

Runnymede Borough CouncilPlanning CommitteeWednesday, 22 March 2023 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Willingale (Chairman), P Snow (Vice-Chairman), A Balkan, J Broadhead, R Bromley, V Cunningham, C Howorth, A King, C Mann, I Mullens, M Nuti, S Ringham, S Whyte, S Williams (In place of E Gill) and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors E Gill.

In attendance: Councillors T Burton, J Furey, J Gracey and S Lewis.

628 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

629 Apologies for Absence

Np apologies for absence were received.

630 Declarations of Interest

Cllr S. Whyte declared a non registerable interest in item 5c due to living in close proximity to the application site. Cllr S. Whyte left the room whilst this item was discussed.

631 Planning Applications

The planning applications listed below were considered by the Committee. All representations received on the applications were reported and copies had been made available for inspection by Members before the meeting. The Addendum had also been published on the Council's website on the day of the meeting. Objectors and applicants and /or their agents addressed the Committee on the applications specified.

Resolved that –

the following applications be determined as indicated.

632 RU.22/0776 - Weybridge Business Park, Addlestone Road, KT15 2UP

Proposal: Industrial redevelopment to provide x3 units within Classes E(g)ii (Research and development), E(g)iii (Industrial processes), B2 (General industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) use, with ancillary office accommodation, new vehicular access, associated external yard areas, HGV and car parking, servicing, external lighting, hard and soft landscaping, infrastructure and all associated works following the demolition of existing buildings.

A Member queried the disparity in figures of HGV movements produced by the Highways Authority and National Highways Authority against research residents had undertaken, and the Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control advised that the assessment of the Highways Authority had concluded even in the worst case scenario the increase in Heavy Goods Vehicle movements during peak times was likely to be relatively

modest, and whilst it would result in further increases during non-peak times (and a higher overall total number of movements across the day), sufficient capacity would be available in the road network to absorb the increase without a “severe” impact arising. Therefore both National Highways and the Local Highway Authority (SCC) had concluded the scheme was acceptable in highways terms.

It was added that the Local Highways Authority had seen the research commissioned by residents, including its differing conclusions on differing peak hours, however this had not caused them to change their opinion. A ratio had been applied to the impact of HGVs against cars to ensure the impact received a fair comparison to the potential lawful use of the offices at full capacity.

In response to a query about the buildings’ use as an office building fundamentally changing post-pandemic due to fewer people using offices, The Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control highlighted that due regard had to be given to the fallback position, which could potentially mean full office use in future. Due regard must be had to lawful fallback positions in decision making.

A ward Member highlighted the impact the application had taken on local residents, many of whom had gathered in the public gallery, and felt that the local and national road network infrastructure could not support such the increase in traffic resulting from the application.

The Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control confirmed to a Member that the cumulative impact of a large number of schemes was taken into consideration by the Highways Authority, who considered new and proposed schemes in highway modelling. These matters are also given strategic consideration in plan making.

Responding to concerns about the sustainability of the development, the Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control advised that the developer proposed to use sustainable materials, including photo voltaic panels and air source heat pumps, whilst there would be around a 60% increase in biodiversity net gain.

Noting the National Trust’s objection to the application, the Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control confirmed that the National Trust were not a statutory consultee, and their primary function was to represent heritage assets rather than consider the full merits of the planning application. Planning officers had given due regard to the objection and considered that the planting and landscaping at the location, along with moving Building 100 further away from the riverbank, offered appropriate mitigation.

A Member raised the issue of air quality, and it was confirmed that Environmental Health had not raised an objection, and it was felt that utilising the site to its capacity for office space would provide similar vehicle emissions. A Member also commented on the increased HGV movements in the borough could deter some residents from cycling.

The full impact of operational noise pollution would not be fully known at the planning stage, however best endeavours had been made to mitigate this by securing acoustic fencing, this could potentially be dealt with by conditions. Some members however expressed concerns that noise and similar harms could arise, particularly at anti-social times.

Significant weight should be given to the economic benefits, with a large number of job opportunities being created on what was currently a dormant office site. The Committee were advised they had to weigh up the economic benefits against what they considered the potential harms of the scheme. A Member noted that unemployment levels in the borough were relatively low, however the weight placed upon creating job opportunities was a material consideration regardless of where residents lived.

