

PLANNING COMMITTEE held at ZOOM on WEDNESDAY, 14 APRIL 2021 at 10.00 am

- Present: Councillor S Merifield (Chair)
Councillors G Bagnall, M Caton, A Coote, P Fairhurst,
R Freeman, G LeCount, M Lemon (Vice-Chair), J Loughlin,
R Pavitt, N Reeve and M Sutton
- Officers in attendance: W Allwood (Principal Planning Officer), N Brown (Development Manager), C Edwards (Democratic Services Officer), M Jones (Planning Officer), N Makwana (Planning Officer), Reynolds (Lawyer), C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer), M Shoemith (Development Management Team Leader), E Smith (Solicitor), C Tyler (Senior Planning Officer) and A Vlachos (Planning Officer) and K Wilkinson (Development Management Engineer, Essex County Council (ECC) Highways)
- Public speakers: M Ainsworth, S Bampton, R Butler, R Clifford (Stansted Parish Clerk), I Donaldson (Elmdon Parish Council Chairman), G Gardner, Councillor R Gooding, Councillor N Hargreaves, C Lee, Councillor P Lees, P McKeown and G Mott (Elsenham Parish Council Chairman).

PC116 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Fairhurst declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Saffron Walden Town Council/ Ward Councillor for Saffron Walden (Agenda Item 5 & 8).

Councillor Loughlin declared a non-pecuniary interest as Ward Member for Stort Valley, covering the Ugley area (Agenda Item 3).

Councillor Coote declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Saffron Walden Town Council/ Ward Councillor for Saffron Walden (Agenda Item 5 & 8).

Councillor Lemon declared a non-pecuniary interest as Ward Councillor for Hatfield Heath (Agenda Item 4).

Councillor LeCount declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Henham Parish Council and Ward Councillor for Elsenham and Henham (Agenda Item 3).

Councillor Pavitt declared a non-pecuniary interest as Ward Councillor for Littlebury, Chesterford and Wenden Lofts (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Freeman declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Saffron Walden Town Council/ Ward Councillor for Saffron Walden (Agenda Item 5 & 8).

PC117 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 March 2021 were agreed and would be signed by the Chair as an accurate record at the next opportunity.

In response to a question from Councillor Fairhurst regarding minute PC114 the Development Manager said there was no update yet on the legal opinion requested at the last meeting.

PC118 UTT/19/2266/OP - LAND NORTH OF BEDWELL ROAD AND EAST OF OLD MEAD ROAD UGLEY & HENHAM

The Principal Planning Officer presented an application for outline planning permission for the erection of up to 220 dwellings including 40% affordable housing (88 dwellings) with public open space, structural planting and landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) with vehicular access point from Bedwell Road. All matters reserved except for means of access.

The application was recommended for approval with conditions and a section s106.

There were additional conditions which related to design coding and the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group who suggested a contribution of £113k to mitigate the impact on local health care provision.

The following concerns were raised by Members:-

- Whether the development was sustainable.
- The issue of extra traffic on already heavily used roads especially through Ugley.
- Noise levels - the development was bound by the M11 on the western boundary and the railway on the east. Councillor Fairhurst suggested that sound screening all along the boundary of the M11 should be a condition.
- The site was not in an area being monitored for air quality so Members had no idea what the impact of the M11 and the railway had on air quality.
- The area was already over developed with too many houses built in the vicinity.
- The comments in the report from Network Rail regarding the rail crossing and the footpath and in particular their recommendation that no houses be occupied until the crossing was permanently closed.
- The cumulative impact of extra road users, which needed to be taken into account.

In response to questions from Councillor Bagnall, the ECC Highways Officer confirmed that she had read the report by Gardner Planning and had looked at the impact to the roads and footpaths. She said the measurements in the application were outside of acceptable distances and the footpath was not viable due to the comments made by Network Rail. She said that the developer had put forward additional information and although there was limited access to key facilities they had provided the opportunity to promote sustainable transport and cycling routes which had led to Highways withdrawing their refusal.

Members agreed that Highways acceptance of the proposal did not seem right; they relied on Highways to provide advice and did not think it was being provided.

The main concerns remained:-

- The main route out of the development was onto the already problematic Grove Hill.
- The Highways preferred route was stated as through Ugley Green but this would add an extra burden of traffic and drivers did not always follow preferred routes.
- Concern about extra traffic using Snakes Lane which was a protected lane.
- The need to safeguard rural roads.

