

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.55 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Prue Bray, Lindsay Ferris, Paul Fishwick, John Halsall and Wayne Smith

Officers Present

Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager
Sean O'Connor, Head of Legal
Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Andrew Fletcher
Senjuti Manna
Kieran Neumann
Simon Taylor

51. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

52. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 December 2020, and the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 16 December 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

Relating to a comment within the minutes, Gary Cowan queried whether a Committee Member should be present for the entirety of the consideration of an item. Sean O'Connor, Head of Legal, clarified that the Council's Constitution set out that Committee Members should be present for the entirety of an item, including all presentations, representations and discussions.

53. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Pauline Jorgensen made a comment relating to agenda item 55, on the grounds that she had been the Executive Member with responsibility for libraries 2 years ago. Pauline stated that she no longer had libraries within her Executive portfolio, and would come into this meeting with an open mind and listen to all presentations, representations and discussions prior to coming to a decision. Pauline added that she would therefore take part in both the discussion and the vote on this item.

Stephen Conway made a comment relating to agenda item 55, on the grounds that he had campaigned to secure a new library in Twyford and was therefore an advocate for the provision of one. Stephen added that his commitment to the provision of a new library in Twyford did not constitute either a personal or financial interest, and he would assess the application based on its planning merits. Stephen added that he would therefore take part in both the discussion and the vote on this item.

54. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

55. PATH CREATION ORDER AT JUBILEE AVENUE

Proposal: Path creation order

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee received a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 29 to 106.

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

Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey commented that she hoped that officers would ensure that no Jubilee Oaks were damaged during the creation of this section of the path. Simon Weeks commented that the proposals included a no dig approach and the use of permeable materials.

Angus Ross queried what criteria the order could be challenged on, during the next consultation, should the order be made on the evening. Andrew Fletcher, case officer, stated that an interested party would have to make a new representation which showed a legal interest in the land.

Malcolm Richards queried what process would follow should someone claim a legal interest in the land. Andrew Fletcher stated that should the order be made, a 6 week period (which would be advertised) would follow to allow interested parties to come forward. After this period, and should no objections be received, there would be a further 6 month period for individuals to challenge the legal processes relating to the making of the order.

Pauline Jorgensen queried whether this path would include the Gear Change guidance relating to separation of pedestrians and cyclists. Andrew Fletcher stated that greenways are off-road routes and comply with the guidance in that respect, as the new guidance discourages shared footway/cycleways, but outside of this the Greenways were not usually designed to segregated users. Highways were aware of the new standards and would comply where possible. Pauline Jorgensen requested that the following be included within the minutes: When designing the route, officers endeavour to meet as many of the Gear Change objectives including the separation of cycle ways and footways given the constraints of the site.

Gary Cowan stated that the original consultation was thorough and well presented, and suggested that officers may wish to consider developing an action plan to address the points already raised within the initial consultation. Gary added that it would be useful to present a reference number alongside such orders to allow easy reference in the future.

The Committee were unanimous in their support for this scheme, as it provided a linked greenway route to allow for recreation and exercise.

RESOLVED That the order be made subject to the recommendations set out in agenda pages 29 to 30.

56. APPLICATION NO.201022 - OLD SCHOOL HALL, HIGH STREET, TWYFORD

Proposal: Full application for the proposed restoration and conversion of existing building into a library, erection of a single storey lobby/link area and a two storey extension to provide multi-purpose community facilities including a café, plus associated landscaping and demolition of existing public toilets (phased)

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)

The Committee received a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 107 to 158.

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

Wayne Smith, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Wayne stated that it had been a long journey to get to this stage, and he hoped that the Committee would approve this application. Wayne wished to thank the case officer Simon Taylor, WBC officer Mark Redfearn, and David Turner from the Polehampton Trust for all of their help and support in getting the application to this stage.

John Halsall, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. John stated that he was delighted to support the application, which had been on a long but highly enjoyable journey. John wished to thank David Turner, James Fort, John Jarvis, Andrew Cardy and Wayne Smith for their help and support in the development of this project and application. John added that this project would be of no financial benefit to the Borough Council, but it would be a community asset for the village. John extended his thanks to both the Twyford Borough and Parish Councillors for their support.

Lindsay Ferris, Ward Member, spoke in support of the application. Lindsay wished to thank David Turner, who had been instrumental in ensuring that this project progressed forwards. Lindsay stated that he fully supported this application, as it was a much needed community facility for Twyford, whilst retaining and using a Grade 2 listed building. Lindsay queried whether some of the nearby car parking be designated solely for use of the library, and was the replacement of the toilets in phase two planned and included within this application.

