

Committee: DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Date: 24TH NOVEMBER 2003

Agenda Item No: 5

Title: FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Author: JOHN MITCHELL (01799) 510450

Summary

- 1 This report is brought forward at the request of the Chairman following correspondence between Members about the timing and frequency of meetings of this Committee. The correspondence arose following a Member workshop on 22nd October 2003, held as part of the Best Value Review of Planning Services. The suggestion put forward was that meetings should be held fortnightly, starting at 4pm and finishing at 7pm, with Member site visits being held on a different day.
- 2 The report analyses this proposal and lists its advantages and disadvantages. It also examines the possibility of holding meetings in the evening. While this is essentially a matter for the Committee, Officers recommend that any decision be deferred until the Best Value Service Improvement Plan has been agreed. This is because there are many other aspects of the Best Value Review that could improve the service but would also have implications for Members' time, and it is considered that the decision should not be taken in isolation of these.

Background

- 3 The draft Service Improvement Plan arising from the Best Value Review of Planning Services is due to be reported to Scrutiny 2 Committee on 3rd December 2003, to this Committee on 16th December 2003 and to the Environment and Transport Committee on 16th January 2004. The suggestion of changing the times and frequency of meetings of this Committee had its origins in a Member workshop held as part of the Review on 22nd October.
- 4 The Development Control Committee meets at 2pm every third Monday. Site visits deferred from the previous meeting are held during the morning, and there is often a workshop at lunchtime. The Committee is well attended by the public, and a recent survey, carried out towards the end of last year, showed that most people attending the meetings were happy with the times of meetings. Members of the public are entitled to address the Committee for three minutes. The Committee meets more frequently than any other Committee of the Council, and this is because of the need to progress planning applications. Meetings last on average for about three hours.

5 The proposal is for the Committee to meet fortnightly at 4pm, with site visits held on a different day. This would enable members who have jobs to juggle their time more effectively. It would increase the number of meetings from 17 to 26 per year. The following table lists the advantages and disadvantages of such a proposal, and also examines possible alternatives, and is set out in such a way as to enable members to examine individual elements of the proposals or combinations thereof. As a basic assumption Officers consider that the timing and frequency of DC meetings should primarily be for the benefit of the public and not to suit the convenience of Members or Staff. The table commences with an analysis of the present arrangements.

Current Arrangements	Advantages	Disadvantages
Committee meets every three weeks at 2pm on Mondays. Site visits for item deferred from previous meeting held in the morning. Workshops or free time at lunchtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity for Members and customers. Convenient for agents • All business can be conducted on the same day • Permits training and workshops to be held at an opportune and convenient time for the Committee • No overtime payments or time in lieu required for staff • Business usually completed by 6pm, enabling attendance at evening meetings if necessary • Debate on applications after site visit can be held while the visit is still fresh in the mind • Recent survey showed general public satisfaction with the procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the public may have to take time off work to attend meetings • Members in employment may find it difficult to take 17 days off work per year for Council business • Can be an intensive and long day especially if there is a large number of site visits in the morning • No opportunity for officers to take up issues raised on site visits with the applicants prior to the meeting.
Proposal	Advantages	Disadvantages
Fortnightly meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could enable the preparation of shorter agendas • Could lead to shorter meetings • Could give rise to speedier decisions without compromising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will increase the number of meetings and the demands on Members time • An increase from 17 to 26 meetings a year, particularly when there is an increase in the

	<p>quality because of the frequency of meetings</p>	<p>number of other meetings, would be difficult for staff to cover.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee staff are already faced with a likely increase in the number of Licensing Committee meetings to meet the changes to liquor licensing laws. • The agenda must go out 5 clear working days before the meeting, hence the agenda would have to go out 4 days after the last meeting • The timescale would not allow time for the minutes of the previous meeting to be available to members prior to the next meeting except as a late item • Officers will be spending an increased time preparing reports, schedules, agendas etc. This is already a time-consuming exercise and will involve half as much work again. • There will be additional duties for print room staff, central admin and post room staff. • Resource implications of holding additional meetings in terms of member expenses and some overtime/time in lieu issues for staff
<p>Meetings to start at 4pm and finish by 7pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will allow members to attend evening meetings • May be more convenient for some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a convenient time for members of the public to attend the meeting. 4-7pm includes the times when parents pick up

