilities and plant (Environmental Statement submitted) (amended plans and reports received 13.11.2020).

Councillor M Ali, Ward Councillor, attended the meeting to speak on the application and commented that he was keen to see the site developed but not to the extent proposed with regard to the bulk, density and size. He referred to the councils Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) obligation of the provision of 2180 dwellings by 2027 and commented that the number of dwellings now proposed on this site were four times that recommended in the Site Allocations DPD; this would mean that 42% of this HIF obligation would be delivered on this one site and he did not think this was sustainable. Councillor M Ali highlighted fire safety issues and commented that there was only one escape staircase and suggested that this was inadequate due to the height of the building. He noted that 17% of the units did not meet the daylight requirements and he commented that the height of these buildings would have a detrimental effect on the buildings in the surrounding area due to their overbearing design.

Councillor T Aziz, Ward Councillor, was also supportive of the site being developed, however he did not think the proposals were appropriate. He commented that the scheme approved in 2016 was more suitable to the site. The Councillor agreed with the points raised by his fellow Ward Councillor, Councillor M Ali and added that the separation distance between the units was extremely narrow resulting in serious daylight issues within some of the units. The Councillor was also concerned that the mix of units was not appropriate and more family units should be provided. Councillor T Aziz commented that although the number of dwellings in the application had doubled in comparison to the

previous application, the parking and cycling provision had reduced, which concerned him. Councillor T Aziz was unsure how the density of the development could be justified and he had the same concerns as Councillor M Ali regarding fire safety and the single escape stair. Councillor T Aziz thought that there was a number of issues with the application which required further details and possible amendments to be acceptable.

Councillor T Aziz advised Committee members that he was minded to propose refusal of the application and was likely to do so once he had listened to the remaining debate.

Some members of the Committee supported the comments made by Councillor M Ali and Councillor T Aziz and raised the same concerns again in their comments.

In response to some of the points raised by the Ward Councillors, the Planning Officer commented that Policy CS10 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) set out an indicative density range and dependent on the nature of the site higher densities would be permitted in principle where they could be justified in terms of the sustainability of the location and where the character of the area would not be compromised. The LPA considered that this application was acceptable for the location.

The Planning Officer commented that the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' (2008) set out recommended separation distances for different relationships and different building heights. However these standards were advisory and the Supplementary Planning Document made it clear that the context of development proposals would be of overriding importance. The proposed apartments did not have a conventional 'rear to rear' or front to front' relationship and the proposal was considered acceptable for this town centre location.

The Planning Officer commented that concerns regarding daylight levels in the apartments had been addressed in full in the written report; considering the high density nature of the proposed development and the town centre location of the proposal site, the proposal was considered to achieve an acceptable quality of daylight for future residents.

It was proposed that 48 affordable housing units would be provided as part of the development. The Planning Officer confirmed that the viability assessment for this development had been evaluated by two independent Viability Consultants (Kempton Carr Croft and Dixon Searle Partnership) and they had agreed with the level of provision and mix of housing offered. Although the Committee considered the provision of affordable units to be very positive, some Members commented that 48 units was only 5% provision, rather than the 40% that the Core Strategy recommended to provide. The Planning Officer commented that a late stage viability review had been recommended at the end of the development to see if it was viable to secure further monies in a commuted sum or by way of additional affordable units. Some Members commented that the mix of housing was not appropriate and with a much lower provisions of family accommodation that they would have liked. The Planning Officer advised the Committee that the mix of housing proposed was comparable to other schemes within the area and that on balance the proposal was considered to achieve an acceptable housing mix whilst delivering the efficient use of previously developed land. The Council's Housing Services had also been consulted on this matter and supported the proposal as providing a good mix especially for families.

The height of the building was flagged up as a point of concern as the tower would be taller than any building in Woking town centre. It would be in keeping with the Victoria Square development just across Victoria Way, but it would not be in keeping with the other existing buildings in the surrounding area. Members were aware however that it would be difficult to

object to the application on the grounds of height as there was an extant 2016 resolution to approve a taller building than that which was proposed.

