

Runnymede Borough Council

PLANNING COMMITTEE

23 June 2021 at 6.30 pm

Members of Committee present: Councillors M Willingale (Chairman), P Snow (Vice-Chairman) , J Broadhead, D Cotty, R Edis, L Gillham, J Hulley, M Kusneraitis, M Maddox, C Mann, I Mullens, M Nuti, J Sohi, S Whyte and J Wilson

Members of the Committee absent: None

94 FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Fire Precautions were read out .

95 NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of their wish that the change listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be reappointed.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Remove</u>	<u>Appoint instead</u>
Conservative	Cllr Anderson- Bassey	Cllr Hulley

The Chief Executive had given effect to the change to Committee membership in accordance with section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

96 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 June 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None-all members present.

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Council's Deputy Monitoring Officer had granted Councillor Gillham a dispensation under paragraph 11.2 of the Code of Conduct for Members to remain in the room when the item on Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan was considered and to both speak in relation to that item, if called by the Chairman to do so, as well as participate in the vote.

This dispensation applied only for the duration of this Planning Committee meeting. The reason for this approach was that if there were future considerations of the Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan the implications of possible Interests should be considered on a case by case basis rather than giving a blanket dispensation at present as circumstances might warrant a different approach.

The planning applications listed below were considered by the Committee. All representations received on the applications were reported and copies had been made available for inspection by Members before the meeting. The Addendum had also been published on the Council's website on the day of the meeting. Public Speakers addressed the Committee on application RU 21/0608.

RESOLVED that –

the following applications be determined as indicated: -

<u>APP NO</u>	<u>LOCATION, PROPOSAL AND DECISION</u>
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RU 20/0098	Rusham Park, Whitehall Lane, Egham
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Outline planning application (amended proposal) for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of purpose built student accommodation up to 1,400 study bedrooms, energy centre and ancillary uses, including a pedestrian footbridge over the railway, and associated landscaping ("a student village") on land at Rusham Park, Whitehall Lane, Egham.

The Committee was advised that an updated Site Location Plan and Parameter Plan had been submitted by RHUL.

The Parameter Plan sought to adjust the proposed 'Student Village New Build Development Zone' to the east to include the footprint of buildings A, B, C & E. This made minor changes to the alignment of the eastern boundary, the development zone remained closely aligned with the size of area that was previously resolved to be approved. Essentially the area to the east had been reduced in size, but there had been an increase in the area to the north of a broadly similar amount. This amendment made more sense in terms of the indicative layout that was shown and would not have affected the original recommendation to approve made in December 2020

Officers also confirmed that the updated site location plan sought to enlarge the extent of the red line to include an additional area of land required for the proposed new bridge which would be constructed across the railway and any associated access from the bridge. Officers had confirmed that this additional area of land was not proposed for any new built development associated with the new student village. The alteration to the bridge area was not considered to cause any significant change or impacts, however the application had been brought back to Committee by the CHDMBC as the change to the red line for the repositioning of the bridge was considered to be relatively significant and as such the CHDMBC did not consider it appropriate to use his delegated authority on this occasion for this amendment.

The CHDMBC confirmed that the future 'Reserved Matters' application would only be reported to Committee if there were more than 10 objections or if a Councillor called it in, or the CHDMBC considered it appropriate to do so.

A Member raised the issue of the proposed CPZ for Englefield Green and sought clarification that the monies arising would be ringfenced for Egham as well as Englefield Green. Officers advised that the monies would be for

the whole CPZ project which would be available for both Egham and Englefield Green and not prioritised for either area.

Officers confirmed that proposed condition 7 had been updated to ensure that no part of the development shall be occupied until further details of highway improvements had been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This included facilities to allow pedestrians and cyclists (both students and the public) to cross the railway line from the site to the main RHUL campus and from adjoining footpaths and pavements. This would include details of the proposed design and positioning of the bridge, external lighting and associated footpaths to link the bridge with the main RHUL campus and existing neighbouring public footpaths and pavements.

The Committee was supportive of the amended details.

RESOLVED that-

The CHDMBC be authorised to GRANT permission subject to consideration by the CHDMBC of any further representations received before the expiry of consultation period, further consultation with Sport England as well as the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to secure:

- i) The agreed SAMM payments and a suitable SANG avoidance strategy in accordance with the requirements of Natural England;**
- ii) Agreed contributions towards setting up of a Controlled Parking Zone;**
- iii) The public use of the new railway bridge which will be funded and built by RHUL**

and conditions (conditions 7 and 39 amended as per Addendum), reasons and informatives listed on agenda, with additional informative listed on addendum.

Under Standing Order 39.2 a request was made by Cllr Mullens for the names of those voting on the above- mentioned application to be recorded and the voting was as follows:

For (12): Councillors Broadhead, Cotty, Edis, Hulley, Kusneraitis, Maddox, Mann, Nuti, Snow, Sohi, Willingale and Wilson.

