

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.30 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Chris Bowring (Chairman), Angus Ross (Vice-Chairman), Sam Akhtar, Stephen Conway, Gary Cowan, Pauline Jorgensen, Rebecca Margetts, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and Bill Soane

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Stuart Munro

Officers Present

Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Chris Easton, Head of Transport, Drainage, and Compliance
Marcia Head, Head of Development Management
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor

Case Officers Present

Senjuti Manna
Kieran Neumann

71. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Carl Doran and Andrew Mickleburgh.

72. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 January 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Rebecca Margetts made a statement with regards to items 76 and 77, application numbers 213903 and 213927. Rebecca stated that she was a Parish Councillor at Finchampstead Parish Council, who was the applicant for the two applications regarding the War memorial. Rebecca added that she had not been involved with the applications or the committee set up for these applications at the Parish Council and she did sit on the Planning Committee for the Parish Council. Rebecca stated that she came to the Planning Committee with an open mind, and she would listen to all representations from public speakers, planning officers and members of the Committee prior to coming to any conclusion on either of these applications

74. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

Item number 75, application number 213796, was withdrawn from the agenda.

75. APPLICATION NO.213796 - 302 LONDON ROAD, WOKINGHAM, RG40 1RD This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

76. APPLICATION NO.213903 - JUNCTION OF JUBILEE ROAD / B3016

Proposal: Application for Listed Building Consent for the proposed dismantling of war memorial and relocation and reinstallation on new site.

Applicant: Mrs Katy Dagnall (Finchampstead Parish Council)

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 37 to 52.

The Committee were advised that whilst there were no updates contained within the supplementary planning agenda, additional comments and officer responses had been received in relation to this application and had been circulated to the Committee. An additional representation had also been received from the War Memorial Trust, and had been circulated to the Committee.

Ian Adnams, local resident, spoke in objection to the application. Ian maintained that the reasons stated by the Parish Council for relocation of the memorial were not relevant. Ian stated that the Parish Council believed that no significant improvements could be made to the current junction whilst keeping the memorial in its current location, despite a suggestion from himself which would have made the junction safer whilst keeping the memorial in its existing location. Ian added that the Parish Council claimed that the current location was unsafe for the Armistice Day parade, however the Royal British Legion Remembrance Parade Policy Update advised that a parade was not the remembrance event, and it was not uncommon to have an event which did not involve a parade on a highway. Ian stated that St James' Church was fully accessible from the memorial hall car park via a direct footpath with no road to close or negotiate, presenting a viable and safe option. Ian commented that a survey from the Parish Council claimed 89 percent of respondents supported plans to relocate the war memorial, however it had been pointed out by others that in fact 90.1 percent of respondents were in objection to the proposals. Ian stated that the memorial was designated both as a war memorial and as a wayside cross, and to carry out its function as a wayside cross the monument was required to remain where it was currently situated. Ian commented that he had lived and worked in Finchampstead all of his life, and the monument was a historic icon of the village of which its location had been chosen by the village's forefathers. Ian asked that the monument be left in its current location, where he felt it belonged.

Graham Jukes, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Graham stated that the key issue relating to the application was the consideration of harm, and noted that the grade two listing applied only to the memorial itself and not to its setting. Graham stated that in the war memorial's current location the Parish Council's legal obligation to maintain the memorial could not be fulfilled, as the site was subjected to 11,000 vehicle movements each day. Graham stated that the site was too hazardous for contractors to operate without road closures, and after careful consideration of a range of options the Parish Council concluded that the only sustainable way for the Parish Council to continue to fulfil its legal obligations was to move the monument to a setting where it fulfilled its function as a place of respect and remembrance whilst allowing for careful maintenance for years to come. Graham stated that the original location had seen vast changes to traffic since the monument was placed there after the First World War, and careful checks had revealed no original debate over where the monument was to be situated. Graham added that the site was currently extremely dangerous for people to visit, was surrounded by heavy duty high curbed stones, and the Parish Council could no longer recruit contractors to carry out works on the monument due to health and safety concerns. Graham stated that following a consultation sent to all households, parishioners supported the relocation of the monument to a safer and more accessible location. Graham stated that the aim of the Parish Council was to maintain the memorial and re-establish its purpose as a purpose for accessible remembrance and quiet contemplation which was not possible at the current location. Graham accepted that there were some residents who

wished for the monument to remain at its current location for personal reasons, however he felt this was a minority of people, and asked the Committee to approve the application.