Following a number of comments from Members raising concern about fire safety, the Planning Officer explained that Surrey Fire and Rescue and Building Control had been consulted on this matter. Building Control would work very closely with the developer on this matter to ensure all safety aspects were covered.

Further comments were made by Members regarding the provision of parking and they suggested that this was substandard by the Council's own Policies. The argument was that due to the town centre location of the development the public transport links were excellent, however some Members did not think it was always feasible for people to abandon car use, no matter how good public transport was, and thought that more focus should be given to greener cars; it was noted there were no electric vehicle charge points in the application. Some Members commented that even if residents were to be encouraged out of car use, the provision of cycle spaces was inadequate. Thomas James, Development Manager commented that parking provision was covered thoroughly in paragraphs 156-157 of the report. It was noted that residents would have the option of access to parking permits for Council owned car parks.

Following a query from the Chairman, the Planning Officer confirmed that the cyclist and pedestrian areas had not been split in the public realm and it was hoped this would reduce cyclists speed if they were not in a segregated area. Following up on another comment from the Chairman, the Planning Officer advised that the Councils Arboricultural Officer had reviewed the plans and that a great deal of consideration had gone into the landscaping plan for the site, with over 100 trees proposed to be planted. The Chairman commented that he thought the amenity space was extensive. Some Members were critical that these landscaping plans were only indicative and thought that these plans should have been submitted in full at this stage. Officers advised that the inclusion of indicative plans was quite normal for big schemes and that there was no justification to ask for the finalised plans at this stage and that it would be covered by a Condition to ensure details were forthcoming.

Following a query it was noted that the application had been subject to three independent Design Review Panels which consisted of a panel of independent architects that provided critique, comments and suggestions to a developer on their application. The Planning Officer confirmed that the developer had taken into account these suggestions.

Douglas Spinks asked Members to remember that this was a town centre site and that the Core Strategy noted that at least 290 dwellings per year needed to be provided in Woking; it was thought that a large amount of these would come from higher density town centre sites. It was a very serious matter for the Committee to carefully consider applications that would deliver the dwellings required under the Core Strategy and Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Members were extremely supportive of the York Road Project expanding as part of the development and it was noted that this would make a huge difference to many extremely vulnerable people in Woking.

Some Members were very supportive of the application and commented that it was a major regeneration project by a major developer that would contribute positively to the vitality of the town centre. They thought that the positives of the application outweighed any negatives and that it would be an important addition to the town centre.

Councillor T Aziz proposed and it was duly seconded by Councillor L Morales that the application be refused on the grounds of loss of sunlight/daylight/privacy to adjoining properties, bulk and mass and insufficient cycle parking.

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 refusal of the application were recorded as follows.

In favour: Cllrs T Aziz, A J Boote, S Hussain, L Morales and M Whitehand.

TOTAL: 5

Against: Cllrs G Chrystie, G Cundy and C Rana.

TOTAL: 3

Present but not voting: Cllr L Lyons.

TOTAL: 1

The application was therefore refused.

RESOLVED

That planning permission be REFSUED on the grounds detailed in these minutes.

6b. 2020/0894 Qaro, Pyrford Heath, Woking

[NOTE 1: In accordance with the procedure for public speaking at Planning Committee, Mr Andrew Grimshaw attended the meeting and spoke in objection to the application. The applicant chose not to address the Committee.]

The Committee considered an application for prior notification for enlargement of a dwelling house by construction of an additional storey, with proposed ridge height of 8.2m (amended description to include height).

The Planning Officer explained that the application was a Prior Approval application under Class AA (b), Part 1, Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (2015) (as amended) and that there were very limited criteria that it could be assessed against. As detailed in the report, the Planning Officer explained that the application complied with these limited criteria.

Councillor M Whitehand commented that it would be a shame to lose another bungalow in the Borough and see it converted to a two storey property.

