

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 29 MARCH 2017 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.12 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Tim Holton (Chairman), John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman), Michael Firmager, Philip Houldsworth, Malcolm Richards, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Wayne Smith and Bill Soane

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: David Chopping, Gary Cowan and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Officers Present

Chris Easton, Service Manager, Highways Development Management
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor
Justin Turvey, Operational Development Management, Lead Officer
Arabella Yandle, Democratic Services Officer

Case Officers Present

Stefan Fludger, Planning Officer
Pooja Kumar, Senior Planning Officer
Daniel Ray, Senior Planning Officer
Rebecca Walkley, Public Rights of Way Manager

108. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Chris Bowring

109. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 March 2017 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. It also contains details of properties to be visited prior to the next Planning Meeting. A copy is attached together with a letter from the Emmbrook Residents Association related to Item 115 on the agenda.

110. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Michael Firmager declared a personal interest in Items 113 and 116 as he was a member of the Planning Committee of Earley Town Council, but had not attended the meetings at which they had been considered.

111. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

It was noted that: Item 114 – 170317 – Land to the rear of 72 Old Bath Road was withdrawn by the applicant.

112. APPLICATION NO 163058 - HEWDEN PLANT HIRE, OLD FOREST ROAD, WOKINGHAM

Proposal: Full application for proposed erection of 43 dwellings (7 x 1 bedroom apartments, 11 x 2 bedroom apartments, 17 x 3 bedroom houses and 8 x 4 bedroom houses) together with associated access improvements, parking and refuse storage following the demolition of existing buildings.

Applicant: Ashill Land Ltd

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in Agenda pages 15 to 46.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- Proposed amendment to Condition 5 to clarify the number of parking spaces as 71;
- Proposed updates to conditions 15 and 17;
- Proposed deletion of condition 13 as it was covered in condition 23;
- Clarification as to acceptable noise levels and noise attenuation schemes;
- Clarification as to the percentage of affordable housing applicable to brown field sites;
- Information on density and maximum building heights of surrounding developments;
- Additional comments from the Emmbrook Residents' Association.

Members had visited the site on 24 March 2017.

Kevin Morgan, Member of Wokingham Town Council for Emmbrook North, spoke against the application. He stated that the plan did meet minimal regulations but by their very nature these were minimal and were leading to a lowering of standards. He suggested that the size of parking spaces for some of the properties would make access to cars, rear gardens and for rubbish collection extremely difficult.

Robert Millen, Emmbrook Residents' Association, spoke in opposition to the application. He stated that the proposal for change of use was acceptable but that the plan proposed an unacceptable housing density and would lead to substandard amenity value. He indicated that only 6 gardens met Council guidelines in terms of length, and queried the number of disabled and unallocated parking spaces.

Tracey Puttock, Ashill Land, spoke in favour of the application, explaining the measures that Ashill Land had taken to work with the community on the development, and that there had been majority support. She stated that, as a brown field site in a built up area, the density was not out of keeping and would not lead to a loss of amenity. The amount of space allocated to parking met the Councils guide and a trip rate assessment had shown that any increase in vehicle movements would be insignificant.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Ward Member for Emmbrook, spoke in opposition to the plan, stating that the location of a hump-back bridge close to the access road to the development would be a hazard. She went on to suggest that, during construction, site vehicles should not park on the road and that parking, access, overhanging trees and garden length should all be addressed.

In his absence, the Chair read a letter from Philip Mirfin, Member for Emmbrook, on the application. He stated, that whilst on the face of it an attractive development and that changes had been made to the application following discussion with the developers, access to the development; the size of the parking spaces for the town houses, and garden lengths were still inadequate.