Rebecca Margetts stated that the proposal to relocate the war memorial was an emotive subject, and it was very important that any relocation decision was correct and allowed current and future residents to pay their respects. Rebecca added that the War Memorial Trust had recommended that the war memorial be kept at its current location with bollards and barriers installed to protect the memorial. Rebecca commented that she had concerns with the suggestion of bollards or barriers, and noted that the War Memorial Trust only recommended a war memorial to move where the current position would put the memorial at risk or where the location was inaccessible. Rebecca felt that both the inaccessibility and potential risk to the memorial were relevant for this war memorial, and added that any traffic calming could change the rural setting. Rebecca stated that there was only a pavement on one side of the road, and it was a great shame that the fantastic armistice service could not visit the war memorial in its current location and instead had to attend a poster of the memorial in a field. Rebecca felt that moving the memorial would future proof it, allowing future generations to pay their respects. Rebecca queried whether barriers were a possibility. Kieran Neumann, case officer, stated that barriers could possibly be achieved however they were not a part of this application.

Angus Ross commented that since he moved to the area in 1980 the traffic had significantly increased in this location. Angus added that he had never personally seen anyone visit the memorial due to its dangerous location, and felt that there was public benefit in moving the monument to a safer location to allow residents to visit and pay their respects.

Pauline Jorgensen stated that she was genuinely torn on this application, in part as the memorial's setting was formed from the overall setting and the view over the water. Pauline felt that this setting would have been selected by people directly affected by World War One, and she was very reluctant to see it moved to a more convenient location.

Chris Bowring queried what evidence was there with regards to how the current location was originally chosen. Kieran Neumann stated that there was not much specific evidence, and the only comments that could be found were in relation to the picturesque location and setting. Kieran added that on balance, the future proofing of the war memorial overrode the current setting of the war memorial.

Sam Akhtar sought clarity with regards to comments that there were two opposing consultation documents, with one showing overwhelming support for the relocation and another showing overwhelming objections. Kieran Neumann stated that the results of the consultation conducted by the Parish Council had no bearing on the scheme. Kieran added that this application was to consider the impact of moving the listed building itself.

Gary Cowan commented that the memorial cross was moved in Arborfield due to works on the roundabout, and very similar points were raised by the War Memorial Trust. Gary added that the project was carried out successfully, and the new location along the side of the roundabout allowed for benches to be installed which now attracted residents to be able to sit down and reflect. In relation to this application, Gary was of the opinion that whilst the current location was appealing it was not protected from the 11,000 daily vehicle movements, whilst any bollards or traffic lights would urbanise the area. Gary added that should the application be approved, the key was to reduce the risk to the fabric of the war memorial, and should it be left at its current location it was at risk of damage from road

vehicles. Should the war memorial be moved, Gary commented that he would like to see a condition protecting the monument at its future location from damage by trees.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey commented that as one of the three veterans on the Committee she felt that the proposal was the best option as it would allow current and future residents to pay their respects in safety.

Stephen Conway commented that the conditions that pertained in 1920 no longer existed, and added that the Parish Council now found it difficult to procure a maintenance team to take care of the memorial. Stephen commented that the current location was far from ideal for residents to visit and pay their respects.

Bill Soane stated that he was part of a group of people who raised funds to install a new war memorial in Woodley five years ago, which was sited within the Woodley memorial grounds. Bill added that this memorial now attracted between 200 and 250 people on Remembrance Day who could not attend before, whilst people often sat on the benches nearby to quietly reflect.

Marcia Head, Head of Development Management, stated that this application was to consider the planning merits of what harm would be caused to the building should it be relocated. Marcia stated that any considerations relating to protecting the monument from trees and roots, should it be relocated, would be considered under application number 213927.

RESOLVED That application number 213903 be approved, subject to conditions and informative as set out in agenda pages 38 to 39.

77. APPLICATION NO.213927 - FINCHAMPSTEAD MEMORIAL PARK, THE VILLAGE, RG40 4JU

Proposal: Full application for the proposed relocation and erection of war memorial, plinth and steps, creation of a footpath, installation of culvert and power supply.

Applicant: Mrs Katy Dagnall (Finchampstead Parish Council).

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 53 to 84.

The Committee were advised that the supplementary planning agenda included an update to paragraph 17 of the officer report. In addition to the supplementary planning agenda, the Committee were advised that additional comments and officer responses had been received in relation to this application and had been circulated to the Committee. An additional representation had also been received from the War Memorial Trust, and had been circulated to the Committee.