Stephen Conway stated that he was pleased to see this application come forward, and pointed out that this application would renew a previous consent that was granted to the Polehampton Trust in 2016, with the new applicant being WBC. Stephen stated that the listed building had been used as a temporary library before, and had been given outline consent for a library in the past. Stephen added that the proposals would cause minor harm to the listed building, disruption of roosting bats, and the loss of a sycamore tree, however the community benefits of the proposals outweighed the negatives. Stephen stated that this had been a community aspiration for 20 years, and he could personally testify for the strong sense of community support for a new library in Twyford.

Andrew Mickleburgh stated that the registered speakers' sentiments reflected the merits of this project and the people that made it happen. Andrew queried whether the existing toilet block was still in use, and whether an informative could be added asking that infrastructure be installed to allow the easy installation of additional electric vehicle charging points in the future. Simon Taylor, case officer, stated that the toilets were due to be refurbished during stage one and then demolished in stage two. Regarding the car parking, Simon stated that

this was situated outside of the red line boundary and therefore had to be dealt with separately.

Pauline Jorgensen queried what might happen to the old library site. Stephen Conway suggested that it may be a possibility that this site could be demolished to provide additional car parking, however this was outside of the scope of this application.

Gary Cowan queried why the Environment Agency were not in the list of consultees. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that the Environment Agency were not a statutory consultee for this application. Gary stated that he did not like the loss of the sycamore tree, however on balance the benefits of the scheme outweighed this.

Angus Ross queried whether informative 10, relating to listed building consent, was part of this planning application or a separate issue. Simon Taylor stated that the listed building consent had been separately submitted and would be determined alongside this application under delegated powers.

Chris Bowring stated that there would be some damage to the listed building, and suggested that listed building consent should possibly come to the Committee for future applications.

Carl Doran concurred with comments made by Simon Weeks, in that the Committee may have looked on this application differently if it was for a commercial or residential development, however the community benefits outweighed the harm in this instance.

The Committee gave their thanks to all those who enabled the development of the proposals and the project as a whole.

RESOLVED That application 201022 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 108 to 122.

57. APPLICATION NO.203439 - 36 AND 39-48 GROVELANDS PARK, WINNERSH, WOKINGHAM, RG41 5LD

Proposal: Full application for the proposed removal of 12 no. existing mobile homes and the erection of 11 no. two storey pre-fabricated temporary accommodation units consisting of one self-contained two- bedroom housing unit per floor (plots 39-48) and 1 no. single storey mobile house (plot 36).

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Housing Services

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 159 to 192.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- Rewording of condition 13;
- Additional condition 18 to secure electric vehicle charging details;
- Receipt of consultation response from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, raising no objection;
- Reference to comments from Prue Bray, Ward Member.

Clinton Taylor, Winnersh Parish Council, spoke in objection to the application. Clinton stated that the proposals were to replace existing one storey units with two storey units, which would be out of keeping with the area. Clinton added that the existing sewerage provision was inadequate to accommodate the proposed two storey units. Clinton stated that the Parish Council would welcome the old units to be replaced with suitable one storey units.

Simon Price, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Simon stated that this was an important improvement project to supply good quality emergency accommodation for families within the Borough. Simon stated that the construction timings for the project had been much reduced as part of this application. Simon stated that the two storey aspect of the application was a point of contention, however it allowed for additional accommodation for families in need of emergency housing. Simon concluded that the proposals would reduce the need for bed and breakfast use to house families in need of emergency housing.

Prue Bray, Ward Member, spoke in support of the application. Prue stated that there was a pressing need for temporary accommodation within the Borough, and the proposals included better quality accommodation than the existing poorly insulated units. Prue added that the two storey nature of the proposals were a concern, however she felt that these had been addressed within the officer report. Prue stated that the windows mostly faced away from existing units, and in instances where this was not the case the windows were obscure glazed. Prue concluded by stating that the sewerage concerns had been taken into account, and concerns regarding antisocial behaviour already existed prior to this application.

Paul Fishwick, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Paul stated that he did not object to the replacement of the existing one storey units with new one storey units, however there was inadequate screening to accommodate two storey units, which would be out of keeping with the character of the area. Paul was of the opinion that the proposals would be akin to a large and insensitive wall within the existing development. Paul stated that the sewerage system was already failing within the development, and the proposals would only make this issue worse.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey stated that she had no issue with the provision of new single storey units within the development. Rachelle added that the biggest issue with the proposals was the inadequate sewerage provision. The two storey nature of the units would lead to massing and overlooking, and would be out of keeping with the character of the area. Rachelle stated that the site consisted of single storey units, and it should be kept that way. Rachelle was of the opinion that the application should be refused.