In her absence, Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey read a letter from Prue Bray, Member of Winnersh, a neighbouring ward, stating concerns around the route that might be used by construction traffic in regards to access over the hump-backed bridge, poor

visibility on access to the site and lack of safe on-road parking. She suggested that a condition be included requiring a banksman and that restrictions and protection be put in place regarding parking on Forest Road and Lennon Close relatively speaking

In response, the Case Officer made the following points:

- Whilst the property densities would be high, they compared favourably to other developments in the area. Density was related to impact on an area and the space of the development had been judged as adequate;
- community space for the flats was 78 sqm for one and 65 sqm for the second. There were a number of open spaces nearby that could be accessed by residents;
- gardens had been calculated to have sufficient sqm. The shorter length was to allow the Council to maintain trees with TPOs. As there would be no conflict from houses backing on to the properties and the boundary was to be post and rail, there would be no loss of visual amenity;
- the aspect of the properties meant that shade would not be an issue in the afternoons, and
- the condition relating to construction routing was stringent and covered all the concerns raised by the speakers.

The Service Manager, Highways Development Management, re-iterated that the parking met Council standards in terms of dimension and exceeded them in terms of number. In regards to disabled bays, he stated that these would depend on need and be determined by the management company in response to resident needs. In relation to construction traffic, he indicated that vehicles would be advised of the most efficient routes on to the site. The development of the Northern Distributor Road to the west of Old Forest Road would, in fact, improve the situation. He stated that the S106 agreement made provision for the security of land within the applicant's ownership to enable, if required in the future, a new cycle and pedestrian bridge which could be located alongside the existing bridge on Old Forest Road, improving the current situation.

In response to Member questions, the Service Manager, Highways Development Management indicated that a reduction to the speed limit on Old Forest road to 30mph had been considered in the past and could be considered again (although it is not dependant on this application) and that the Council's Community Parking Enforcement powers would provide further assistance when introduced to assist in parking enforcement restrictions. He stated that the access gates were set back by approximately 12m to enable vehicles to pull off the highway prior to them opening to prevent traffic build up on entering the development. He also clarified that any increase in traffic was measured against the existing vehicle movements to determine an overall nett increase. The site would benefit from 6m wide roads and had turning areas, as well as a footpath running down one side.

In response to a Member question regarding Houses of Multiple occupation (HMOs), the Lead Officer, Operational Development Management stated that a condition could be added citing the removal of HMO development rights due to parking.

Resolved: That Application no 163058 be approved subject to the conditions set out in Agenda pages 15 to 46, the amendment to conditions 15 and 17, the deletion of condition 13, the clarifications and additional comments as laid out in the Members' Update and an additional condition relating to HMOs.

113. APPLICATION NO 170368 - LODDON JUNIOR SCHOOL, HILLSIDE ROAD, EARLEY

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of a part single, part two storey (double height hall) extension to the south of the existing main block. Refurbishment of existing reception/administration offices; alterations to existing hall to create classrooms, WCs and store; and conversion of existing PE store to group teaching room. Alterations to parking layout to north and south of site and alterations to playing field to include installation of a MUGA (multi-use games area) with ball fence.

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in Agenda pages 47 to 74.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- proposed amendment to Condition 5 Drainage Strategy regarding drainage, and
- clarification regarding the use of the MUGA, to wit that use would be restricted to day time.

Elizabeth Edwards, Resident, spoke against the application, stating that her property was immediately adjacent to the proposed MUGA site and that she had been subject to ongoing issues around flooding and damp due to run off and the difference in level of the existing surface in its relation to her property.

Piers Brunning, Service Manager, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships for Wokingham Borough Council, spoke in favour of the application. He explained how demand for places in Earley Schools had increased due to the influx of young families into the area and that Loddon Primary School had been identified in a recent Task and Finish Group as suitable for expansion. He indicated that it was expected that the additional places would be taken up by pupils who likely lived within walking distance and that the school's Travel Plan would be updated to take into account the changes in pupil and staff numbers. He stated that the improvements to the school, including a hall, MUGA and several new classes, met all current standards and would provide new and more modern facilities

David Chopping, Ward Member for Earley Ward, spoke in favour of the application, complementing the staff at Loddon Primary School for their work in catering for increasing demand. He also thanked Council staff for their work and professionalism, and stated that the plan was an example of how much could be achieved through communication and co-operation. He acknowledged issues around parking and traffic, but explained that the growth in numbers would only be visible over time as the increase would start in reception and follow through over the following years. He suggested that most of the problems with parking and traffic were due to bad discipline and that measures could be taken to improve this.

