

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.10 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Simon Weeks (Chairman), Chris Bowring (Vice-Chairman), Stephen Conway, Gary Cowan, Carl Doran, Abdul Loyes, Andrew Mickleburgh, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

**Councillors Present and Speaking**

Councillors: Sarah Kerr and Dianne King

**Councillors Present**

Councillors: John Halsall and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

**Officers Present**

Marcia Head, Development Manager Team Leader  
Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager  
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor  
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

**Case Officers Present**

Senjuti Manna  
Simon Taylor  
Graham Vaughan

**69. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Pauline Jorgensen.

**70. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Item 66 – Application 192244 "... it would allow for safer access **than** from Nine Mile Ride".

**MEMBERS' UPDATE**

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

**71. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**72. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS**

Item 76, application number 191655, was withdrawn from the agenda. No applications were recommended for deferral.

**73. APPLICATION NO. 192420 - UNIT 1 (THE BUSINESS CENTRE), MOLLY MILLARS LANE, WOKINGHAM**

**Proposal:** Full application for the change of use from B8 Warehouse to mixed use of B8, B1a (Offices other than in A2) and B1c (Light Industry within a residential area). Extension

of first floor. Increase in ridge height by 1.75m. Installation of 2no. silos, new external doors and solar panels.

**Applicant:** Mr Philip Glover, Intersurgical Ltd.

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 13 to 46.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- Correction of summary paragraph 4;
- Amendment of Recommendation A to state that the legal agreement was a personal permission;
- Amendment of Condition 2 to include the submitted plans and drawings;
- Additional sub-clause to Condition 5;
- Replace reference of Condition 13 to Condition 4 on agenda page 23;
- Additional clarification to paragraph 25, to state that the applicant was willing to accept a personal permission in order to overcome non-compliance with parking standards.

Emily Temple, agent, spoke in support of the application. Emily stated that this application would enable the expansion of Intersurgical within Wokingham. Emily added that Intersurgical was 2<sup>nd</sup> only to the Borough Council in terms of employment within the Wokingham Borough, and had been an employer within Wokingham for over 20 years. Emily stated that the NHS was Intersurgical's largest client, and the demand for their specialist products was growing. Emily added that approximately 2 million adult respiratory masks were produced for the NHS per month, and this application would allow Intersurgical to manage this growing need. Emily stated that parking could be accommodated on other land and facilities owned locally by the applicant, and the applicant had engaged with officers throughout the planning process and agreed with all Conditions.

Simon Weeks commented that there had been no objections received from local Ward Members or the Town Council, and the two neighbour letters of objection had been addressed by the officer within the report.

Andrew Mickleburgh applauded the inclusion of solar panels on this application, and raised some concern regarding the proposed silos with regards to additional noise. Senjuti Manna, Case Officer, stated that the proposed additional silos would produce noise at 6Db higher than permitted levels. However, there was a noise mitigation condition that was required to be implemented prior to construction of the proposed silos. The application site was located within an industrial estate and there was therefore a certain expectancy of some residual noise.

Abdul Loyes queried whether there were any health and safety concerns with regards to the overhead power cables and the proposed new structures. Senjuti Manna stated that the building was not moving closer to the overhead power cables and the footprint of the building was not changing, therefore the proposed development would have a neutral effect with regards to the overhead power cables.

Gary Cowan queried the additional sub-clause (h) included within the Members' Update. Simon Weeks proposed that this now read, "...should be kept clear of parked, loading and unloading construction traffic at all times". This proposal was seconded and carried.

Gary Cowan queried what public transport was available on Molly Millers Lane, and why the travel plan had been removed. Senjuti Manna stated that the site was within walking distance of the train station and a bus stop was approximately 40 metres away. Senjuti added that a staff survey showed that 64% of staff drove to the site. Senjuti stated that the travel plan had not been removed from this application, but instead it had been removed from the approved document.

**RESOLVED** That application number 192420 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 14 to 21, various amendments and clarifications within the Members' Update, and amendment to the additional sub-clause (h) set out within the Members' Update as resolved by the Committee.

