

Runnymede Borough CouncilPlanning CommitteeWednesday, 26 June 2024 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors T Gates (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), V Cunningham, C Howorth, E Kettle (In place of A King), P Mehta, I Mullens, M Nuti, C Parry, K Rowsell, M Smith (In place of S Whyte), P Snow, M Williams and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors L Gillham and C Mann.

In attendance: Councillor A Berardi.

11 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

Councillor M. Smith substituted for Councillor S. Whyte and Councillor E. Kettle substituted for Councillor A. King.

12 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record

13 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Gillham and C. Mann.

14 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

15 **RU.23/0338 - Land at Bittams Lane, Chertsey, KT16 9QX**

Proposal: Proposed change of use of land for the creation of 12 Gypsy/ Traveller pitches (11 net including retention of 1 existing pitch) comprising 1 static and 1 touring caravan per pitch including alterations to existing vehicular access point and associated parking, landscaping, amenity areas and bin store (amended description 25/01/2024)

Several Members expressed a desire to defer the item to allow the consultation period for the 'Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople: Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)' to run its course.

It was advised by the Head of Planning that deferring the application on that basis would not be appropriate as the Committee should be determining planning applications on current rather than any potential future policy. The SPD only provided further detail to existing policy. Furthermore any move to defer should only come after a debate about the merits and disadvantages of the scheme.

It was added that the Local Plan established the principle of development with provisions in place for maximum plots and specification of plots, whilst the site was a specifically allocated site for development for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople pitches in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan in area region where it had been demonstrated that there was an acute need for it.

Responding to queries on whether members of the Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople community had been consulted about the scheme, whether it met their need and the prospect of other uses on the site, it was confirmed that there was a significant need for sites in the borough, the local plan considered the potential options for meeting this need and was examined in public. This was the preferred solution for meeting need adopted by the Borough.

Robust conditions were proposed limiting each pitch to only one static mobile home and one touring caravan, and there were also proposed limitations on commercial activity and vehicle weight that could be subject to enforcement action should the conditions be breached. The conditions on the scheme were precise that would require technical standards to be met with matters such as drainage.

Concerns around drainage had been dealt with by conditions that ensured the final drainage design did not increase the flood risk on or off the site, The HoP advised that this was a normal approach taken on a site in flood zone 1 and there was sufficient surety that a scheme could be designed.

Disappointment was expressed at what some committee members saw as the negligible biodiversity net gain of 0.66%, and whilst officers acknowledged it was only a minimal increase the only policy requirement was to improve biodiversity, therefore the scheme was policy compliant and could not be refused or deferred on those grounds. However, it was noted that the prevention of the felling of two elm trees would result in a very slight increase in biodiversity net gain. It was proposed, seconded and agreed by the Committee to add a condition to prevent the felling of the trees.

The proximity of the M25 was acknowledged, along with the impact this would have on noise and air quality. It was confirmed that no objections had been received in relation to air quality. In the original design some of the pitches were within the Air Quality Management Areas but had been removed from the zone by the applicant following talks with officers to meet policy requirements.

Other sites in the Borough had come forward in close proximity to AQMAs and been approved in a similar proximity to the M25. For example the Green Lane site, and as such a consistent approach was being taken across different accommodation types .

The impact of external noise on the site had resulted in the Council's Environmental Health Officer stating that internal noise level guidelines should be achieved in full, whilst the gypsy and traveller pitches were located in area with the lowest noise levels within the site.

A Committee Member asked for clarification on why a condition around trickle ventilation could not be accommodated given the external noise factors, and it was advised that due to the nature of mobile homes sites it would not be appropriate to impose the condition. However it was reiterated that everything possible had been done around noise mitigation and officers felt that the scheme maximised opportunities.

It was highlighted that there was no evidence within the officer report of the scheme adhering to the Council policy of 10% energy requirements coming from renewable sources. Officers advised the Committee it would be reasonable to add this condition if the policy required it, with the caveat that should it emerge that there was an appropriate planning reason for not including it then it could be withdrawn with the agreement of Cllr Gates (Chair at this meeting). The proposal was moved, seconded and agreed by the Committee.

Noting the Council's Land Contamination Officer's concerns about the land having never been certified as clean soil, a condition was proposed that contaminated land testing should take place prior to use as a garden area. The proposed condition was moved,

seconded and agreed by Committee.

It was resolved that –

The HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- **The completion of a section 106 legal agreement**
- **Planning obligations 1-4**
- **Planning conditions 1-21**
- **Informatives 1-13**
- **Additional condition to prevent the felling of the two elm trees**
- **Additional condition that contaminated land testing should take place prior to use as a garden area.**
- **Additional condition that 10% of energy provision should come from renewable sources. However if there was an appropriate planning reason for not including it this would be withdrawn subject to consultation with Cllr Gates as Chair of this meeting of the Committee.**

Trudi Passey, an objector, addressed the committee on this application.

16 RU.23/1564 - Culverdon House, Abbots Way, Chertsey, KT16 9LE

Proposal: Erection of an additional floor above existing office building to provide 9 apartments including ancillary works

The Committee sought clarity around minimum space requirements for the properties. Officers advised that all guidelines had been met, and whilst the room identified as a study fell below the minimum space requirements for a bedroom, the overall size of the properties still met national standards.

In response to queries about the size of the balconies, whilst the depth was below standard this had been offset by the creation of a communal amenity area in part of the existing car park which had provided betterment on the overall complex.

It was resolved that –

The Head of Planning was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- **The completion of a Unilateral Undertaking under the Town and Country Planning Act to secure planning obligation 1.**
- **Planning conditions 1-14**
- **Informatives 1-6**
- **Additional planning condition 15 in the addendum**

(The meeting ended at 7.51 pm.)

Chair