Andrew Mickleburgh stated that he was in favour of replacing the existing poor quality units. Andrew queried whether the total proposed parking spaces of 23 was greater than the existing provision, queried where units 39 to 43 would park their cars and whether they would share any spaces, queried how sewerage issues had been addressed, and whether there was any specific exemption for this type of accommodation relating to amenity space requirements. Senjuti Manna, case officer, stated that Highways had suggested only 16 car parking spaces would be required to meet standards, which would lead to a better layout of spaces. Units 39 to 43 were not included within the plans. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that although sewerage was outside of the scope of this application, several benefits relating to sewerage would be realised as part of this application. Relating to amenity requirements, Senjuti Manna stated

that a strict occupancy period of 12 months would be applied, as it was not the intention for this accommodation to be used by a family on a permanent basis.

Andrew Mickleburgh stated that he was concerned that internal space requirements were not being met. Andrew queried whether any consultation had been worked on relating to whether the proposals could cause mental health issues for occupants, and queried where the fire assembly point would be located, and whether it would be compliant, given the density of the site. Simon Weeks stated that given the current option for emergency occupation could include stays in small bed and breakfast facilities for families, the proposals were likely to be improvements for the mental wellbeing of any occupants. Justin Turvey stated that the fire assembly point was not a planning consideration, however it was likely that the proposed units would follow the existing site plan.

Carl Doran stated that he totally accepted that the proposals would be an improvement over bed and breakfast accommodation, however he had concerns regarding outdoor amenity space provision given that many of the users of the proposed units would have young children. Carl sought clarification as to what constituted a modular design and passive fire protection. Senjuti Manna stated that the proposals included 'misterters', a more sophisticated form of sprinklers. Senjuti added that the walls were fire resistant which meant that the six meter separation gap was not necessary everywhere. Senjuti stated that there was a field to the south of the site, and whilst immediate outdoor amenity space was limited the accommodation would only be used on a temporary basis.

Abdul Loyes that he was supportive of the proposals, and stated that flooding issues had been addressed as he knew the area quite well.

Pauline Jorgensen queried where potential overlooking would occur, as it was not clear from the plans. Senjuti Manna stated that there had been concerns that the landing area of the external staircase could be used as an external balcony. Senjuti added that to minimise overlooking, a condition is used to secure privacy screening for the external staircase landing so that even if these were used as external balconies, no overlooking would occur.

Malcolm Richards queried whether the units would have flat roofs, queried whether the outside areas would be illuminated, and queried whether any of the proposed spaces would be for disabled use. Senjuti Manna confirmed that the roofs of the units would be flat. Senjuti added that the roads had existing street lamps, and each unit would have a small motion detected external light. Senjuti stated that the parking spaces had been changed from 23 to 16, and the detailed parking plan would be approved prior to the occupation of the units.

Malcolm Richards queried whether there was a communal depot for waste on the site. Senjuti Manna confirmed that each unit had a bin storage and drying yard at the rear of each plot.

Gary Cowan was of the opinion that the motion sensor lights could become a nuisance, and felt that the proposals were better than the existing provision. Gary was of the opinion that the proposals were of a dreadful appearance, would not fit into their surroundings, and would let people down and could create more issues going forwards. Gary stated that he had an open mind regarding whether to approve this application.

Gary Cowan queried why the Environment Agency had not been consulted on this application. Senjuti Manna clarified that most of the site was in flood zone one, and therefore the Environment Agency did not need to be consulted unless there was a critical drainage issue. In addition, a flood risk assessment had been submitted and agreed.

Stephen Conway stated that this was a difficult application to determine, as there was a great need for more temporary accommodation within the Borough to help people, however this needed to be balanced against the impact on existing residents. Stephen was of the opinion that the proposals were out of keeping with the existing character of the area, however the need for the units may outweigh the negatives, although there was a duty to protect the existing visual amenity for residents such as through screening.

Chris Bowring queried whether the proposed units could be considered as mobile homes, and queried whether a temporary approval could be granted to assess whether screening and other mitigation was acceptable. Senjuti Manna stated that as the proposed units were two storeys in height, they could not be mobile homes by definition. Senjuti added that they were classified as two storey pre-fabricated units, and would require a change of use from mobile homes to residential, which had been assessed as not causing harm to the area. Regarding the temporary approval query, Simon Price commented that the scheme had been based on double stacking units to take advantage of economies of scale and value for money. As it was in effect a permanent structure, Simon was of the opinion that a temporary grant of planning permission would not be suitable. Chris Bowring stated that subject to the provision of adequate screening, he would be inclined to approve the application on balance.

