

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 30 MARCH 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.30 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Simon Weeks (Chairman), Tim Holton (Vice-Chairman), Chris Bowring, John Kaiser, Bob Pitts, Malcolm Richards, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Chris Singleton and Wayne Smith

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Mark Ashwell, Prue Bray, Philip Mirfin and Angus Ross

Officers Present

Mark Cupit, Head of SDL Delivery

Chris Easton, Service Manager, Highways Development Management

Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor

Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Officer

Case Officers Present

Emy Circuit

110. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

111. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 March 2016 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. A copy is attached.

112. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey stated that, while as a member of the Liberal Democrat party she had in the past expressed sympathetic support for an alternative scheme for Elms Field, she had an open mind about the application and intended only making a final decision once she had heard all the representations on this scheme.

113. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications had been recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

114. APPLICATION NO. 153125 - LAND BETWEEN WELLINGTON ROAD & SHUTE END (ELMS FIELD AND PADDOCKS CAR PARK) WOKINGHAM

Proposal: Full application for the erection of mixed use development for Town Centre uses comprising A1 shops including a food store, A2 Financial and Professional Services, A3 Cafes and Restaurants, A4 Drinking Establishments, A5 Hot Food Takeaways; Cinema (D2); 95-bed hotel (C1); 126 C3 residential units; re-configured town park; new and re-configured public car parking and partial closure of Elms Road (south) and provision of a new road to link Wellington Road and Shute End, as part of the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre.

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council & Wilson Bowden Developments

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in Agenda pages 11 to 138.

The Committee was advised that the Members' Update included:

- corrections and clarifications to the report;
- additional information regarding an Average Daylight Factor Test;
- additional consultation responses on fire and rescue and crime prevention;
- additional representations; and
- revised and additional conditions and additional informatives.

It was noted that Members had visited the site on Wednesday 23 April 2016.

Mark Cupit, Head of SDL Delivery, outlined the history of the town centre regeneration and the principles behind it. He described the current proposal as the final piece of the first wave. The Planning Officer summarised the report on the application and displayed computer-generated pictures of how the development will look.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey and Andrew Waters, representing Wokingham Town Council, spoke to application. They welcomed the regeneration plan but expressed concerns about road safety, tree loss, overbearing building heights, loss of green space, the absence of affordable housing in the proposal and possible unacceptable uses of the cinema.

Marc Maynard and Peter Humphreys spoke in objection to the application on behalf of local residents and other interested parties. They raised the issues of building heights, effects on the character of the area, the fact that the great majority of representations received were in opposition to the plan, the continuous loss of green space over the last 50 years and doubts about the proposed anchor tenants.

Bernie Pich, Stan Hetherington and Councillor Mark Ashwell spoke in favour of the application. They emphasised that the plan was in line with Council policy, there had been widespread consultation, the development was needed to provide for sustainable growth, it would greatly improve Elms Field and the concern that further procrastination would lead to a loss of confidence.

Philip Mirfin, Local Ward Member, spoke in favour of the application on his own behalf and on behalf of Bob Wyatt, also a Local Ward Member, who was unable to attend due to illness. He stated that local people were asking for a greater choice of shops and entertainment in the town centre. He believed that the development was needed to reverse recent decline, create jobs and bring money in.

Responding to the issues raised, the Planning Officer stated that mature trees would be lost due to their proximity to the road. The arboricultural advice was that they could not be retained or have some roots cut, as suggested, without them becoming unstable and creating a danger to the highway. The plans contained new planting to mitigate the losses.

Regarding the provision of affordable housing in the scheme, an independent consultant had examined the proposal and confirmed that it would not be viable if required to include affordable housing. This is the normal procedure followed.

Addressing concerns about the cinema use, the Planning Officer stated that this would also be a matter for licensing and that condition 30 required details of the acoustic design to be submitted.

There were two main issues with regard to building height, according to the Planning Officer, the character of the area and the effect on adjoining properties. She described the measures taken to reduce the effects such as top floors being set back and the use of obscure glazing for rear windows

On the issues of traffic and parking, Chris Easton, Service Manager, Highways Development Management, stated that the road would have a 20mph design speed and there would be 1,895 parking spaces when all related development was completed compared with 1,836 now. These figures did not include the privately operated station car park which is about to be expanded.

Members viewed images showing the shadowing in the development at different parts of the day which was also a matter of concern.

The Planning Officer clarified that the only five storey building in the development was part of the hotel at the corner of Denmark Street. She had examined the overlook issues with regard to No.s 9 and 14 Albert Road from various angles and found the design to be acceptable.

Members asked how much of Elms Field was to be lost under the proposal and if the park had been cited as suitable green space for other new developments. Officers calculated the loss of area at 38 per cent and, while it may have been cited as suitable green space for historic applications, the loss was being compensated for in this application.

Members expressed concern about the pedestrian crossing to Carnival Pool both in terms of pedestrian safety and the effect on the high volume of traffic. Chris Easton stated the overall scheme will contain improvements for pedestrians and that new traffic lights can detect flows and adjust the timing accordingly.

Asked about pillars shown in the application drawings that might restrict visibility of pedestrians, Chris Easton said that such problems would be dealt with at the detailed design stage and that full Road Safety Audits would be required prior to implementation.

RESOLVED: That application No. 153125 be approved, subject to

- i) No new substantive planning issues being raised during the remainder of the consultation period which ends on 6 April 2016;
- ii) Contributions to mitigate the impact of the development in terms of sport and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area in accordance with paragraphs 31, 188 and 201 of this report and the Executive resolution on 28 January 2016 ; and
- iii) the conditions set out on Agenda pages 13 to 37 with conditions 2,3,7,12 and 17 amended, additional conditions 56 to 60 and additional informatics 10 and 11 as set out in the Members' Update.

115. APPLICATION NO. 160523 - LAND AT ELMS ROAD, WOKINGHAM

Proposal: Application for change of use from outdoor sports area to a temporary car park with 96 parking spaces plus temporary lighting. Formation of a vehicular access linking to the Paddocks car park.

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in Agenda pages 139 to 152.

The Committee was advised that the Members' Update included an additional representation and an amendment to condition 4.

Peter Humphreys spoke in objection to the application and questioned why the Council was spending money providing this parking when there were many spare spaces around the town centre.

Members asked if it was necessary to include a condition to restore the site to its former use given the other application approved at this meeting. The Planning Officer explained that it could not be assumed that the other application would be passed or that it will be built.

Members expressed concern that if the basketball nets were left in situ that it would not be feasible to enforce the time limits on playing basketball. It was agreed to add an informative to recommend using portable nets.

Members also asked if lighting in the car park would be switched off at night. It was agreed to add a condition that lighting should be turned off between midnight and 6am.

RESOLVED: That application No. 160523 be approved, subject to the conditions set out on Agenda page 140 with condition 4 amended as set out in the Members' Update, an additional condition to restrict lighting to the hours of 6am to midnight and an additional informative regarding the basketball hoops, to be agreed by the Head of SDL Delivery.

116. PRE COMMITTEE SITE VISITS

There were no proposals for pre-committee site visits.