

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.45 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: David Cornish (Chair), Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chair), Alistair Neal, Wayne Smith, Michael Firmager, Stuart Munro, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Tony Skuse and Bill Soane

Officers Present

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Brian Conlon, Operational Lead – Development Management
Connor Corrigan, Head of Strategic Development
Rachel Lucas, Legal Services
Alan Lewis, Highways Development Manager

Case Officers Present

Joanna Carter
Nick Chancellor
Andrew Chugg
Christopher Howard
Rowan Reynolds

29. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

30. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

31. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Andrew Mickleburgh declared a personal interest with regards to agenda item 34, application number 231900, on the grounds that he was the Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which had responsibility for scrutinising the delivery of Children's Services in the Borough. Andrew added that he came to the meeting with an open mind and would listen to and consider all representations prior to forming a judgement.

David Cornish declared a personal interest with regards to agenda item 33, application number 230872, on the grounds that he was a member of the Finchampstead Parish Council Planning Committee. David added that he was not present at the meeting where this application was discussed, and came to the meeting with an open mind and would listen to and consider all representations prior to forming a judgement.

32. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

There were no items to be withdrawn or deferred.

33. APPLICATION NUMBER 230872 ARBORFIELD GREEN DISTRICT CENTRE, ARBORFIELD GREEN, RG2 9GB

Proposal: Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 (dated 02/04/2015). The Reserved Matters (access, appearance,

landscaping, layout and scale) comprise details of a mixed-use District Centre including 206 dwellings, commercial floorspace (Use Class E), a preschool, public open space, pedestrianised high street, and a mixed-use community centre building including cafe, associated community facilities and day nursery. New vehicular, pedestrian and cycle accesses to be provided with associated internal roads, parking, landscaping, drainage, substations, plant, bin and cycle storage.

Applicant: Crest Nicholson Chiltern

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 11 to 80.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Amended wording for informative 17 to clarify that the CEMP will need to refer to pedestrian and cycle access to Bohunt School.

Pamela Stubbs, Barkham Parish Council, spoke to the application. Pamela Stubbs commented that Barkham Parish Council fully supported the application for the district centre. For almost a decade they had taken part in discussions and consultations. The Parish Council had tried to engage with residents and the developers about what was required for residents, but this had been difficult. She noted that the medical centre included in an earlier iteration of the proposals was no longer included. Pamela Stubbs went on to emphasise that it was vital that the community centre facilities were built before any further housing, and that meaningful consultation with the residents be carried out. The residents had waited some time and deserved to be heard.

David Digby, Crest Nicholson Chiltern, applicant, spoke in support of the application. David Digby stated that the proposals for the Arborfield Green District Centre were the result of numerous pre application post submission discussions with officers, two consultations, focus groups with stakeholders including the nursery, and feedback from an independent design review panel. Every aspect of the proposal had been refined to ensure that it would deliver the vibrant community centre that residents needed. He went on to highlight some of the features of the proposals including over 10,000 square feet of new shops, a new community centre, nursery, and village green with children's play area and wildflower planting. Sustainability was key and walking and cycling would be promoted with connections into Bohunt School. A wide range of shopping units were proposed which had flexibility to be adapted to different sizes to meet changing local demands. David Digby stated that all buildings were designed to be highly energy efficient with wastewater heat recovery, PV panels and electric vehicle charging points. The new commercial space would achieve a Very Good BREEAM rating, and the community centre had potential to achieve an Excellent rating subject to specifications. Should the application be approved enabling works were planned to start in January. The first phase would enable the supermarket and pub to be delivered and the majority of the new shops. The second phase would prioritise the remaining shops, the village green, the community centre and nurseries. Refurbishment would likely overlap with Phase 1, and the last phase would deliver the remaining housing. A dedicated and safe route to and from Bohunt School would be provided for pedestrians and cyclists during construction.

It was confirmed that all Members except Anthony Skuse had attended a site visit.