	<p>Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could allow time for longer training workshops or for more thorough site visits before the meeting 	<p>their children school, when people are normally travelling home from work and when people are preparing their evening meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would work against the principles of opening up the meeting to include the public • No guarantee that meetings would finish by 7pm • Members are not prevented from attending evening meetings by the current arrangements • May be some resource issues in terms of overtime/time in lieu payments for staff
<p>Site visits to be held on different days to Committee meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could enable officers to address issues identified by members on site prior to the meeting, thus possibly saving time • Could better enable visits to take place at particular times, e.g. at rush hour to examine effect on congestion • Could be held at times to suit members' lifestyles and working hours, e.g. early morning or late evening (depending on the time of year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will lose opportunity to hold debate while the site visit is still fresh in the memory • Could involve up to twice as many meetings of members as a present. • Could mean that the Committee meets on 52 days of the year if fortnightly meetings adopted
<p>Meetings to take place in the evenings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common with all other Committee meetings • Members of the public do not have to take time off work to attend meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings could regularly finish very late at night • Late night closure of meetings could mean that decision-making may be impaired by tiredness

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the public wishing to speak may have to wait a long time, so the agenda would need to be re-ordered “on the night”. • Resource implications in terms of overtime/meetings allowances/time off in lieu.
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6 Officers consider that more frequent meetings would be complex to service and difficult to administer - and would offer no discernible improvement in service to the public. DCC already meets more frequently than any other committee. Officers also consider that holding meetings between 4 and 7 pm would not be convenient for the public. There may however be merit in holding site visits on different days to the Committee and in holding evening meetings. However, Officers also consider that such decisions should not be taken in isolation of the outcome of the Best Value Review of Planning Services. There are many other issues impacting on the quality of the service, which should be taken into account, such as levels of delegation to officers and Members’ commitment to meeting Government targets for speed of decision. The timing and frequency of Committee meetings has not formed part of the questions we have posed to members of the public and other customers of the service, primarily because of the satisfaction registered by people attending the meetings when recently surveyed.

Recommendation

That Members consider the timing and frequency of meetings of this Committee and make their decision in the light of the outcome of the Best Value Review of Planning Services.

Background Papers: Results of survey of people attending DC&L Committee Meetings.

Committee: DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
Date: 24 NOVEMBER 2003
Agenda Item No: 6
Title: PROPOSED WORKS TO TREES AT BRIDGE END GARDENS SAFFRON WALDEN – WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA
Author: Ben Smeeden (01799) 510466

Introduction

- 1 This item seeks Members' consideration of proposed works to trees at Bridge End Gardens which is within the Saffron Walden conservation area.

Background

- 2 The Council's Bridge End Garden Restoration Project Manager has made notification of the intention to undertake works to fell fourteen trees within the gardens. The trees proposed to be felled are 1 no Sycamore tree in the wilderness area and 2 no Elm, 1 no Horse Chestnut, 4 no Willow, 1 no Hazel, 1 no Acacia, 2 no Laburnum and 1 no Elder within the Bridge Street path area of the gardens.

Assessment

- 3 The common Hazel is approximately 4 metres in height and whilst found to be in good general health, it is not considered to be an outstanding specimen of its type.
- 4 The Crataegus is some 3.5 metres in height. This tree is in very poor condition with the majority of its crown being dead.
- 5 The two Laburnum trees are between 2.5 and 3 metres in height. Both these trees are poorly formed specimens having been crowded by surrounding shrubs for a number of years.
- 6 The Acacia tree is a juvenile subject of some 5 metres in height. This tree is in good general health, however, its size and form is not considered to make this tree an outstanding example.
- 7 The Elder is approximately 2 metres in height and is undermining an adjacent flint wall causing damage.
- 8 The Sycamore tree is approximately 7 metres in height and is situated in the wilderness area of the Gardens. The close proximity of this self-set tree to the

Grotto is considered likely to result in damage to this brick and flint structure if the tree is retained in the long term.