In response to Member questions regarding drainage, the Case Officer stated that the MUGA was to be built into the existing hill so would not increase the height differential between the school playing fields and the surrounding properties. She indicated that condition 5 in the update referred to drainage and that any scheme would need to demonstrate that the plan had not made the situation worse. A SuDS plan would need to be agreed prior to development.

In response to Member questions regarding traffic and parking, the Service Manager, Highways Development Management, stated that the standards for parking in relation to numbers of full-time equivalent staff members referred to in the plan could only be applied to the extension, not the existing school, as it was only the extension being considered for planning consent. He indicated that the school's Travel Plan had only been updated in 2016 and that, as the full expansion would take place over 7 years, the recent travel surveys gave a good base assessment for how travel patterns would proceed throughout the expansion. He stated that parking at schools was a perennial problem and that the planned expansion would not significantly aggravate the situation as alternative modes of travel to the school, other than the car, are already currently good and should continue to improve through further promotion of the Travel Plan.

In response to a question about fire safety and the installation of sprinklers, the Service Manager, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, stated that the current regulations on the installation of sprinklers only required them to be installed on new schools, not expansions, as this would then require a retro-fit of the whole school.

Resolved: That Application no 170368 be approved subject to the conditions set out in Agenda pages 45 to 74 and the amendment to condition 5 and clarifications as laid out in the Members' Update.

114. APPLICATION NO 170317 - LAND TO THE REAR OF 72 OLD BATH ROAD, CHARVIL

This item was withdrawn.

115. APPLICATION NO 170217 - 3 BARKER CLOSE, ARBORFIELD

Proposal: Householder application for the proposed two storey side extension to existing dwelling, raising of garage roof to provide first floor habitable accommodation and part conversion of garage to habitable accommodation.

Applicant: Mr David George

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in Agenda pages 87 to 104.

Gary Cowan, Member for Arborfield, spoke in favour of the application and submitted a set of images to the Committee to illustrate his viewpoint. He stated that the layout of the development was not linear in nature. He indicated that other two storey extensions had been approved historically and went on to explain that the plan before the Committee had been designed to allow full access for an elderly relative and that any diminution in the design would negate its intended purpose.

In response to a Member query, the Lead Officer, Operational Development Management, stated that the relationship between the two properties in question was different to others on the street and that officers were concerned about the impact of the extension on number 5. He indicated that an alternative plan had been proposed to limit any possible impact, but that had been rejected by the applicant.

Members discussed the item at length, suggesting that the plan was not out of keeping with other developments on the estate and that, as most other properties abutted each other and that the garden of number 5 was bigger than others in the street, the impact

would be minimal and not out of keeping. They felt that developments to allow elderly relatives to be cared for at home should be encouraged.

The recommendation put to the Committee to refuse the application was not supported. As a result, an alternative proposal was received from Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey to approve the application for the reason that, although the plan did not wholly conform with guidance, any harm was outweighed by the amenity value. This was seconded by John Kaiser.

The following conditions were attached:

- The development should begin no later than three years from the date of the decision;
- The development would be carried out in accordance with the plans in Agenda pages 87 to 104;
- Materials used in the construction of the external surfaces would match those in the existing building, and
- A condition regarding the process to follow if there is evidence of contamination in future.

Resolved: that Application no 170217 be approved subject to the conditions set out above.

116. FOOTPATH EARLEY 11 - EXTINGUISHMENT OF FOOTPATH AT FINBECK WAY

Proposal: Extinguishment Order to extinguish part of Public Footpath No. 11 Earley

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in Agenda pages 105 to 110.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included a clarification that the stretch of Footpath 11 under consideration was in Hillside Ward.

Resolved: That

- an Extinguishment Order for part of Footpath 11 be made, and, if no objections are received, confirmed, and
- it be referred to the Secretary of State for confirmation.