

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 10 AUGUST 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.30 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey (Chairman), Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chairman), Chris Bowring, Stephen Conway, David Cornish, John Kaiser and Alistair Neal

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Andy Croy

Officers Present

Kamran Akhter, Principal Highways Development Management Officer

Brian Conlon, Operational Lead – Development Management

Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery

Sean O'Connor, Head of Legal Services

Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Sophie Morris

George Smale

31. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Rebecca Margetts and Wayne Smith.

32. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

35. APPLICATION NO.220822 - READING FC TRAINING GROUND, PARK LANE, BARKHAM, RG40 4PT

Proposal: Application for the approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline planning consent 163547 for the erection of 140 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), associated amenity spaces, play area, access, garages, parking, internal roads, pathways, drainage and associated landscaping (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be considered).

Applicant: Vistry Partnerships (Thames Valley)

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

Whilst there were no updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda, the Committee were informed verbally by the case officer that informative 10 was no longer required as it was covered by informative 6.

Nina Lloyd, agent, spoke in support of the application. Nina stated that she was delighted with the officer recommendation for approval, and thanked all involved for their efforts and collaborative working. Nina added that the principle of development was established in 2021, and the application had received no technical objections from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) officers or statutory consultees. Nina stated that the scheme was policy compliant, and would deliver 140 high quality houses which reflected the existing local character. 40 percent (56 houses) of houses delivered on site would be affordable and tenure blind, whilst a 2.8 hectare SANG had been approved and would connect to an existing SANG. Top quality walking and cycling routes would be installed across the development, in addition to community green space with local and native species. The existing perimeter landscape would be maintained, and the site was considered to be located in an extremely sustainable location. Nina supported the officer recommendation of approval, and hoped that the Committee would grant planning permission.

John Kaiser stated that the strategic market assessment indicated that 22 percent of all homes should be four-bedroom, whereas this development proposed 35 percent. John added that there was a housing crisis within the Borough in relation to small and affordable homes, and questioned why four-bedroom homes were being overdelivered with recent planning applications. Sophie Morris, case officer, stated that the dwelling mix had been considered against the 2020 housing needs assessment, and fell comfortably within the specifications and was therefore considered acceptable. Sophie added that it was not considered suitable for 1- and 2-bedroom flats to be delivered in this edge of settlement location, whilst apartment blocks would be delivered in other locations within the Arborfield SDL. John Kaiser stated that members needed to see the running total of homes delivered within the SDL locations, including dwelling mix and affordable homes. John stressed that the borough needed more smaller homes and not 4-bedroom houses.

John Kaiser stated that this development was presented as part of the wider SDL, and queried how this could be justified with no highway link to the wider SDL. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager – Planning and Delivery, stated that a highways link could not be provided due to the positioning of the school and leisure centre pitches. Connor added that a link was available at the top of the Hogwood spur and onto the Nine Mile Ride extension, providing easy access for pedestrians and cyclists to the district centre. Connor stated that there was no physical ability to link the two, and the site was no different to the sites in the norther part of the SDL

John Kaiser queried whether S106 charges for buses were being reflected in the increasing costs being sought by bus operators. Connor Corrigan stated that officers were in consultation with bus companies, and this was generally reflected within S106 contributions.

David Cornish felt that the best possible use of land should be sought, as residents would likely prefer more dwelling density at edge of settlement locations rather than having to give up more green space in other areas. David added that small homes had long been part of the rural landscape, and queried whether all pathways within the site were open to cyclists and horse riders. Sophie Morris stated the Arborfield SDL supplementary planning document gave a broad density range of up to 35 dwellings per hectare. Due to the location and edge of settlement status, the proposed 27.5 dwellings per hectare was considered acceptable. Sophie stated that the paths around the perimeter of the site were 2m wide and were open to cyclists, whilst the pedestrian cycle path secured by S106 would provide a route up to Biggs Lane. Connor Corrigan confirmed that horses would not

be permitted in the SANG, as Natural England did not want the conflict between horses and dogs.

Stephen Conway stated that the scope of member deliberations were limited as this was a reserved matters application. Stephen was of the opinion that the design of the dwellings was attractive and of high quality, and he was very pleased to see 40 percent affordable homes, with 70 percent of those being social rent whilst being of high-quality design and tenure blind.

Andrew Mickleburgh was pleased that many issues raised at the outline stage had been addressed, particularly noise and odour concerns which had resulted in positive assessments being carried out. Andrew added that he was pleased with the overall designs being proposed, and with the proposed levels of tenure blind affordable housing.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that the application be proposed as per the officer recommendation, minus informative 10 as advised by the case officer. This was seconded by Stephen Conway.

RESOLVED That application number 220822 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 14 to 17, with the omission of informative 10 as advised by the case officer.

36. APPLICATION NO.221453 - 25 PALMERSTONE ROAD, EARLEY, RG6 1HL

Proposal: Householder application for the proposed first storey extension and raising of the roof to create a habitable first floor, single storey rear extension and changes to fenestration.

Applicant: Mr S Sidhu

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 47 to 76.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

Tim Marsh, ACER residents' association, spoke in objection to the application. Tim stated that ACER had reviewed over 400 planning applications in Whitegates since 2016, including a variety of bungalows, however no applications to convert a bungalow in the middle of a row of bungalows to a two-storey house had been considered until now. Tim added that such a development would be out of keeping and out of character. Tim felt that the bungalow development to number 42 was acceptable, with the overall height only being increased by 0.75m, whereas the proposal for number 25 would add an entire additional storey and had received 9 objections. Tim requested that the application be refused as the conversion of the bungalow to a two-storey property was out of keeping with the character of the area and was not in keeping with the row of bungalows in which it resided, and the allocated parking for a 5-bedroom tenanted property was inadequate.