The Assistant Development Manager confirmed that minimal light overspill was anticipated for the Wey or Bourne, however a condition of the application stated that a sensitive lighting scheme would have to be in place that was reviewed by an ecologist.

A Member asked about the possibility of limiting the hours of operation at the site, but the Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control advised that the applicant had not asked for a restriction in operating hours and had indicated that such a move would be contrary to their business model and put them at a disadvantage against its competitors and therefore they would not be willing to accept such a condition.

The Committee Chair noted the work officers had done with the applicant to move the main building on the site – Building 100 – away from the canal, but given its bulk, scale size and mass still felt it dominated the surrounding area, being far in excess of other buildings already on the site.

A Member talked about an audit from 2016 that stated that the Addlestone Moor roundabout was already operating beyond capacity at its peak, and asked why a new audit had not been carried out. The Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control acknowledged there were pressures on the roads in the borough, which would in part be mitigated by ongoing work on the A320 following a successful Highways Infrastructure Fund bid. However, planning applications were not designed to solve existing problems, and the application was unlikely to have a significantly greater impact on the highway network than the fallback use of an office block operating at full capacity. There was no objection from the Highway Authority.

During the debate several Members voiced significant concern about the change of residential amenity due to noise and other disturbance and the impact that night-time use of the site could have on local residents.

A named vote was requested on the application, and the voting was as follows:

For (0)

-

Against (15)

Cllrs M. Willingale, P. Snow, A. Balkan, J. Broadhead, R. Bromley, V. Cunningham, C. Howorth, A. King, I. Mullens, C. Mann, M. Nuti, S. Ringham, S. Whyte, S. Williams, J. Wilson

Abstain (0)

-

The motion to approve therefore failed.

Further debate occurred on the item for grounds of refusal, and a number of potential issues were discussed. Several Members put forward a motion for refusal on the basis of mass, scale, size and bulk, along with the loss of residential amenity to surrounding residential properties at various times of the day and night. This proposal was supported by other Members. A further named vote was requested on the resolution to refuse permission, and the voting was as follows:

For (15)

Cllrs M. Willingale, P. Snow, A. Balkan, J. Broadhead, R. Bromley, V. Cunningham, C. Howorth, A. King, I. Mullens, C. Mann, M. Nuti, S. Ringham, S. Whyte, S. Williams, J. Wilson

Against (0)

-

Abstain (0)

-

This motion to refuse permission passed and therefore it was resolved that:

Resolved that –

The CHDMBC was authorised to REFUSE planning permission due to:

- i) The proposed ‘Building 100’ by reason of its position, form, scale, mass and significant bulk would result in an overtly prominent, dominant and visually overbearing form of development which would have a detrimental impact to the character and appearance of the area.**

- ii) The proposed use would result in a loss of residential amenity to surrounding residential properties. This loss of amenity would be due to due noise and disturbance from both the on-site operations as well as disturbance from the likely significant numbers of comings and goings of large goods vehicles that the proposed uses would attract, particularly at anti-social hours of the day and night.**

At the start of the debate Ms Heidi Dennis, an objector, and Mr Nick Green, on behalf of the applicant, addressed the committee on this application.

633 RU.22/1933 - Barbara Clark House, St. Jude's Road, Englefield Green

The Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control advised Committee that the purpose of the application coming forward was to turn a condition of the site into a legal agreement to ensure that developer delivers the agreed affordable housing on the site.

Resolved that –

- i) The CHDMBC was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:**
 - a. Completion of a section 106 legal agreement**
 - b. The stated SAMM & SANG contributions**
 - c. Compliance with planning conditions 1-21**
 - d. Compliance with informative 1-8**
 - e. Addendum notes.**

- ii) **The CHDMBC was authorised to refuse planning permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not progress to his satisfaction.**

634 **RU.22/0542 - Pantiles Nurseries, Almnors Road, Lyne**

Proposal: S73 application seeking a proposed variation to planning condition 2 (approved drawings) to seek revisions to the approved house types to include revisions to their siting, scale and appearance as originally approved under planning application RU.19/0843 for the demolition of 198 Almnors Road and former garden centre buildings and erection of 60 residential dwellings with parking, widening of existing access road from Almnors Road, creation of new pedestrian and cycle connections to Lyne Village Green and creation of habitat corridor through the site.