**74. APPLICATION NO. 192826 - FORMER ADWEST SITE, HEADLEY ROAD EAST, WOODLEY (BULMERSHE AND WHITEGATES)**

**Proposal:** Full application for the demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to form 5 industrial units for uses within Use Classes B1 (b and c), B2 and B8 with ancillary B1a; and erection of a building to be used as a builders' merchant (Sui Generis) for the display, sale, storage of building, timber and plumbing supplies, plant and tool hire including outside display and storage racks, with associated access, car parking and landscaping. (Part retrospective)

**Applicant:** L & C Investments Limited

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 42 to 72.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- Various additional tree protection Conditions;
- Amendment to Condition 7;
- Amendment to Condition 5;
- Additional Condition relating to construction hours;
- Additional information on parking provision;
- Various amendments and corrections to the report.

Laura Wilkinson, agent, spoke in support of the application. Laura stated that the previous building was not suitable for office use and the proposed structures were similar in design to surrounding buildings. Laura added that there was suitable access and parking provision on-site with 53 parking spaces available. Laura stated that the offices would not be B1, and B1a offices would be ancillary to the B8 units on-site. Laura added that there had been no objections from trees and landscape officers nor environmental health officers. Laura added that additional planting would take place on-site, and the applicant was in agreement with all conditions and the S106 agreement. Laura stated that there had been no objections received from the Town Council or residents.

Carl Doran stated that some residents had been concerned that this site might become housing, and it was good that this site would now be retained as an employment space. Carl queried how the builders' merchant was not classed as a retail unit, and queried the retrospective demolition planning permission request. Graham Vaughan, Case Officer, stated that the builders' merchant was not classed as an A1 or A2 unit as although there was an element of retail it was not a high enough proportion of its use to warrant an A1 or

A2 classification. Simon Weeks proposed that an informative be added, strongly advising the applicant to ensure that all future planning applications were not retrospective. This proposal was seconded and added to the list of informatives set out in the officer recommendation.

Car Doran commented that although Hawkhurst House was not a listed building, it did have some history and parts of the building would have been worth saving and documenting.

Malcolm Richards queried how large delivery vehicles would turn on the site. Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager, stated that there was a wide enough area located between the parking bays to allow adequate manoeuvre of large vehicles.

Gary Cowan queried whether there was a standard delivery hours Condition, and whether any piling would occur on-site. Simon Weeks stated that a standard hours Condition was present. Graham Vaughan added that a construction management condition was also included. The agent confirmed that no piling would take place on-site.

**RESOLVED** That application number 192826 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 48 to 52, various additional tree protection conditions as set out in the Members' Update, amendment to conditions 5 and 7 as set out in the Members' Update, additional condition relating to construction hours as set out in the Members' Update and additional informative as resolved by the Committee.

#### **75. APPLICATION NO. 192128 - WOODSIDE CARAVAN SITE, BLAGROVE LANE, WOKINGHAM**

**Proposal:** Application to vary condition 1 (relating to temporary and personal restrictions) of planning consent 181694 which was a variation to conditions 1 (names of residents) and 2 (number of pitches) of planning permission 152821 (appeal decision APP/X0360/C/15/3085493 dated 15/1/18) for the change of use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes.

**Applicant:** Mr B, C and Ms C Maughan

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 73 to 94.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included information that the applicant had provided details of a land search for 9 potential plots both within and outside of the Borough, however they had been advised that the sites were either too expensive or were not suitable for occupation.

The Committee were advised that since the deferral of this application from the November Committee to request more information, an appeal had been submitted to the inspectorate and therefore the Inspector would make the final decision on this application. The Inspector had asked the Committee to consider whether, in light of any and all additional information received to date, they would have resolved to grant planning permission at the November Committee.

Philip Bain, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Philip stated that he was representing the residents of Blagrove Lane, whom had one central argument – which was that the site location was located in a field sold as horse grazing land and was not suitable

for the purposes of stationing of caravans for residential purposes. Philip was of the opinion that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) needed to do more to find the applicant a suitable site. Philip stated that the number of caravans on site had increased over time and there was a concern that this increase would continue over time. Philip added that the caravans could be seen from the surrounding residential properties. Philip queried why the applicant needed a site in this specific area, whether the applicant was on the waiting list for a site and why temporary planning permission was continually granted.

Lettie Maughan, applicant, spoke in support of the application. Lettie stated that the application site had become their family home, comprising of three families. Lettie added that their families were growing and they had recently had a bereavement which had strengthened their desire to keep all of the families together. Lettie stated that they had tried to find an alternative site however all of the sites were either full or unsuitable. Lettie added that she understood that some residents may not want to live near a stationary caravan site, however this site had become a family home which met their needs. Lettie stated that they had been on a waiting list for a pitch for three years and nothing suitable had been offered in that time. Lettie commented that some of their family had moved to a pitch only to be evicted due to the different backgrounds of the existing travellers. Lettie asked that the Committee give her and her family a chance.