Peter Dorward, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Peter stated that policy CP3 was the key policy regarding planning permission, and proposals must meet key criteria and requirements including appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character of the area whilst being of no detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users and their quality of life, whilst integrating with the surrounding existing

dwelling. Peter added that number 25 was in a row of 5 houses with very similar design, with the same frontage and same height, creating a section of the road with its own unique character. Peter felt that the proposed changes demonstrated a very significant change, with the proposed building being much taller than existing dwellings. Peter stated that other properties including his own had been sympathetically increased in size, but had remained in keeping, met planning requirements, whilst retaining their existing height. Peter added that his dining room would see a loss of light from the proposed dwelling, whilst number 23 would also experience this same issue. Peter felt that the application should be refused as it did not meet the requirements set out within CP3, and presented a number of signatures from objectors on Palmerstone Road.

Andy Croy, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Andy felt that the mass, scale and layout of the proposal would detract seriously from the existing street scene. Andy added that this section of the road was a section of bungalows, and a two-storey home in the middle of this section would detract from the character of the area. Andy stated that other properties had undergone sympathetic redevelopment, utilising space towards the rear of the property, which remained in keeping with the road. Andy expressed his disappointment that officers made reference to the flats at the bottom of the road as an example of different built forms in the area, which he felt was totally out of keeping with the area and should never have been developed. Andy felt that the application should be refused, which would give the applicant the opportunity to go back and return with a scheme which was sympathetic with the existing character of the road.

Stephen Conway contemplated whether the character of the road as a whole or the immediate context of the building's surroundings formed the street scene and character of the area. Stephen added that the road had a variety of styles however this particular section of the road appeared to be a row of bungalows with lots of gables which were also incorporated into any extensions. Stephen emphasised that gables appeared to be a common feature of the road, and sought officer comment on this matter. George Smale, case officer, stated that there were a wide variety of different property designs in the area, some with gables but also bay windows. George added that all windows on the proposed design were symmetrical to each other. Stephen Conway queried whether retention of gables the ground floor but then proposing a completely different design on the second floor was acceptable in design terms and in accordance with policy R23. George Smale stated that the most unique character of the property were the gables on the ground floor towards the front and the rear of the property, which would be retained.

Andrew Mickleburgh sought clarity on the proposed height increase of the property, thanked officers for clarifying the intended design of the property compared to the shaded plans provided, queried whether the materials to be used would match the existing materials, and sought details regarding any potential loss of light to neighbouring properties. George Smale confirmed that the property would see a 1.85m increase in height, whilst materials would match those of existing materials by condition. George stated that the nature of any two-storey house would result in a loss of light to neighbouring dwellings, however side glazing would be conditioned for each side window. George added that loss of light would only be detrimental to a main habitable room, and number 27 had a habitable room to the front of their property with a window. Brian Conlon, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that it was the nature of side-to-side development that there would always be some level of overbearing, however the application was situated within a suburban area which had established side to side development. Brian added that members needed to determine whether the variety of

dwelling being proposed was harmful in planning terms in and of itself. Brian confirmed that the proposal did not breach any guidelines in terms of vertical or horizontal levels.

With regards to further queries about obscure glazed windows, George Smale stated that loss of light to the ground floor of neighbouring properties already existed. Peter Dorward commented that the room in question was his dining room, and not his kitchen. Brian Conlon stated that a dining room was a habitable room, however it had a north facing elevation and most habitable rooms were situated to the front or rear.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried under what circumstances loft conversions required planning permission. Brian Conlon stated that if an existing roof void was converted then this would not require planning permission until the built form protruded significantly in which case permitted development or planning permission would be sought. Brian added that internal use of a roof void was not a material planning consideration.

Alistair Neal was of the opinion that the proposal was completely out of character with the area, as the proposed 2-storey dwelling was situated within a row of bungalows opposite other bungalows.

John Kaiser was of the opinion that this application would have a fundamental and detrimental effect on the street scene. John queried how much the space of the property would increase by. George Smale stated that there were a mix of dwellings on this road, and several properties had enlarged their roof spaces by between 40 and 50 percent. George confirmed that the proposals conformed to separation gap requirements either side of the property.

Chris Bowring queried how many consecutive bungalows persisted on this part of the road. Brian Conlon stated that this was a very long road, and this section had 5 bungalows in a row with two on the opposite side. Chris Bowring was of the opinion that the overall street scene was very mixed. Chris queried how many additional rooms would be added by the proposal. George Smale stated that the property would comprise of a total of 5 habitable rooms, with 3 car parking spaces which complied with car parking standards, whilst no highways safety concerns had been raised by highways consultees.

David Cornish stated that the neighbouring property's dining room was classed as a habitable room, which would be affected by loss of light. David added that the question of 'how long is a street scene' was a subjective question, however when you broke the road down into smaller sections these proposals would be out of keeping with its surroundings. David stated that he was not against redevelopment, however these proposals were not in keeping in his opinion.

Stephen Conway queried whether any planning guidance was available as to how changes to a street scene were assessed. Brian Conlon stated that members had to consider whether the proposals fundamentally changed the street scene in their opinion, whilst also considering whether the design was good and whether it would cause harm.

Andrew Mickleburgh felt that given the diverse nature of the street scene and the professional advice received with regards to loss of light, the application should be approved.

John Kaiser proposed that the application be refused as it failed to retain the existing character of the street scene. This was seconded by Alistair Neal. Upon being put to the vote, the motion fell.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that the application be approved as per the officer recommendation. This was seconded by Chris Bowring.

RESOLVED That application number 221453 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 54 to 55.