Against (1): Councillor Mullens

Abstention (2): Councillors Gillham and Whyte)

RU 21/0608

7 Mead Lane, Chertsey

Alterations to previously approved change of use of existing building from A1 use (retail) to C3 (residential) use to create 3 no residential units (RU20/0754). Alterations include a new rear dormer and internal /external alterations.

The Committee sympathised with the concerns expressed by the public speaker and residents, but accepted that the principle of the change of use had previously been approved under the Prior Approval granted under RU 20/0754 and that significant weight had to be given to that and the fallback position. This current application was only for changes to the front fenestration and insertion of a rear dormer to facilitate that change of use.

The application would provide a betterment in living environment for future occupiers compared to the prior approval

In order to try and address the concerns of the public speaker and residents regarding impact on amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties, the Committee agreed that a condition be imposed requiring first floor west and north windows to be obscurely glazed.

In response to issues raised by Members on highways issues, Officers advised that the impact of the change of use had been considered under RU 20/0754. The SCC Highway Authority had considered that parking spaces were not required as the site was in a sustainable location with proximity to a local convenience shop and public transport links. Cycle storage had also been considered under the Prior Approval and there was limited capacity to increase cycle storage owing to space constraints on site.

A suggestion from a Member that a representative from SCC Highways Team, should attend future Committee meetings for significant applications was noted.

The Committee also agreed that a condition be imposed requiring submission of a Flood Risk Management Plan in respect of flood risk and safe means of escape which had also been a condition of the Prior Approval.

RESOLVED that:

The CHDMBC be authorised to GRANT permission subject to conditions, reasons and Informatives listed on agenda with two additional conditions requiring first floor west and north windows to be obscurely glazed, and submission of a Flood Risk Management Plan in respect of flood risk and safe means of escape.

(Under Standing Order 39.2 a request was made by Cllr Mullens for the names of those voting on the above- mentioned application to be recorded and the voting was as follows:

For (10): Councillors Cotty, Hulley, Kusneraitis, Maddox, Mann, Nuti, Snow, Sohi, Willingale and Wilson.

Against(0):

Abstentions(4): Councillors Broadhead, Edis, Mullens and Whyte)

(Mr Whitnall, an objector, and Ms Sanfulgencio, agent for applicant, addressed the Committee on the above application.)

100 **RUNNYMEDE DESIGN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) ADOPTION**

The Committee considered adoption of the Runnymede Design SPD.

The SPD had been prepared based on national good practice, and also taking into account opinions of Councillors and local residents. The draft SPD had also undergone a period of public consultation, during which representations had been received. These representations had now been considered by Officers. The Draft SPD had been the subject of screening in respect of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) which had concluded that neither a SEA nor HRA was required.

A total of 8 representations were received during the public consultation period and the comments made in 1 late representation had also been taken into account. A copy of the Consultation Statement which summarised these representations and how they had been taken into account was noted. This statement also set out a range of other amendments which were recommended by officers following their final review of the document. Officers recommended that the following key proposed amendments be made to the draft SPD prior to its adoption:

- Updating of title page and document footer throughout to refer to adoption date;
- Additional text had been added to confirm the purpose of an SPD and how it would be used in decision taking;
- Incorporation of introductory comments from the Chairman of the Planning Committee
- To respond to the National Design Guide;
- Updating of the document in some places to ensure factual accuracy as far as possible at the time of adoption, and in order to correct a number of spelling and grammatical errors;
- To signpost the reader to a number of useful additional sources of information as highlighted by consultees (for example Active Design);
- Updating of some of the maps in appendices 2 and 3;
- Additional text added to better celebrate the historic environment assets in Runnymede and to promote healthy lifestyles;
- Incorporation of wording recommended by the Environment Agency in relation to the construction of walls and fences in flood zone 3.
- Updating of appendix 5 on the design of pitches and plots for Gypsies, travellers and Travelling Showpeople; and,
- Updating of the glossary.

None of the amendments proposed were considered to change the general purpose of the SPD in that it continued to set out criteria for a good design across the borough for new development. Therefore, as the amendments were minor in nature, the Committee agreed that no further consultation was required prior to the adoption of the SPD and for the SPD to be adopted. Once adopted, the SPD would be a material consideration for the purposes of the determination of planning applications.

The Committee complimented officers on the quality of the SPD.

A Member asked that additional references to Thorpe should be made in the SPD and likewise Lyne. A comment was also made that the photographs in the SPD should show local examples where possible. It was requested that several sites in the borough were photographed and then considered to replace some of the existing images in the SPD which were from outside the borough. The Corporate Head of Planning Policy would address these matters and asked for Members to submit any suggested photographic material by 30 June for consideration. In order to allow for further consideration of these matters, the Committee agreed to delay the implementation date for the SPD to 15 July 2021.