Bill Soane questioned whether all shops could be built in Phase 2 to ensure viability. Nick Chancellor, case officer, stated that it was likely that Phase 2 would commence before Phase 1 had fully completed. There would be logistical challenges to amending the phasing. Priority would be given to the eastern side of the high street in Phase 2. In response to a question from David Cornish regarding the letting of the units and trading during construction, Nick Chancellor indicated that outline planning permission was subject to a condition which required a Construction Environment Management Plan. The letting of the units would be down to the market.

Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked about contaminated land, and if any was identified, how it would be made safe. Nick Chancellor stated that the developer would have to comply with a condition around checking whether there was any contamination present on site and establishing a remediation method to clean up any contamination should it be identified. Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey went on to ask about ensuring a suitable fit out of the community centre, and whether the community centre would be managed by a management committee. Nick Chancellor referred to condition 5 which indicated that the Council and the developer would need to come to an agreement on specifications before building commenced. Nothing had been decided with regards to who would run the community centre, although there were some interested parties. However, this was not a planning issue. Lastly, Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked about the viability of the shops. Nick Chancellor responded that the developer had undertaken work regarding the appropriate level given the population size. The 18 units and the amount of floor space had been informed by an appraisal. The units were different sizes allowing for different sizes of operators and flexibility.

Anthony Skuse noted that the original plans had contained a S106 agreement for a health facility but that the ICB had indicated that this was not part of its Commissioning Strategy. Connor Corrigan, Head of Strategic Development - Planning and Delivery, commented that numerous conversations had been had with the NHS on this matter. Surgeries now covered a much wider footprint and there was no interest in a new facility in this location. However, there was potential for a room within the community facilities to be used as an outreach facility.

Michael Firmager was of the view that Barkham Parish Council needed to be kept better informed of the process. He queried how it could be ensured that heat pumps were operational, and was informed that they were the main source of heat for the community centre and that the application was supported by an Energy Strategy which set out how the BREEAM criteria would be met.

Andrew Mickleburgh referred to achieving the highest practical BREEAM rating for the community centre. He questioned whether condition 5 could be strengthened to clarify that the intent was trying to achieve an Excellent BREEAM rating. Nick Chancellor indicated that the outline planning permission required the achievement of a Very Good rating. Officers felt that whilst excellence could be aspired to, it could not be required. Andrew Mickleburgh asked if it could be noted on an informative that the Committee would like to see the community building achieve a BREEAM 'excellent' certification. Officers agreed. With regards to condition 8 and public art, Andrew Mickleburgh questioned how much money would be allocated and the anticipated number of installations. Nick Chancellor stated that the Landscape Masterplan supporting the application identified three possible areas for installations. The developer was committed to providing public art and could potentially consult the community. Public art did not necessarily have to be

expensive but had to be right for the site. Connor Corrigan added that the S106 had already been signed so additional sums of money could not be requested.

David Cornish sought assurance that the existing nurseries would not close prior to the construction of the new facilities. Officers confirmed that this was the case. He went on to ask whether the community centre had to be in the building already located on site. Officers indicated that it was the only proposal that had been put forward. Potentially it could be located elsewhere but additional work around funding would be required, and the agreement of the developer needed. The refurbishment of the existing community building was the most favourable option given the cost cap.

With regards to public open space, David Cornish sought clarity as to what would be transferred to the Council, what would be retained by the developer and what would be transferred to a management committee. Nick Chancellor commented that it was likely that the spine roads and the roads serving residential areas would be adopted by the Highways Authority. Much of the public open space to date had been retained by the developer and a fee was paid to the management committee. Under the s106 agreement, the Council could adopt the public open spaces.

Wayne Smith was of the view that the application had been a long time coming and should proceed.

Alistair Neal asked whether the car park located by the school was used by the school. Officers indicated that the school had used the car park in the past but going forwards access would be closed off to the school.

Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked whether the history of the site would be commemorated. It was suggested that this could be linked to the public art condition. Nick Chancellor commented that the area near the proposed Village Green had been subject to a design code and as part of that process the developer had proposed that there could potentially be a memorial garden.

David Cornish was of the view that the application would be welcomed by many in the community who had been waiting some time to see it actioned. He felt that the application was innovative, forward-looking and a good design for the heart of Arborfield Green. However, residents had had many promises from other applications which had not been fully met. The applicant was currently in breach of planning conditions and S106 agreements. He noted that many residents had expressed a desire that the delivery of the community facilities be actioned before the delivery of any further housing, and that the Parish Council had expressed concern regarding the community centre facility. David Cornish was of the opinion that communication with the Parish Council and other stakeholders could be improved. Whilst he had some concerns regarding the plans for the community centre, he felt that the application in general was a good one. He stated that the residents' comments suggested a loss of faith in the applicant and the Local Planning Authority and this represented an opportunity to deliver on that which had been promised for some time.

RESOLVED: That application 230872 be approved subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 46 to 52 and amended informative 16.

34. APPLICATION NUMBER 231900 2 WORMSTALL COTTAGES, GREENSWARD LANE, READING, RG2 9JP

Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use from residential dwelling house (use class C3) to children's home (use class C2).

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 81 to 97.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- To clarify, the reason for determination of this application by Committee was that the applicant was Wokingham Borough Council, and the application will result in an increase in staff members.
- Further comments from Councillor Cowan and officer response.

Nathan Whitley, WBC, applicant, spoke in support of the application. He indicated that the site was one of three children's homes that the Council wished to open to support up to six children in total. There was currently a lack of residential opportunities for vulnerable children in the Borough, with some children having to be placed over 100 miles from their family homes. The rural location of the site would offer a quiet and therapeutic environment for the children. Very little improvement was required to the building and it was hoped that should the application be approved, it could open in the new year. The application would create 14 permanent jobs.

Michael Firmager asked about the narrowness of the lane. Rowan Reynolds, case officer, responded that it was not overly narrow, and that on road parking would not be obstructive to the road. Alan Lewis, Highways Development Manager, indicated that it was suitable for two-way traffic and that there were 25 houses and an equestrian centre in the area. Vehicle flow was approximately 15-20 vehicles per hour, and a bus stop was located 250m away. Michael Firmager went on to question whether the area would be too isolated for the children. Rowan Reynolds indicated that it was considered appropriate for the children.

RESOLVED: That application 231900 be approved subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 88 to 89.

35. APPLICATION NUMBER 222304 "LAND ADJACENT TO LANE END HOUSE", SHINFIELD ROAD, SHINFIELD RG2 9BB

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 6no. dwellings, with associated landscaping and access

Applicant: Mr R Mellett

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 99 to 149.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Clarification that officers had further considered the proposed planning obligations to be secured via s106 with the applicant. The Infrastructure Financial Contributions for South of M4 SDL and 'My Journey' initiative was to be secured for payment upon commencement of development rather than being considered as part of the late-stage viability review. Hence, the application remained in compliance with the Council's highways policies.
- Amended recommendation.
- Correction of typographical error at the end of paragraph 12.

Andrew Mickleburgh commented that he was pleased to see the revised recommendations including the infrastructure and My Journey contributions. He went on to state that should the proposal be approved, it would enable a late stage viability review at which time the actual contributions to the affordable housing would be determined.

In response to a question from Alistair Neal about the approach taken by the valuers to the modelling, Andrew Chugg, case officer, indicated that two different approaches had been taken. In October 2022 policy compliant affordable housing and highways related contributions had been secured. Following this, issues around developer viability had arisen, and the developer had indicated that they could not make a reasonable profit and make an affordable housing contribution, and had submitted a Financial Viability Appraisal. This document had been independently assessed by viability experts. Whilst not all aspects were agreed, it was agreed that the scheme was in deficit and the developer could not afford to pay the affordable housing contribution at that point. A financial review would take place after 70% of the build out had taken place. Brian Conlon, Operational Lead – Development Management, provided further clarification around viability.