Sarah Kerr, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Sarah stated that this application was contrary to planning policy, however it was previously allowed due to significant human rights factors relating to the applicant. Sarah queried whether the applicant had been on the waiting list for a pitch since the grant of temporary planning permission or prior, and asked how the applicant might be elevated up the waiting list. Sarah was of the opinion that the racial background of existing travellers should not be a factor in identifying a suitable pitch. Sarah asked that should temporary planning permission be granted, what could be done to ensure that the permission was only temporary and the site was fully restored on its cessation.

Stephen Conway was of the opinion that it was unfortunate that the agent had persuaded the applicant to appeal on non-determination rather than wait for the Committee decision, as the application was only deferred to allow further information to be provided. Stephen stated that given the additional information, he believed that he would have voted in favour of temporary planning permission subject to conditions.

Andrew Mickleburgh was of the opinion that the additional information provided was quite limited, and it would be beneficial to receive more information on pitch allocation. Andrew added that in his opinion the site was unsuitable for stationary caravan usage for residential purposes, however the human rights considerations were now even more important due to the increase in the size of the families present on site.

Chris Bowring queried whether the information regarding the search for nine potential plots by the applicant, contained within the Members' Update, had been corroborated. Graham Vaughan, Case Officer, stated that the information had only been provided at the beginning of the week and was limited, however early indications were that the information was accurate.

Chris Bowring was of the opinion that the application should be approved in principle should the additional information be considered as satisfactory by Members.

Carl Doran was of the opinion that the human rights issue considerations made by the Inspector originally still stood.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether there were any suitable sites that met all of the needs of the applicant. Marcia Head, Development Management Team Leader, stated that there were currently no sites either in private ownership or Council owned that were deemed as suitable for the applicant.

Angus Ross queried what the legal position would be should the Committee be minded to approve the application in principle and the applicant be minded to withdraw the appeal. Simon Weeks stated that the applicant would need to submit a new planning application.

Malcolm Richards queried what could be done to ensure that a new site was found within the next two years. Simon Weeks stated that the new Local Plan would include a call for sites. WBC were in a position to increase the number of allocated sites (within Government guidelines) should they wish.

**RESOLVED** That application number 192128 be approved in principle, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 73 to 74, with the final decision to be made by the Inspectorate.

**76. APPLICATION NO. 191655 - CROSFIELDS SCHOOL, SHINFIELD**  
**This application was withdrawn from the agenda.**

**77. APPLICATION NO. 192852 - SORBUS HOUSE, FISHPONDS ROAD, WOKINGHAM**

**Proposal:** Outline application with for the proposed erection of 38 dwellings to include one and two bedroom dwellings, landscaping, bike store and bin store (access to be considered)

**Applicant:** Mr P Smith

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 141 to 180.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- Reference to the previous building being destroyed by fire, and noting that there was no direct entitlement for a replacement building following fire and/or demolition;
- Reference to an approval for a replacement office building on the site which had since expired;
- Correction to Condition 9;
- 4 Neighbour objections received since publication of the report and associated officer responses;
- Confirmation that the commuted sum in lieu of the 11.4 units of affordable housing as quoted in paragraph 78 was correct;
- Further clarification that an off-site commuted sum was acceptable because the Council's Housing Policy Team felt that affordable housing could be provided in a more accessible location.

Paul Smith, applicant, spoke in support of the application. Paul stated that they had worked closely with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) throughout the planning and pre-

planning phases, and significant changes to amenity space had been made throughout the application process on the advice of officers. Paul added that the previous building on-site had been burnt down, and the remaining ground had now become a wasteland. Paul stated that there was no market for office space in the area, and other properties in the area had been developed into residential units using permitted development rights. Paul added that they had noted and taken seriously all of the concerns and objections with the application. Amenities in the area included local schools and two large doctors' surgeries who were taking on new patients and did not have capacity issues. Paul stated that a CIL contribution would be made as part of this application which could be used to provide further infrastructure within the area. Paul added that the application did not meet the threshold requirements for SANG provision and electric vehicle charging points would be available. Paul stated that there were no objections from Highways officers with regards to this application, and WBC had requested a commuted sum in lieu of on-site affordable housing, however they were exploring options with affordable housing companies and were open to providing on-site affordable housing units.