The Development Manager said ECC Highways were professional. He said that this application could be refused on Gen 1 – sustainability, S7, Gen 4 due to the noise, Gen 6 and H9 – lack of infrastructure and Env 13 for air pollution.

Councillor Bagnall asked for it be noted that he thought TA1 and TA2 should also be a refusal reason.

Councillor Fairhurst proposed that the application be refused on the basis set out by the Development Manager.

Councillor LeCount seconded the motion.

RESOLVED to refuse the application.

Councillor P Lees, Councillor R Gooding, G Gardner, R Clifford (Stansted Parish Clerk and G Mott spoke against the application.

C Lee (applicant) spoke in support of the application.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40am and reconvened at 11:50 am

PC119 **UTT/20/0422/FUL - LAND NORTH OF COX LEY, HATFIELD HEATH**

The Planning Officer presented an application for the erection of 12 dwellings including new access and associated landscaping, with the creation of a parking area for the adjacent playing field.

The land is located directly to the north of the development limits of Hatfield Heath, within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The housing mix would consist of 1 x 1 bedroom house, 6 x 2 bedroom houses, 3 x 3 bedroom houses and 1 x 4 bedroom house. The buildings would be arranged either side of the new access road.

Ten of the dwellings would be provided as affordable housing and two of the plots would be market housing.

The scheme was recommended with conditional approval of the S106 agreement.

The following comments were made by Members:-

- The Parish Council were in favour of the scheme.
- Access onto the site was through a housing estate with narrow roads, assurance was needed that this would not occur during key times e.g. rush hour.
- To provide all residents with the Site Manager's contact details.
- There was concern that the site was outside development limits and on the green belt.
- There was general consensus that it was a good scheme and there was a local need for affordable homes.
- Hastoe Housing had produced similar developments with other successful schemes.
- A suggestion that other means of accessing the site were looked into – possibly across nearby fields.

The Development Manager said that there was already a recommended condition 10, regarding a construction site management plan. He suggested that prior to any development, there was early engagement with residents including UDC Housing and the Parish Council. Additionally safe access onto the site (including alternative ways to temporarily access the site during works).

Councillor Reeve proposed that the application be approved with the above conditions.

Councillor Fairhurst seconded the motion.

RESOLVED to approve the application with conditional approval of the s106 agreement.

P McKeown (Planning Consultant on behalf of the applicant) spoke in support of the application.

PC120 **UTT/20/2175/DFO - LAND SOUTH OF RADWINTER ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN**

The Acting Senior Planning Officer presented an application following outline approval UTT/17/3426/OP (approved under appeal APP/C1570/W/19/3227368) for extra care housing (use Class C2) together with associated infrastructure including road, drainage and access - details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale.

The proposal was for a total of 72 units of specialised 'extra care' accommodation units and includes: 31 x 1 bed apartments, 25 x 2 bed apartments, 7 x 1 bed bungalows and 9 x 2 bed bungalows.

The bungalows had access to small rear gardens as well as a central courtyard. Ground floor apartments had access to a terrace, and some upper floor apartments had access to balconies. There was also a large communal garden and terrace.

The application was recommended for approval with conditions.

The following concerns were raised by Members:-

- The size and nature of the building and the visual impact on one of the gateways into the town of Saffron Walden.
- A similar development, Cornell Court, on the other side of the road had problems with low occupancy.

In response to a question from Councillor Freeman, the Acting Senior Planning Officer clarified that it was not the same applicant as the previous scheme that had been turned down.

In response to a question from Councillor Bagnall the Acting Senior Planning Officer said the PV Panels covered the roof of the apartment blocks and a condition had been added that the developer submit plans of how they featured on the bungalows.

In response to a question from Councillor Pavitt the agent, R Butler, said that the PV panels would be at a slight angle.

The Development Manager said that if the design was not acceptable the Members would need to refuse the application.

Councillor Coote suggested that if the development was moved back from the road and provided more trees this would screen the building from the road and minimise the impact on the approach.

The Development Manager said the application could be refused on gen 2 – impact on the street scene.

Councillor Fairhurst proposed that the application be refused on this basis.

Councillor Freeman seconded the motion.

RESOLVED to refuse the application.

R Butler (agent) spoke in favour of the application.

PC121 **UTT/20/3016/FUL - LAND R/O MALT PLACE, CORNELLS LANE, WIDDINGTON**

The Planning Officer presented an application for the conversion of existing single storey agricultural building into 4 residential units. The agricultural land was occupied by vacant poultry sheds and associated structures.

