

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2019 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.28 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Simon Weeks (Chairman), Chris Bowring (Vice-Chairman), Gary Cowan, Carl Doran, Pauline Jorgensen, Abdul Loyes, Andrew Mickleburgh, Malcolm Richards and Angus Ross

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: John Halsall

Councillors Present

Councillors: Wayne Smith

Officers Present

Chris Easton, Service Manager Highways Development Management
Marcia Head, Development Management Team Leader
Lyndsay Jennings, Legal Specialist
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Andrew Fletcher
Adriana Gonzalez
Chris Hannington
Simon Taylor

32. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Stephen Conway and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

33. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 August 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MEMBERS' UPDATE

There are a number of references to the Members' Update within these minutes. The Members' Update was circulated to all present prior to the meeting. A copy is attached.

34. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Item 36 – Angus Ross stated that he was a member of Wokingham Borough Council's Local Access Forum and was also a member of the local ramblers association. Angus stated that he was able to take part in the debate and the vote as he did not have a pecuniary interest.

Item 40 – Gary Cowan declared an interest for this item on the grounds that he had been involved with various issues related to the Coombes Woodland for many years. Gary added that he would take no part in the debate nor the vote.

35. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

Item number 39, application number 191112 (Manor Farm, Finchampstead, RG40 3TL), was withdrawn from the agenda.

36. DIVERSION ORDER WOKINGHAM 16

Proposal: Diversion Order FP Wokingham 16

Applicant: Bellway Homes Ltd

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this Diversion Order, set out in agenda pages 11 to 16.

The Committee were advised that there were no Members' Updates.

Simon Weeks stated that the Diversion Order was envisaged to be required as a part of the outline application for the site, and would be a minor diversion to the eastern side of the route and had received no objections.

Malcolm Richards queried what road safety aspects had been taken into account as the diversion would cross an estate road. Andrew Fletcher, Case Officer, clarified that there would be a safe crossing point available for the user. The road formed a part of the NWDR and there were adequate crossings with central islands being provided

RESOLVED That Diversion Order Wokingham 16 be authorised, as per the recommendation as set out on agenda page 11.

37. APPLICATION NO. 191972 - 24 MATTHEWSGREEN ROAD, WOKINGHAM, RG41 1JU

Proposal: Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey extension to existing detached garage, plus conversion of the garage into habitable accommodation.

Applicant: Mr Graham Ebers.

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 17 to 30.

The Committee were advised that there were no Members' Updates.

Simon Weeks stated that this application was before the Committee as the applicant was the Deputy Chief Executive of Wokingham Borough Council. An application of this nature would not routinely come to the Committee, however all Officers who form a part of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team were required to have their planning applications brought forward to the Planning Committee to allow for an additional level of scrutiny and due diligence. Simon added that there had been no objections to this application.

Pauline Jorgensen queried how had the plans been validated with regards to parking, as there were no plans showing the available parking submitted. Marcia Head, Development Management Team Leader, stated that the Case Officer had undertaken a site visit and had no concerns regarding the parking provision. Subsequently, there was no need to require a parking plan to be submitted as a part of this application.

RESOLVED That application number 191972 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 17 to 18.

38. APPLICATION NO. 191566 - OLD BIRD HOUSE, MILLEY LANE, HARE HATCH, RG10 9TH

Proposal: Full planning application comprising a new vehicular access, improved vision splays to Milley Lane for the existing and new access and associated fencing and gates

Applicant: Mrs D Klat

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 31 to 54.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- A summary of 20 additional submissions against the proposal, and Officer responses to issues not raised in the previous submissions;
- Additional Officer comment regarding traffic data;
- Additional Officer comment regarding materials to be used;
- Additional Officer comment regarding the loss of hedgerows;
- Correction to the final paragraph on agenda page 31 to state that Council Officers raise no objection, as distinct from the objections raised by the Ward member;
- Correction to paragraph 26 on agenda page 43, clarifying that listed building consent was not required and therefore Informative 1 was unnecessary.