Sarah Kerr, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Sarah stated that she had been notified that many properties within this core employment area had been, or were in the process of being, converted to residential properties. Sarah added that there was a rapid rate of office to residential conversions in this area, and as this application was not under permitted development WBC could do something to retain the core employment space. Sarah was of the opinion that just because other units in the area had been converted into residential properties, this should not mean that WBC should grant planning permission against policy. Sarah stated that there were issues in the area with local amenities, including lack of doctors' surgery capacity. Sarah added that the nearest playing field was not accessible from Fishponds Lane, and should the application be granted then affordable housing should be provided on site.

Dianne King, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Dianne stated that she had originally thought that this application was a good use of a previous office space. However, since visiting the business park Dianne felt that a residential development would be a strange and unpleasant place to live as it was surrounded by large office buildings. Dianne added that should this application be approved, it was likely to be used as a precedent for similar applications. Dianne stated that should this business park be considered as a residential estate, then proper amenities and infrastructure needed to be delivered. Dianne urged the Committee to refuse the application.

Simon Weeks commented that permitted development conversions attracted no affordable housing, had restrictive conditions for the Council to apply, had a generally lower living and amenity space and had lower levels of provision of parking spaces. Simon added that as this was not a permitted development conversion, this development would give the Council more control and provided a higher quality development for residents.

Carl Doran queried why an off-site affordable housing contribution was considered acceptable, as it needed to be robustly justified. Carl was of the opinion that WBC were wrong for requesting a commuted sum. Simon Weeks suggested that an informative be added suggesting that WBC and the applicant re-engage in talks to provide on-site affordable housing and clarifying the Committee's preference for provision of on-site affordable housing. This proposal was carried and added to the list of informatives as set out within the officer recommendation.

Andrew Mickleburgh raised a number of concerns with this application, including design and amenity issues, a greater bulk than surrounding buildings, overlooking of surrounding buildings, lack of soft landscaping and a greater resident density than surrounding conversions. Andrew was of the opinion that this was a case of overdevelopment in the area, and additional infrastructure and facilities such as schools and doctors' surgeries were required should this level of development continue. Simon Weeks commented that this application attracted a CIL payment, which could provide facilities and infrastructure within the area.

Stephen Conway stated that should this application be approved, it would mark a permanent loss in office space within the core employment area. Simon Weeks commented that there was approximately 84,000m<sup>2</sup> of vacant office space within the Borough. Stephen added that he supported the idea of on-site affordable housing.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey commented that this type of application was preferable to a permitted development conversion as it attracted affordable housing. Rachelle stated that the core employment area was seemingly not in great demand, and supported proposals for on-site affordable housing.

Angus Ross stated that the application site was relatively close to playing fields, and queried whether pedestrian permeability could be added to the south wall of the site. Simon Weeks suggested that this be added as an informative, suggesting that the applicant endeavours to provide pedestrian permeability to the south wall of the site leading to the nearby playing fields. This proposal was carried and added to the list of informatives as set out within the officer recommendation.

Gary Cowan commented that a residential and industrial mix can work well if properly implemented. Gary added that the site was near the town centre with good accessibility, and supported the affordable housing and connectivity informatives.

Malcolm Richards queried whether the road was wide enough to allow for large vehicles such as refuse or emergency vehicles adequate space in order to enter and exit the development. Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager, stated that Fishpond Road was 7.5m, with the other connecting road being 6m wide. Both roads were adequate to accommodate large vehicles.

Abdul Loyes queried whether this building would be higher than existing properties. Simon Taylor, Case Officer, stated that the proposed development would be 12.5m high whereas other properties were 14m high. Simon added that the property would have more bulk than existing properties but it would not be out of character.

Chris Bowring queried if an office building was approved and built, whether the building could then be converted to residential through permitted development. Marcia Head, Development Management Team Leader, stated that a newly office block would not get permitted development rights.

Carl Doran queried whether on-site affordable housing could be conditioned. Marcia Head stated that Recommendation A could be changed to remove the reference to an off-site commuted sum and instead to read: "A legal agreement to secure affordable housing and an employment skills plan". The applicant verbally confirmed that this was agreeable. This amendment to the recommendation was moved, seconded and carried.

**RESOLVED** That application number 192312 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 144 to 148, correction to condition 9 as set out in the Members' Update, two additional informatives as resolved by the Committee, and alteration to Recommendation A as resolved by the Committee.