It was noted that Class Q approval had been given for the conversions on the 26 February 2021.

The application was recommended for approval with conditions.

The Development Manger explained that the Class Q approval meant that planning permission had already been approved; the prior notification under Class Q was in accordance with the Council's delegated scheme. This application was before the Committee for approval of the proposal to make the gardens bigger and provide car parking.

Councillor Pavitt said that the chicken huts could not be converted and would have to be demolished. However if the Committee was not in a position to refuse this and the only thing that could be considered was the bigger gardens and car parking then he thought it would need to be approved.

In response to questions from Councillor Fairhurst the Officers confirmed the following:-

- There was no legal definition of isolation it was a judgement made from other cases.
- The protected lane was taken into account in the report by Highways.
- The site was agricultural land, not a brown field site.
- There was a condition on the application to restrict all permitted development rights.
- The scheme of delegation could be changed in the future but would have to go through Full Council.
- The development of the building behind had been refused on the basis of harm to the character and appearance of the area contrary to policies S7, Env 9 and the criteria failed to meet policy H6. There was no prior approval of this scheme through Class Q.
- This Class Q application was for 4 dwellings it was a standalone application and other schemes would be separate and either come through PAP3Q or through the Committee.

Further to a question from Councillor Loughlin, the agent, S Bampton, confirmed that it was a condition from Highways for the first 6 metres of the access road to be unbound material and then after this it would be gravel or large stones. There was also a condition for the road to be widened and for passing bays to be constructed.

Councillor Reeve proposed to approve the application.

Councillor Lemon seconded the motion.

RESOLVED to approve the application with conditions.

*Councillor N Hargreaves and G Gardner spoke against the application.
S Bampton (agent) spoke in favour of the application.*

The meeting adjourned at 1:45pm and reconvened at 2:30pm

Councillor Coote did not return to the meeting after the break.

PC122 UTT/20/2486/FUL - NORTH OF LABURNHAM VIEW, HIGH STREET, ELMDON

The Planning Officer said that the application had been deferred from the January Planning Committee for Members to visit the site.

The proposal included the erection of 2 semi-detached 3 bedroom dwellings with minor alterations to the existing access; associated landscaping and parking/turning area.

There were two options presented relating to car parking for residents.

The application was recommended for approval with conditions.

Members made the following points:-

- The line of sight to open countryside would be effected
- Elmdon Parish Council had come up with a design statement which should be taken into account.
- Scenario 2 would be the preferred parking option.
- Place Services had not visited the site and this application was in a conservation area.

The Development Manager confirmed that the Parish Council had been notified of the meeting but individual residents were not.

Councillor Loughlin said she did not think this application was in line with policy Env1 as it did not enhance the conservation area.

Councillor Caton said there could be beneficial change from development and a conservation area was not a preservation area. He said adding to the village on a small scale was needed and could be a good thing.

The Chair said that the building to the right of the site did not look like an old building and agreed that villages have to evolve. She asked if there were many semi-detached buildings in Elmdon. The Planning Officer said there were semi-detached properties on the left hand side of the site which were also listed.

Councillor Sutton thought the site was too small for two properties and did not think it would be beneficial.

The Planning Officer said he did take into account the Parish Council's comments. He said the application complied with their design statement and did not compromise the line of sight to open countryside. He said the hedge at the front of the property would be kept as a condition and the visual link to the countryside would be preserved with scenario 2.

Councillor Lemon proposed to approve the application with car parking scenario 2.

Councillor Caton seconded the motion.

RESOLVED to approve the application with conditions, the Chair had the casting vote.

M Ainsworth and I Donaldson (Elmdon Parish Council Chairman) spoke against the application.

Councillor Freeman left the meeting at 3.19pm

PC123 UTT/21/0410/HHF - 6 MONKS HILL, SAFFRON WALDEN

The Planning Officer said that the application was for a proposed single storey rear/side extension. The materials included brickworks (to match), tiled roof (to match) and flat roof to the rear, UPVC windows and doors.

The matter had been referred to the Committee as the applicant worked for the Council.

The application was recommended for approval with conditions.

In response to a question from Councillor Bagnall about an objection received in relation to being overlooked due to bi-fold doors, the Planning Officer said they were in compliance with the Essex design guide and he had tried to contact the objector to explain.

Councillor Fairhurst proposed that the application be approved with conditions but asked that the objector be contacted again.

Councillor LeCount seconded the motion.

RESOLVED to approve the application with conditions.

Meeting Closed at 3:30pm