- 9 None of the trees proposed to be felled are considered to be of a visual amenity value worthy of being made subject to a tree preservation order.
- 10 The removal of these trees would be in accordance with and required to implement the Bridge End Gardens restoration plan and planting proposals.
- 11 The common Hazel is approximately 4 metres in height and whilst found to be in good general health, it is not considered to be an outstanding specimen of its type.
- 12 The Crataegus is some 3.5 metres in height. This tree is in very poor condition with the majority of its crown being dead.
- 13 The two Laburnum trees are between 2.5 and 3 metres in height. Both these trees are poorly formed specimens having been crowded by surrounding shrubs for a number of years.
- 14 The Acacia tree is a juvenile subject of some 5 metres in height. This tree is in good general health, however, its size and form is not considered to make this tree an outstanding example.
- 15 The Elder is approximately 2 metres in height and is undermining an adjacent flint wall causing damage.
- 16 The Sycamore tree is approximately 7 metres in height and is situated in the wilderness area of the Gardens. The close proximity of this self-set tree to the Grotto is considered likely to result in damage to this brick and flint structure if the tree is retained in the long term.
- 17 None of the trees proposed to be felled are considered to be of a visual amenity value worthy of being made subject to a tree preservation order.
- 18 The removal of these trees would be in accordance with and required to implement the Bridge End Gardens restoration plan and planting proposals.

RECOMMENDED that no objection be raised to the proposed felling.

Author: J Mitchell
 Agenda Item: 7

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 24 NOVEMBER 2003
APPEAL DECISIONS

APPEAL BY	LOCATION	APPLICATION NO	DESCRIPTION	APPEAL DECISION & DATE	DATE OF ORIGINAL DECISION	SUMMARY OF DECISION
Croftvale Builders Ltd	Elmbridge Farm Mill End Little Easton	UTT/0231/03/FUL	Appeal against the the refusal of planning permission for the conversion of vacant agricultural barns to a single dwelling	ALLOWED 29 Oct 2003	13 May 03	The Inspector concluded that the buildings were of substantial construction and that their conversion to residential use would enhance the rural character and appearance of the area and the setting of the adjacent listed building.
T J Lloyd	Orchard End Cannon Lane Hatfield Broad Oak	UTT/0694/03/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the demolition of existing dwelling and replacement with two smaller dwellings	DISMISSED 23 Oct 2003	30 Apr 2003	The Inspector concluded that the development would detract from the character and appearance of the area and provide poor living conditions for the occupiers of "Tanglewood" adjacent.

Mr K Preece	Walnut Bungalow High Roding	UTT/0190/03/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the extension to provide family room between garage and kitchen	DISMISSED 27 Oct 2003	17 Apr 2003	The Inspector concluded that the proposal would adversely affect the appearance and character of the countryside.
Mr J A Young	Rear 22 Park Road Stansted	UTT/1653/02/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the one private house	DISMISSED 29 Oct 2003	14 Apr 2003	The Inspector concluded that there would be material harm to the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring residences.
Mr & Mrs J Jossaume	Brew House Park Street Thaxted	1) UTT/0244/03/FUL 2) UTT/0246/03/CA	1) Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the linked two storey/single storey extension for domestic purposes 2) Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the two storey/single storey extension	DISMISSED 29 OCT 2003	6 June 2003	The Inspector concluded that both proposals would fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

			with single link to existing house: two storey gable and single storey link to be built on boundary occupied by wall			
Mr and Mrs T Gates	Longcroft Whitehouse Road Stebbing	UTT/0542/03/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the alteration to roof slope of the garage and the formation of two dormer windows to its rear elevation	ALLOWED 23 Oct 2003	5 June 2003	The Inspector concluded that the development would not be significant nor cause harm.
Mr C Kirby	Dunrovin Main Road Willows Green Felsted	UTT/1572/02/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the extension to side and rear of bungalow with extended roof conversion and the new detached	DISMISSED 14 Oct 2003	27 Dec 2003	The Inspector concluded that the development would be dominant and out of character with its surroundings, and to the original dwelling.

			garage			
Mr & Mrs T F Chambers	Martinside Stud Ladywell Drive Howe Green Great Hallingbury	UTT/1813/02/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the erection of a dwelling (disabled person)	DISMISSED 22 Oct 2003	16 Dec 2002	The Inspector concluded that there was no justification for the development that would outweigh long standing planning policies to protect the countryside.
Mrs S Hall	New Building (Stanley House) The Station Station Approach Great Chesterford	UTT/0764/02/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the erection of a two storey office building following a successful appeal to the high court regarding the imposition of a footpath linking Station Road to the Swaine Adeney Brigg Factory Site.	ALLOWED 10 Oct 2003	10 July 2002	The Inspector concluded that the condition did not meet the tests in circular 11/95 and was not reasonable or enforceable.
Allen Homes	School Row Ickleton Road Elmdon	UTT/0249/03/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the erect detached house and garage	ALLOWED 3 Nov 03	29 May 2003	The Inspector concluded that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the Elmdon Conservation Area and not have an