Councillor L Morales commented that she had concerns that this timber framed property would not be able to support a second storey extension. The Councillor also had concerns that if approved, the applicant could potentially come back sometime later and apply to demolish the existing building and build a new dwelling in its place; Councillor L Morales asked for reassurance from Planning Officers regarding this point. Planning Officer reiterated that as permitted development, the scope against which the application could be assessed was very limited and there was little scope for refusal.

Councillor L Lyons commented that the extension would not be in keeping with the character of the buildings in the surrounding area and suggested it would breach CS21. Councillor L Lyons proposed and it was duly seconded by Councillor M Whitehand that the application be refused on these grounds. Thomas James, Development Manager, advised the Members that the assessment criteria was down to the character and appearance of the dwelling itself, not the surrounding area, so it was likely to be deemed unsound to propose refusal on these grounds as it was not within the criterion remit. Councillor L Lyons heeded the Development Managers advice and withdrew his motion to refuse, Councillor M Whitehand supported this. Councillor L Lyons commented that he still considered the proposed application to be out of keeping.

Following a query regarding privacy issues of neighbouring properties, the Planning Officer confirmed that there would be no windows allowed on the side elevations, however installation of windows would be allowed on the rear. These windows would give additional views over neighbouring gardens, but this was not considered to cause a level of harm that the application could be refused on.

Following a query regarding the front appearance of the property, the Planning Officer advised that the application did include material details and it was proposed that a repeat of the existing materials be used. This would not be ground for refusal.

The Committee were frustrated by the limited scope to assess the application against as many supported the concerns detailed in the representation section of the report.

One of the Planning Officers in attendance at the meeting (but not involved in this application) raised a query regarding the ridge height of the existing property and questioned whether this might affect the permitted development rights. Mr James suggested to the Chairman that in light of this comment, if the Committee were in agreement, it would be sensible to defer this application to get clarification on this matter. The Chairman agreed.

Councillor L Morales proposed and it was duly seconded by Councillor L Lyons, that the application be deferred to seek clarification on the ridge height and whether new legislation overrides previous requirements and the effect of these on the permitted development rights.

It was noted that the timescales for determination of permitted development cases were very strict and if it was not possible for this application to come back to the Planning Committee meeting on 2 February 2021 for determination, delegated authority would be given to the Development Manager to determine the application with consent of the Chairman. The Committee supported this approach.

RESOLVED

That the application be deferred.

6c. 2020/1014 Evans Triangle, Guildford Road, Woking

The Committee considered an application which sought Advertisement Consent to display non-illuminated advertisements on site hoarding.

Councillor L Lyons asked that his opposition to the application be noted.

RESOLVED

That Advertisement Consent be GRANTED.

6d. 2020/1020 Evans Triangle, Guildford Road, Woking

The Committee considered an application which sought planning permission for the erection of site hoarding around the proposal site.

Councillor L Lyons asked that his opposition to the application be noted.

RESOLVED

That Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions.

6e. 2020/0819 8 Lockwood Path, Sheerwater, Woking

The Committee considered an application which sought permission to use the detached building in the rear amenity space as separate free standing independent accommodation.

Councillor T Aziz, Ward Councillor, supported enforcement action if the building was being used independently to the main house; he questioned whether the building would be allowed to remain if it was ancillary to the main residence. Councillor T Aziz was under the impression that that applicant used it as an office space. The Planning Officer confirmed that the enforcement action did not require the removal of the building, only removal of the facilities that allowed this to be used as an independent residential unit.

RESOLVED

That planning permission be REFUSED and formal enforcement proceedings be authorised.

6f. 18/00890/HHCOMP St Annes, Littlewick Road, Woking

The Committee considered the report which requested authority to take direct action against the owner of the land due to the continued failure to comply with a Remedial Notice issued under Section 69 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Councillor M Whitehand, Ward Councillor, commented that she was fully supportive of this enforcement action.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Authority be granted to proceed with direct action under s77 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 in order to undertake the outstanding steps required by the notice, as set out in paragraph 4(d) below; and
- (ii) Recover from the owner of the land any expenses reasonably incurred by the Council for carrying out the works required by the Notice, including registering a charge against the land if necessary.

Planning Committee 12 January 2021

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 11.20 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____