The Senior Planning Officer confirmed to a Member that the level of affordable housing within the Section 106 agreement had been secured as one of the special circumstances of the legal agreement.

The application was for the same number of units previously agreed on the site, and no material change in circumstances existed that would lead officers to change the initial recommendation.

The Development Manager explained that under section 73 of the Town & Country Planning Act a developer could amend a planning condition under a variation, so long as the description remained unchanged.

The Development Manager agreed to amend condition 34 to state that notwithstanding what is shown on the approved plans no above ground development shall take place until details of the siting and design of the electricity substation have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

Resolved that –

- i) **The CHDMBC was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:**
- a. **The referral to the Secretary of State**
 - b. **The completion of a Deed of Variation to the original s106 Legal Agreement completed under RU.19/0843**
 - c. **Compliance with planning conditions 1-34**
 - d. **Compliance with informatives 1-17**
- ii) **The CHDMBC was authorised to refuse planning permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not progress to his satisfaction.**

635 **RU.22/1373 - 159-175 Redevelopment Site, Station Road, Addlestone, KT15 2AT**

Proposal: Development at 159-175 Station Road, Addlestone to provide a development of 3-6 storeys, comprising 75 affordable residential units, 330 sqm of commercial floorspace at ground floor level (Use Class E) and associated access, car and cycle parking, bin stores, plant, landscaping and amenity space.

The Principal Planning Officer advised that a very similar planning application on the site had been approved in 2018. The application before Committee had limited changes since permission was granted previously, with the most notable being the addition of an air source hydraulic plant room in lieu of the gas-powered boiler that was granted within the previous scheme.

A Member queried the affordable housing provision, and was advised by officers that to be policy compliant the scheme needed to offer a minimum of 35% affordable housing, however the development had been acquired by a registered provider, who intended to offer 100% affordable housing on the site.

A Member questioned the allocation of parking spaces on the site given the number of properties outnumbered the available spaces. The Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control advised this would be an operational decision for the developer, and the relatively low number approved previously was primarily down to good access to transport provisions in the nearby vicinity.

Resolved that –

- i) The CHDMBC was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:**
 - a) The completion of a Section 106 legal agreement**
 - b) Compliance with conditions 1-31**
 - c) Compliance with informatives 1-18 and addendum notes.**
- ii) The CHDMBC authorised to refuse planning permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not progress to his satisfaction.**

636 **RU.22/1508 - Longcross South, Longcross Road and Kitsmead Lane**

Proposal: Two Film Studio Sound Stages (for a temporary period of 5 years) (retrospective)

(Cllr T. Burton, whilst not a Planning Committee Member, left the room for the entire debate, having declared a non-pecuniary interest in the application)

A Member spoke of their frustration at the retrospective nature of planning applications, and the Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control advised that there were various reasons for retrospective planning applications, which had all been legislated for by government. The government had indicated in a recent consultation that there may be changes with regards retrospective applications in the future, including double planning fees and potential other mechanisms, the application however had to be considered on current law and regulation.

The issue of outstanding information with the application was raised, and it was advised that a programme of work was underway to address the drainage issue, and whilst the lighting had not yet been installed it was proposed the type of lighting would be similar to that used elsewhere on the site, which had minimal spill and was a sufficient distance from residential properties.

A Member queried the ability to alter the hours of use in future, however the Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control advised that the application was simply for these two buildings which were a significant distance from residential properties it could not control other operations on the site which would be subject to a separate temporary planning application. Appropriate conditions would be considered at this time.

The application was for a five-year temporary permission, which was unlikely to impact the development at Longcross South, as this would occur in a phased manner with a significant build out period due to the size of the development proposed.

Resolved that –

The CHDMBC was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- a) Planning conditions 1-7.**
- b) Informatives 1-5**
- c) Addendum notes**

637 RU.22/1486 - Treberfydd, Bagshot Road, Englefield Green, TW20 0RS

The application was withdrawn from the agenda.