						adverse effect on neighbours' living conditions.
J Brock & Sons	Woodhams Farm Thaxted	UTT/1634/02/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the erection of a storage building	DISMISSED 30 Oct 03	11 Feb 03	The Inspector concluded that the development would harm the character and appearance of this rural area.
Mr J Watson Mr P Woolner Mr A Howard	4 The Maltings Debden Saffron Walden	UTT/1458/02/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the new house and garage	DISMISSED 3 Nov 03	3 Dec 02	See below.
Mr J Watson Mr P Woolner Mr A Howard	4 The Maltings Debden Saffron Walden	UTT/1017/03/FUL	Appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the new house and garage	ALLOWED 3 Nov 03	12 Aug 03	The Inspector concluded that the development, because of the reduction in potential use of the site for off street parking, was acceptable. This contrasted with another similar application which showed more on-site parking and was subsequently dismissed the decision is disappointing.

Committee: DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Date: 24 NOVEMBER 2003

Agenda Item No: 9

Title: PLANNING AGREEMENTS

Author: JACQUI HARRISON (01799 510420)

The following table sets out the current position regarding outstanding Section 106 Agreements:-

	Planning Current Ref.	Approved by Committee	Applicant	Property	Position
1.	UTT/0443/98/OP UTT/1123/00/OP	18.3.02	Pelham Homes Ltd Croudace Ltd	Rochford Nurseries, Stansted/ Birchanger	Agreement being concluded.
2.	UTT/0816/00/OP	29.4.02	Countryside Properties Plc	Priors Green Takeley/Little Canfield	Agreement being concluded.
3.	UTT/0884/02/OP	22.7.02	Exors of D M Harris	83 High Street, Gt. Dunmow	Agreement being prepared by Essex C.C.
4.	UTT/0875/02/FUL	23/9/02	Granite Estates Ltd	Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden	Agreement being prepared by Essex C.C.
5.	UTT/1382/01/FUL	16/12/02	A Batchelor	Southgates Industrial Park, Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden	Completed (but do not delete this time as only verbally reported)
6.	UTT/1247/02/FUL	24/02/03	M B Rich-Jones	Coach House High Street Stebbing	Negotiations continuing.
7.	UTT/0023/03/OP	07/04/03	Enodis Properties Ltd	Former Sugar Beet Works, Little Dunmow	Negotiations commenced.
8.	UTT/1042/02/OP	07/04/03	Countryside Properties plc	Takeley Nurseries	Negotiations being

					finalised.
9.	UTT/0518/02/OP	07/04/03	R & E McGowan	Laurels Yard, Takeley	Agreement being drafted
10.	UTT/1810/02/FUL	27/05/03	Welcome Break Group Ltd	Birchanger Green MSA	Agreement being finalised
11.	UTT/0595/03/OP	16/06/03	Ashdon PC & English Villages Housing Assoc	Guildhall Way, Ashdon	Negotiations commencing
12.	UTT/0811/02/OP	On appeal	Easton Properties	The Broadway, Church End, Great Dunmow	Agreement being finalised
13.	UTT/0511/03/OP	16/06/03	Mrs Gatsky	Hamilton Road, Little Canfield	Negotiations commencing
14.	UTT/0630/03/DFO	07/07/03	David Wilson Homes	Barkers Tank, Takeley	Agreement being finalised.
15.	UTT/0147/03/FUL	07/07/03	Estuary Housing Association	Woodlands Park, Gt Dunmow	Agreement being finalised
16.	UTT1513/02/FUL	28/07/03	Norwich Union	Chesterford Park	Negotiations commencing
17.	UTT/0790/03/REN	26/08/03	Countryside Properties	Bell College, Saffron Walden	Negotiations commencing
18.	UTT/1002/03/OP	26/08/03	Ms C Cox	The Homestead, Lt Canfield	Negotiations commencing
19.	UTT/1084/03/OP	26/08/03	Mr & Mrs T Boswell	Hamilton Road, Lt Canfield	Negotiations commencing
20.	UTT/1020/03/FUL & UTT/1195/03/FUL	26/08/03	Paul Watkinson	Felsted School	Negotiations commencing
21.	UTT/1340/03/FUL	22/09/03	Coston Engineering	Bowers Lane, Hadstock	Awaiting proof of Title.
22.	UTT/1315/03/FUL	22/09/03	S M Smith	Hamilton Road, Lt Canfield	Awaiting instructions

Background Papers:

Planning Applications
Files relating to each application