Simon Weeks queried the space requirement relationship between caravans and permanent accommodation. Senjuti Manna stated that there was a requirement for a 6m side to side separation between caravans. For C3 usage, a 12m front to side distance was set out within the guidelines. The proposals fell slightly short of the 12m distance, however the units would only be used on a temporary basis and the boundaries would be screened via high hedging.

Stephen Conway queried whether the proposed screening was enough to break up the proposed bulk and massing. Senjuti Manna confirmed that the landscaping officer was happy with the proposals.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey raised concern that this could encourage other units on the site to apply for two storey permission. In addition, Rachelle was of the opinion that the proposals were out of keeping with the character of the area, and would change the character of the area.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey proposed that the application be refused, on the grounds that it was out of keeping with the character of the local area and would constitute to a loss of amenity for existing residents. This was seconded by Gary Cowan and upon being put to the vote the motion fell.

Stephen Conway proposed an additional informative to encourage the applicant to provide additional landscaping in order to achieve greater screening. This proposal was carried by the Committee and added to the list of informatives.

RESOLVED That application number 203439 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 160 to 167, reworded condition 13 and additional

condition 18 as set out in the Members' Update, and additional informative relating to additional landscaping as resolved by the Committee.

58. APPLICATION NO.202106 - PADDICKS PATCH, WAINGLES ROAD, CHARVIL, RG10 0UA

Proposal: Full Planning application for the proposed erection of new meeting hall following demolition of existing meeting hall, relocation of three metal storage containers, plus car park improvements with the installation of a cycle stand.

Applicant: Mr Donald MacDonald, Loddon District Scouts

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 193 to 216.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- Amended condition 6;
- Updated summary information related to agenda page 201.

Gary Cowan queried why pictures of the site were not included within the agenda documentation, and asked that this be improved in the future. Gary stated that around 17 trees were due to be removed on the site. Gary added that 57 trees were due to be planted on site, although if they were juvenile specimens then they would not be adequate. Gary was of the opinion that tree replacement proposals should be adequate for each specific planning application, and not draw on trees planted in other areas.

Pauline Jorgensen queried how the landscaping would be managed against the road. Senjuti Manna, case officer, stated that she could confirm specific details with the landscape officer, however the trees along the roads were being retained, however it was not clear on the plan.

Stephen Conway stated that subject to the provision of adequate screening and sufficient tree planting, he would support this application.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried what percentage of biodiversity net gain would be achieved as part of this application, and queried whether two informatives might be added, asking for increased secure cycle storage and suggesting that the applicant explores opportunities to secure funding for solar panel provision. Simon Weeks stated that as a heavily wooded site, solar panels may not be effective, however there would be no harm with wither informative being added. Senjuti Manna stated that there was a standard DEFRA method used to calculate biodiversity net gain, and once the applicant came forward with a discharge of conditions application the Council's ecology officer would give their input.

Malcolm Richards sought clarification regarding SUDs on the site. Senjuti Manna stated that the site had existing cess pits, which was not currently connected to the Thames Water system, however the proposed building would be connected to the system. The Council's drainage officer had requested further details regarding SUDs and how the property would connect to the Thames Water system.

Carl Doran commented that there was a good replacement rate of trees on the site, however the replacement trees would be juvenile and therefore smaller. Simon Weeks

commented that the trees due to be removed were of wither C or U categorisation, meaning they were, in general, trees of poor quality or health.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that two informatives be added, the first of which suggesting that the applicant provide additional on-site secure cycle storage, and the second suggesting that the applicant explores opportunities to secure funding for solar panel provision. These informatives were agreed by the Committee and added to the list of informatives.

RESOLVED That application number 202106 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 194 to 200, amended condition 6 as set out in the Members' Update, and additional informatives relating to secure cycle storage and solar panels as resolved by the Committee.

59. APPLICATION NO.203344 - HIGHWOOD BUNGALOW, FAIRWATER DRIVE, WOODLEY, RG5 3JE

Proposal: Full application for a change of use from residential dwelling (Class C3(b)) to Residential institution/nursing home (C2), including a single storey side extension following demolition of the existing carport.

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 217 to 234.

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

Gary Cowan was of the opinion that the agenda documentation could be improved, including the addition of additional pictures of the existing site. Gary queried how many vulnerable adults would be on the site and what their ages would be, and queried what the car parking facilities were on the site. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that the age of the occupants was not a planning consideration. Kieran Neumann, case officers, stated that there would be two parking spaces. Gary Cowan wished for the applicant to take note of the proximity of the site to a school.

A number of Members commented that this application was a community asset and would benefit some of the most vulnerable residents in the Borough.

RESOLVED That application number 203344 be approved, subject to conditions and informative as set out in agenda pages 218 to 219.

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