Ian Adnams, local resident, spoke in objection to the application. Ian stated that he was the vice-chairman of the Finchampstead Park Management Committee, and stated that the issue of removal of the hedge was still ongoing at meeting discussions. Ian was of the opinion that the Parish Council had made a decision despite opposition from residents, and added that he had spoken to many residents who did not like the suggested location for the relocation of the war memorial. Ian stated that the proposal would take the monument from one busy road and place it next to another busy road, which would offer no more opportunity for quiet contemplation than at its current location. Ian commented

that people in the village would prefer for the war memorial to be relocated at the church if it had to be moved, where there was adequate parking and amenities and available. Ian stated that the War Memorial Trust asked that anyone moving a war memorial should use a conservation accredited architect whereas the Parish Council had hired a landscape architect. Ian felt that the Parish Council should now go back to the village and seek their views as to their preferred location for the war memorial.

Graham Jukes, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Graham stated that the hedge within the memorial park was not material to this application, however it would not be removed prior to full discussion and debate with the Finchampstead Park Management Committee. Graham commented that the consultation survey was circulated to 5,500 households, with 596 responses in total, and 89 percent agreed with the proposal to remove the memorial from its current site and relocate it to the verge adjacent to the memorial park of the village. Graham added that the memorial park was purchased in memoriam to those who fell in both World Wars, and felt that it was right and fitting that the memorial was located and maintained at this site. Graham stated that each year residents gathered at the park in front of a photograph of the memorial statue. Graham added that detailed plans were considered for four separate locations including the church, and following discussions the proposed location was deemed the most suitable given the guidance from the War Memorial Trust relating to the visibility of war memorials. Graham stated that an arboreal expert had been involved to both protect the monument and the plants and trees at the proposed location. Graham added that the proposed location would allow visibility of the memorial from those passing on the road, a safe space for those who wish to visit the memorial, and a safe venue for the remembrance service to take place each year. Graham asked that the application be approved.

Chris Bowring sought clarification with regards to the type and qualifications of the architect which would be carrying out this work, and was required by condition. Marcia Head, Head of Development Management, stated that the contract would ensure the landowner in the proposed location agreed to the erection of the structure on their land, which was a highway verge, prior to removal from the current location. Marcia added that condition attached to the agreed listed building consent included a requirement of provision of methodology detailing how the structure was to be transported, including a detailed schedule.

Rebecca Margetts queried whether a condition managing overhanging trees and tree roots from damaging the war memorial at the proposed location was included within the scheme. Marcia Head suggested that an additional informative could be added to in relation to this. Rebecca Margetts proposed an additional informative requesting that details be submitted including the provision for access to maintain the memorial in the new location including the ability to carry out future tree works should they be required. This was seconded by Gary Cowan, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

Stephen Conway commented that he appreciated that this was a delicate issue, however added that the Planning Committee needed to assess in planning terms whether the proposed location was acceptable. Stephen added that the parking located nearby would allow residents to visit the war memorial and pay their respects safely.

Chris Bowring sought clarification as to how policy TB24 might apply to this application. Kieran Neumann, case officer, confirmed that this policy applied to this application, as if the structure fell into disrepair Wokingham Borough Council would be responsible for its maintenance. Marcia Head stated that one of the conditions attached to the Listed Building

consent required a very detailed scheme showing how the structure would be transported and cared for prior to its removal.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey proposed an additional informative, suggesting that the applicant provide a bench to allow people to rest and contemplate near the proposed site of the war memorial. This was seconded, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

Pauline Jorgensen queried what would happen to the previous application relating to listed building consent should this application be refused. Marcia Head stated that the listed building consent required a contract showing that the war memorial could be re-erected. Marcia added that the applicant could submit a further application detailing an alternative location.

Angus Ross queried whether the addition of the informative relating to a bench was reasonable as the bench would be located outside of the red line area. Marcia Head confirmed that both the Parish and Borough Councils had permitted development rights to place benches.

Angus Ross commented that although the proposed location would be located next to a busy road, it would not be as busy as the roads it was currently positioned next to. Angus felt that the condition relating to protection of trees and protection and maintenance of the war memorial were sufficient.

Gary Cowan commented that people sat on the benches next to the Arborfield memorial cross and reflected despite this being located next to a five exit roundabout. Gary added that a qualified firm had to be procured and used to carry out the works in Arborfield, and a similar qualified firm would also be required to carry out the proposed works.

Ian Adnams commented that the local car park was a privately owned car park.