Officers confirmed that the Local Plan review would address any new matters which arose from the Council's proposed Climate Change Strategy and that were not already covered by the current Local Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Planning Committee APPROVE the draft Design SPD as modified for adoption with an implementation date of 15th July 2021; and**
- ii) The Corporate Head of Planning Policy be given delegated authority to make minor editorial changes in order to provide additional references to Thorpe and Lyne and to consider the use of photographic material which was more representative of the local area.**

101 **DECISION TO MAKE THE THORPE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The approval of Committee was sought to formally 'make' (i.e. adopt) the Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan, and to confirm that it formed part of the Council's statutory development plan. The plan would then be used alongside the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Surrey County Council Minerals and Waste Plans.

The Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan had been through independent examination. The Examiner's report supported the neighbourhood plan subject to a number of modifications. The plan had been modified to incorporate the Examiner's recommendations. The Inspector also recommended that the plan met the basic conditions in legislation and could proceed to referendum. However due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the referendum had been delayed to the 6th May 2021, where the majority (85%) of those who voted were in favour of the plan. Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the Council had to declare its decision to make (i.e. adopt) the plan within eight weeks of the referendum result (not later than 6 July 2021).

Members noted that this was the first neighbourhood plan in Runnymede to meet this milestone and that, as far as officers were aware, the Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan was also the first neighbourhood plan in the country to re designate Green Belt land as urban land (1.76ha) and allocate it for residential development. Officers had made some minor changes to the text in the plan prior to adoption and these were noted.

Officers had not identified any concerns in making the Plan, and given the high level of community support for the Neighbourhood Plan as evidenced through the referendum, recommended that the Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan should now be 'made' in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

The Committee fully supported the making of the Plan and congratulated Cllrs Gillham and Gill on their work on the Plan. Councillor Gillham thanked the Council's Policy Team for their support during the process.

RESOLVED that:

the Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan be made with a commencement date of 30th June 2021.

102 **RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL SELF AND CUSTOM BUILD REGISTER**

The Committee considered amendments to the eligibility criteria for the RBC Self and Custom Build Register.

A Local Connection Test, Financial Solvency Test and fees for entering and then remaining on the Council's Self and Custom Build Register had been introduced in 2017. Officers had now taken the opportunity to review the existing requirements for entry to check whether they continued to be reasonable.

Due to limited land availability and tightly-drawn Green Belt boundaries, officers advised the Committee that it was still appropriate to only allow people to enter on to the Council's Self and Custom Housebuilding Register if they were able to demonstrate a local connection to the Borough as well as an ability to purchase land for a self or custom build project.

The details of the current local connection test was reported. Officers had undertaken a review of the local connection tests used by the other Surrey authorities to see how they compared to the test applied by RBC. A summary of the findings of this benchmarking work was noted.

Some Councils did not appear to have any local connection tests (Epsom and Ewell, Spelthorne and Woking Borough Councils). For those that do, RBC's local connection criteria were generally not as strict as those set out by the other councils. To align more closely with other Council's local connection tests, Officers recommended that the local residency test period be shortened to 5 years from its current 10, and the armed forces exception be increased from 3 years to 5. Members endorsed these changes.

The current financial solvency test required evidence from applicants which demonstrated that they had sufficient funds to purchase a plot of land to fund the construction of their self-build project at a value of £311,500. The Council had utilised the Government's land value estimates for policy appraisal which stated that the estimated value for a typical residential site, per hectare in Runnymede is £6,230,000.' This was based on a density of 20 dwellings per hectare (dph).

Comparative data from a limited number of the other Surrey Councils (where they had a criterion) was noted. Overall, the approach taken by the Council was considered to remain robust. However, Officers recommended that the amount that an applicant needed to be able to demonstrate they could afford to purchase a plot for a self or custom build property be amended to £259,333 based on the updated Government Residential Land Value Estimate for Runnymede, and a revised density figure of 30dph rather than 20dph be used in accordance with the new Local Plan. The Committee agreed the changes.

With regard to registration and retention fees, currently RBC charged an initial £65 registration fee and then an annual renewal fee of £60 for both individuals and associations. These charges were set to cover the Council's costs in administering the self and custom build register, but due to a relatively low sign-up rate, these costs had been considerably lower than expected. Therefore, officers had reviewed the costs charged by the other Surrey Councils for their self and custom build registers, details of which were noted.

Of the local authorities that charged, it would seem that RBC's charges were relatively high compared to the other councils in Surrey. In light of this, and based on the experience of officers in the Planning Policy team over the last 4 years, the management and maintenance of the self and custom build register was considered to be comparable (or involve considerably less work in many cases) to managing other core elements of the Planning Policy Team's work, such as responding to general enquires, responding to Freedom of Information requests etc. On this basis, Officers recommended that there was no justification for charging either a joining or retention fee and the Committee concurred.

The Committee thanked the Senior Planning Policy Officer for his presentation.

RESOLVED that

The above-mentioned amendments to the criteria for the Local Connection and Financial Solvency Tests, and deletion of the joining and renewal fee be APPROVED with an implementation date of 2nd August 2021:

(The meeting ended at 8.18 pm)

Chairman