Kim McLaren, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Kim stated that there had been 45 objections to this application, including from both Wargrave & Ruscombe Parish Councils. Kim added that this application sought the removal of all hedges and trees on this stretch of the road, and was directly opposite a listed building. Kim stated that the application would encroach on the green belt and would allow for the removal of mature native hedging and trees. Kim commented that the application would be harmful to the greenbelt and would become a negative feature within the setting of the listed building's character. Kim added that TB24 required conservation of designated heritage assets, and was of the opinion that the views from Hill House were a material consideration and formed a part of the character of this listed asset. Kim stated that the application was located close to an area of special interest, and when taking in to account the recently declared climate emergency by Wokingham Borough Council serious consideration and reserve should be given to proposals asking for the removal of mature trees and hedgerows and therefore should be required to remain. Kim raised concerns about traffic safety implications on Milley Lane, and added that HGVs could be impeded, even more so than currently, as a result of the proposed works. Kim concluded by stating that this location was inappropriate for access to the site and the application would harm the listed building Hill House.

Paola Kalisperas, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in favour of the application. Paola stated that the application would bring safety improvements to the existing main gate of the site. Paola added that her mother had originally purchased The Old House and the cottage combined, and subsequently purchased the current plot to breed rare pheasants – hence the name The Bird Gardens. Her mother had since sold part of the property. Paola stated that the current application had been altered based on pre-application advice and feedback from planning officers. Paola added that the application would achieve vehicular access to the Bird Garden in addition to widening the verges and improving the lines of

site. Paola stated that should the application be refused, access to the Bird Garden would be very limited and residents would be forced to park on Milley Lane to gain access to the land from the roadside. Paola concluded by stating that all pre application conditions had been met, and the applicant had complied with all officer advice and feedback.

John Halsall, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. John was of the opinion that this application was in effect a retrospective planning application. John stated that the site already had good access and felt that access should have been retained when part of the property was previously sold. John added that Milley Lane was only 1 track wide, and heavy goods vehicles could often be seen blocking the lane by driving in the opposite direction to one another. John added that the proposed application would cause safety implications on Milley Lane, in addition to encroaching on the green belt.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether accidents had been recorded on Milley Lane, whether the setting of the nearby listed building was a material consideration and why a bat survey had been undertaken. Chris Easton, Service Manager - Highways Development Management, stated that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) held all traffic accident data for all of the surrounding areas. However, if road users did not report an accident to the police, for example if it was a minor accident, WBC would not know that the accident had occurred and therefore there were no recorded incidents on this stretch of road. Simon Taylor, Case Officer, stated that the existing bird aviaries were proposed to be demolished, but the type of construction would mean that the building was unlikely to be used as bat roosts and the removal of the vegetation adjacent to the road was acceptable outside of the bird nesting season. Simon stated that WBC's conservation Officer had reviewed the proposals and had made no objections on the grounds that the proposed development would not impact on the setting of the nearby listed building.

Gary Cowan queried the width of Milley Lane compared to the proposed access, and why this item came to Committee prior to the conclusion of the consultation process. Chris Easton stated that the access would be 5.5m wide, with Milley Lane being approximately 5m wide. Simon Weeks commented that this would make the visibility splays wider which could lead to better road safety. Marcia Head, Development Management Team Leader, stated that the recommendation before the Committee was to approve the application in principle and to defer and delegate the final decision to the Assistant Director of Place Based Services based on any further comments received as part of the consultation.

Pauline Jorgensen queried whether the loss of the hedge rows was deemed acceptable, and how comparable the proposed access was to other access points in the area. Simon Taylor stated that the hedgerows would be replaced and were subject to landscaping details condition 3. Chris Easton stated that the proposed access was not dissimilar to the existing access to the main house.

Chris Easton clarified that the applicant could improve the vision and sight lines of the existing access by cutting back and removing the hedgerow without the need for planning permission.

Carl Doran queried why the visibility splays were required to be changed after such a long time, why the vegetation was required to be removed and whether there were different standards of visibility splays. Chris Easton stated that the current visibility splays were historic and dated back to pre-motor vehicle days. Chris added that the applicant had undertaken speed surveys and in accordance with the derived data the visibility splays were proposed to be adjusted accordingly. Chris stated that the speed surveys undertaken

showed that vehicles were no travelling along the road in line with the derestricted 60mph speed limit, which had allowed the applicant to retain more of the hedgerow and vegetation. Chris stated that the proposals would significantly improve the road safety around both the existing and proposed entrance and at the junction of Scarlets Lane and Milley Lane.