638 RU.22/1883 - 83-87 Guildford Street, Chertsey, KT16 9AS

Proposal: Application seeking full planning permission for the construction of a 3-storey rear extension with roof accommodation containing 5no. new apartments and alteration of 2no. existing apartments with associated parking, cycle and bin stores.

Resolved that –

The CHDMBC was authorised to grant planning permission subject to compliance with planning conditions 1-15 and informatives 1-6.

639 Article 4 Direction and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Position Report

The Assistant Local Plans Manager advised Committee of the initial work undertaken to date to consider introducing an Article 4 Direction for HMOs in the borough, which would limit the conversion of properties into HMOs.

It was noted that whilst HMOs were distributed throughout the borough, there were notable concentrations focused in the north of the borough, particularly in the wards of Egham Town and Englefield Green (East and West), which was primarily due to the presence of Royal Holloway University.

Members were supportive of officers continuing to gather evidence of the impact of HMOs, with one Member highlighting that many universities had already implemented Article 4 Directions to protect local residents from the negative impact of the lifestyle of some students, which was dramatically different to lifestyles of young families or elderly residents, whilst the numbers of school enrollments had steeply declined in Englefield Green in recent years.

A Member felt that for the most part the presence of students enhanced a community, however more pressure needed to be applied to the university to address antisocial behaviour from a small minority of students, who needed to be held accountable for their actions. Another Member emphasised that the issue was around ensuring suitable housing provision was in place rather than looking to blame students for local issues.

Resolved that –

- i) Committee noted the findings of the work undertaken to date to investigate the number and potential impacts associated with HMOs in Runnymede;**

- ii) **Committee agreed that the Planning Policy Team should continue to gather evidence on the distribution and impacts of HMOs in Runnymede in tandem with the Local Plan Review, to underpin a future report which would be brought before the Planning Committee to decide whether it is appropriate to introduce an Article 4 Direction(s) in the Borough.**

640 **Revocation of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**

The Corporate Head of Planning, Policy and Economic Development asked Committee to revoke three existing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents; the Addlestone Town Centre Strategy (1999), Residential Extensions & Replacement Dwellings in the Green Belt (2004) and Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows (2003).

The three SPGs were no longer supported by either national or local planning policies, and had been largely superseded by other policies and guidance, including the 2030 Local Plan, and were considered to be out of date attracting little or no weight in the decision making process.

Following consultation with the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment Group, it had been concluded that a full equalities impact assessment was not required.

Resolved that –

Committee approved the revocation of the Addlestone Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), Residential Extensions & Replacement Dwellings in the Green Belt SPG and Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows SPG from 29th March 2023.

641 **Planning Policy & Economic Development - Service Area Plan**

The Corporate Head of Planning, Policy and Economic Development presented their service area plan. Over the past year the business unit had successfully adopted outstanding Supplementary Planning Documents, progressed work on the Local Plan review and assisted with delivery of other Corporate priorities, including the Council's response to climate change.

A Member asked about the evolution of policies, particularly green policies to enable more weight to be placed on ensuring developers met certain green credentials. It was also felt that more could be done to support gypsy and traveller sites.

The Corporate Head of Planning, Policy and Economic Development advised that any substantive policy changes would be done through the review of the Local Plan, and the current delay to the timetable of the Local Plan would afford officers time to consider new evidence to change and update policies.

Resolved that –

- i) **Committee approved the 2023/24 Service Area Plan for Planning Policy and Economic Development; and**

- ii) **Committee noted any General Fund business cases requiring growth were subject to approval by Corporate Management Committee (or full Council depending on sums).**

642 **Development Management & Building Control - Service Area Plan**

The Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control presented their service plan, stating Development Management were currently in delivery phase following the adoption of Local Plan. The service was performing to a high level against regional and national benchmarking. It was also ranked first in the country for the third year running for the successful defence of planning appeals of more than five dwellings.

The service had been successful with modest growth bids in the annual budget setting. These would be used for facilitating the potential shared service with Building Control with Surrey Heath Council, along with a small growth of 0.5 FTE for a planner to improve capacity as the CHDMBC had forward funded additional Enforcement Officer posts when growth was lost during the pandemic.

Resolved that –

Committee noted and approved the 2023/24 Service Area Plans for Development Management and Building Control.

(The meeting ended at 10.04 pm.)

Chairman