Pauline Jorgensen was of the opinion that the war memorial in Woodley was fundamentally different, as it was a brand new memorial and did not involve moving an existing war memorial.

RESOLVED That application number 213927 be approved, subject to conditions and informative as set out in agenda pages 54 to 55, and additional informatives relating to maintenance and protection of the memorial in relation to trees and the suggested provision of a bench to allow for quiet reflection.

78. APPLICATION NO.213380 - BALCOMBE NURSERIES, BASINGSTOKE ROAD, SWALLOWFIELD, RG7 1PY

Proposal: Full application for the erection of 5 no. detached dwellings, two with detached garages and three with internal garages and associated landscaping works including one balancing pond, 2 no. accesses with entrance gates and 1.2m post and rail fencing.

Applicant: Woodridge Developments, 11 Arkwright Road Reading RG2 0LU

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 85 to 120.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates contained within the supplementary planning agenda.

John Anderson, Swallowfield Parish Council, spoke in objection to the application. John stated that three-storey homes were not part of the character of the Parish, and the proposals would occupy an elevated position whilst taking centre stage within the wide site entrance. John added that the proposals would give the appearance of tall town houses within a field. John felt that the proposals were inappropriate within a countryside setting. John stated outline permission was granted in 2016 for three houses, which the Parish Council had supported on balance as an alternative to a busy garden centre. John stated that this permission had removed permitted development rights, however this had been subsequently ignored and the proposals were now for 5 tall dwellings with a separate driveway leading to plot one. John was of the opinion that this was a further attempt to increase the size and scope of the development, which would further harm the character of the area and was a step too far.

Lisa Burns-Peake, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Lisa stated that loss of privacy to her home as a result of the proposals would have a huge impact on their quality of life. Lisa was of the opinion that the proposed dwellings were utterly out of keeping with the housing stock on the road, and added that there had been subsequent increases in the proposed size of the development of the site since 2016.

Tristan Parsons, neighbour and on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Tristan stated that he lived in the property two doors down from the site, and five years ago there had been an issue with travellers accessing the site and entering his back garden. As a result, the site was purchased with a view to develop. Tristan stated that he was now working from home alongside his wife whilst their children took part in home schooling when required due to Covid-19. Tristan stated that his family would be moving into plot one, and the proposed attic rooms would be added to the other four properties to allow those families space for home working. Tristan stated that many different designs had been considered, and the proposed designs were deemed to have the least impact on the countryside whilst providing space for the attic rooms without losing the attractive curve appeal of the properties, without increasing either the height of the dwellings or the footprint of the properties. Tristan felt the addition of the attics would allow for future families to work from home when required, which could also result in less vehicle movements to and from the properties. Tristan added that the additional floor space would attract an approximate £100,000 in additional CIL contributions to the Council.

Stuart Munro, Ward Member, spoke in objection of the application. Stuart stated that he understood the need for home working space, however the proposed dwellings would be very large via their existing and approved plans. Stuart added that the site had a long and complex planning history, and in his opinion it had reached the point where the proposals were no longer in keeping with the character of the area.

Stephen Conway stated that he fully understood the concerns of the Parish Council and local residents, however the principle of development had been established through previous planning permissions. Stephen commented that it was regrettable that there would be no housing mix on the site, other than four large houses and one very large house. Stephen sought additional details with regards to any potential issues relating to overlooking. Senjuti Manna, case officer, stated that the distance between the old cottage and plot one was approximately 80 metres, which was significantly more than was recommended within the Borough Design Guide, whilst trees would also provide additional screening. Senjuti added that it was accepted that this was a rural setting, however the proposals allowed for more than double the recommended separation distance.

Lisa Burns-Peake commented that plot one would be located directly behind her home and would be an invasion of their privacy with direct views into their garden and bedroom.

Angus Ross stated that the site had a long and complex planning history. Angus stated that the question for the Committee was whether it was reasonable to refuse this application when there was no proposed increase in ridge height or footprint, and sought officer comment on the viability of such a refusal should it go to appeal. Marcia Head, Head of Development Management, stated that the proposed changes were the inclusion of dormers and roof light windows, with no increase to the ridge height or footprint of any of the properties. Marcia confirmed that the separation distances were double that of the recommended distances.

Gary Cowan felt that the changes to the existing planning permission were minor, and Wokingham Borough Council would likely not fare well at an appeal. Gary commented that the site was 2.32 hectares, and in another location up to 70 houses could be placed on such a site.

RESOLVED That application number 213380 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 86 to 91.