Carl Doran queried what constituted engineering works, as stated within the application. Marcia Head stated that although there was no statutory definition, engineering works was widely held to include formation of an access point.

Gary Cowan queried whether the existing hedgerow was an ancient hedge, and what research had been done to determine the effects of its removal in the context of the recently declared climate emergency by Wokingham Borough Council. Chris Hannington, Team Manager - Trees and Landscape, stated that he had not seen anything within the hedge that showed that it was an ancient or an important hedge. Chris added that the estimates he had heard suggested the hedge was planted approximately 30 years ago, and this estimate was likely to be approximately correct based on the evidence he had seen. Chris stated that the proposals could improve the species mix at the site, and the length of the hedge would remain approximately the same as part of the proposals.

Carl Doran proposed that the Chairman in conjunction with the Assistant Director Place Based Services review any further submissions as a part of the ongoing consultation. This was seconded by Angus Ross and upon being put to the vote the motion was carried and added to the recommendation.

RESOLVED That application 191566 be approved in principle, with the final decision delegated to the Chairman in conjunction with the Assistant Director Place Based Services subject to any additional submissions as a part of the ongoing consultation, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 32 to 35, various corrections and removal of informative 1 as set out in the Members' Update.

39. APPLICATION NO. 191112 - MANOR FARM, FINCHAMPSTEAD, RG40 3TL
This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

40. TREE PRESERVATION ORDER (TPO) - COOMBES WOODS, TPO 1684/2019
Gary Cowan left the room and did not participate in this item.

Proposal: Confirmation of TPO 1684/2019

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this TPO, set out in supplementary agenda pages 3 to 38.

The Committee were advised that there were no Members' Updates.

Candice Jules, resident, spoke in objection to the TPO. Candice stated that her land used to be a part of the Newland Farm and was originally planted for the purpose of harvesting trees. Candice stated that her paddock predominantly housed silver birch trees, and had previously been overrun with rhododendron which she had cleared. Candice stated that she was concerned with the additional species included within this TPO, as some of them were seen as weeds which needed careful management. Candice added that she had

submitted a woodland management plan to WBC with no response. Candice stated that a 5 day dated and diseased tree application took a considerable amount of time for WBC to respond to. Candice queried how WBC would manage with increased correspondence if holly, which was seen as a weed, was classed as a tree under this TPO and required permission to manage.

Dean Thompson, resident, spoke in objection to the management of the TPO. Dean stated that he had planted 400 trees on his land, and just 18 now remained as a result of theft and antisocial behaviour by members of the public. Dean stated that landowners and woodland managers needed to be able to properly manage their woodland effectively and efficiently, and this TPO would inhibit this.

Chris Hannington, Case Officer - speaking about woodland management, clarified that a woodland management plan (WMP) had been received from Mrs Jules however it was deemed to not be up to standard. Chris added that a management plan approved by the Forestry Commission sat above a TPO and a TPO was a flag to the FC that a woodland provided amenity value. They would consult the council over WMPs in such cases. Chris stated that there was some evidence that some of the woodland at the Coombes had been planted in rows, ostensibly for forestry, however there was other contradictory evidence such as rows of various different species planted which suggested otherwise. Chris stated that all tree species were included within this TPO, however species such as rhododendron which were not classified as trees were not to be protected.

Angus Ross commented that many of the general public that used the woodland for recreational walks would be unlikely to see different ownership, and this TPO would allow WBC some control over the area in order to retain its amenity value.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried how long an approved woodland management plan would last. Chris Hannington stated that an approved woodland management plan would likely last for many years or even decades. Chris added that if somebody deviated significantly from an approved woodland management plan, the TPO would be a legal vehicle to prosecute under the terms of the TPO. Simon Weeks commented that a TPO would remain even in cases of change of ownership.

RESOLVED That TPO 1684/2019 be confirmed.