Some Members expressed concern that the level of the final contribution was not yet known. Andrew Chugg indicated that it was not viable at this point in time, but the situation could change. Brian Conon added that the planning system had a degree of flexibility to take changing circumstances into account.

RESOLVED: That application 222304 be approved subject to the completion of a legal agreement as detailed in the Supplementary Agenda, and conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 130 to 136.

36. APPLICATION NUMBER 231602 LAND AT BUILDING 810, ESKDALE ROAD, WINNERSH TRIANGLE BUSINESS PARK, WOKINGHAM, RG41 5TS

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of a sound stage building for commercial filming with access, parking, landscaping and associated works, following demolition of the existing buildings.

Applicant: Mr J Atack

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 151 to 191.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Revised recommendation.

- Comments from Councillor Prue Bray, ward member, and officer response. Members were informed that Councillor Paul Fishwick, ward member, had indicated that he agreed with Councillor Bray's comments following the production of the Supplementary Agenda.
- Updated conditions 11 and 12.

Jonathan Rowlatt, agent, spoke in support of the application. He stated that the site was a key constituent of the creative quarter in Winnersh and would provide additional sound space and floor space, strengthening the film industry in the Borough. It would provide significant employment opportunities both in the construction and operation stages. The proposal would help to address the shortfall of film production space in the UK. Jonathan Rowlatt went on to state that the high quality design and materials proposed would greatly enhance the part of the business park and optimise previously developed land. He went on to state that it would help to assist with traffic calming and provide a safer pedestrian environment along Eskdale Road. Additional soft landscaping and biodiversity net gain would be delivered.

Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey commented that more employment was needed in the Borough.

Andrew Mickleburgh was pleased to note the 20% biodiversity net gain and the Excellent BREEAM standard.

RESOLVED: That application 231602 be approved subject to prior completion of a S106 legal agreement as detailed in the Supplementary agenda, within 3 months of the committee resolution (unless a longer date is agreed by the Chair Chairman of Planning Committee), and conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 173 to 185 and updated conditions 11 and 12 as set out in the Supplementary Agenda.

37. APPLICATION NUMBER 231837 GATEWAY 4 PLOT THAMES VALLEY SCIENCE PARK SHINFIELD, RG2 9LH

Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed erection of a new Gateway building containing offices for creative industries (including film, television and ancillary support uses) and ancillary café with associated landscaping. (Application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment and is a potential departure from the Local Plan)

Applicant: Shinfield Studios

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 193 to 255.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Amendment of applicant name from University of Reading to Shinfield Studios.
- Update building height from 5 stories to 4 stories with plant room above
- Confirmation that Southern Gas Networks have withdrawn their objection.
- Updated recommendation.
- Amended paragraph 25.

Mark Owen, agent, spoke in support of the application. He indicated that the application would provide space for creative industries, including film and television. He went on to state that the Gateway policy which controlled the type of businesses to be located at the Science Park had been amended under the wider Shinfield Studios application to include businesses relating to the digital and creative sector. This amended Gateway policy would be included as part of the S106 agreement for the application. Providing space for creative industries would align and support the wider influence of Shinfield Studios at a local and national level. The proposal would create employment opportunities for approximately 415 employees and 420 jobs at the construction stage, boosting employment in the area. He highlighted that the mass would be broken up by cladding, and energy efficiency measures such as PV panels and the use of heat pumps. It was noted that the proposed building would achieve BREEAM 'Excellent.'

Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey encouraged the applicant to offer apprenticeships.

Michael Firmager questioned whether the cladding would be fire retardant and was informed that it need to meet building regulations so should be.

RESOLVED: That application 231837 be approved subject to completion of a legal agreement within 6 months of the committee resolution (unless a longer date is agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning and Chairman of Planning Committee) as detailed in the Supplementary Agenda, and conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 217 to 227.