

Runnymede Borough Council

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 1 June 2022 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Willingale (Chairman), P Snow (Vice-Chairman), A Balkan, A Berardi, J Broadhead, R Bromley, V Cunningham, R Davies, L Gillham (Substitute, in place of E Gill) C Howorth, C Mann, I Mullens, S Whyte and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor M Nuti.

In attendance: Councillors S Jenkins.

45 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 April, 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

46 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Nuti.

47 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Broadhead declared a Non registrable Interest in planning application RU 22/0262 as he lives in close proximity to the application site. Cllr Broadhead withdrew from the chamber and took no part in determination of the application.

Cllr Howorth declared a Non registrable interest in planning application RU 22/0086 as he knew the applicant who had donated to political campaigns. Cllr Howorth withdrew from the chamber and took no part in determination of the application.

Cllr Berardi declared a Non registrable interest in planning application RU 22/0086 as he had previously objected to the application before he was elected as a Councillor. Cllr Berardi withdrew from the chamber and took no part in determination of the application

48 Planning Applications

The planning applications listed below were considered by the Committee. A 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. Objectors and applicants and/or their agents addressed the Committee on the applications specified.

RESOLVED that –

the following applications be determined as indicated: -

49 **RU.22/0262 Coombe Drive Addlestone**

Replacement of existing fence with 1.8m high decorative panel fencing and continuation of panel fencing over existing driveway to rear of site (part retrospective)

Officers informed the Committee of a further assessment of the application that confirmed that this proposal did not constitute the improvement, maintenance, or alteration of the existing fence rather it was a complete replacement new fence of more than 1m adjacent to a highway and therefore was not permitted development and required planning permission and needed to be considered as such.

The CHDMBC informed the Committee that much of the concern expressed by residents related to a new fence which had also been erected and extended along the full length of the northern side boundary and wrapped around the corner and across part of the front boundary. This would be the subject of a separate planning application which would be reported to a future meeting and must not be considered as part of this application.

Some Members considered the fence, the subject of the application before Members, was out of character with the area and objected to the non- natural materials used which did not contribute to biodiversity.

Officers advised that the principle of a means of enclosure in this proposed location and of this proposed height was considered acceptable and having some form of boundary treatment of this scale would not appear out of place subject to detailed design considerations. This had been demonstrated by the previous fence which was sited in the same location and of similar height to that currently proposed which in officers' opinion caused no harm to the character and appearance of the area. This was a material consideration which needed to be given weight by the Committee.

Whilst the external appearance of the proposed fence was unusual and very different from what was previously there officers considered it was not sited in an overly prominent location or of excessive length or height that would result in it appearing overbearing or overly intrusive in the street scene. Officers felt that the fence was just about within the boundaries of acceptable design and within the range of reasonable personal choice of the applicant, this was however a balanced recommendation, and design was a subjective matter for the decision maker to take into account, the decision maker being the Committee.

A number of Members did not agree with this assessment, and considered the balance fell the other way. These Members considered that the materials used were alien and incongruous to the detriment of the streetscene and character of the area, and therefore would not warrant support and approval of the application.

Some other Members commented that whilst the fence was not appealing aesthetically, the fence was broadly compliant with Planning Policy and they did not consider there was sufficient grounds to refuse the application,

A Motion to authorise the CHDMBC to grant planning permission was moved and seconded. The Motion was lost.

Following defeat of the Motion, and further debate on the design a Motion was moved and seconded that the application be refused on grounds that the fence by virtue of materials and appearance formed an incongruous and alien feature in the street scene.

The Motion was passed and it was-

**Resolved that
The CHDMBC be authorised to refuse planning permission as the fence by virtue of materials and appearance forms an incongruous feature in the street scene to the detriment of its character**

(Ms Wortley, an objector ,and Mr Munday, agent for applicant, addressed the Committee on this application)

50 **RU.22/0043 31 The Causeway**

Construction of a self-storage facility (Use Class B8), six units forming an innovation centre (Use Class B8), and nine industrial units (Use Class E(g) (iii)/B2/B8), together with vehicle parking and landscaping

The Committee mainly commented on landscaping, noise, flood mitigation, appearance of the buildings and drainage.

The proposal would result in an improvement in the landscaping and tree cover at the site and tree loss would be mitigated by proposed planting. The Council's Tree Officer had raised no objection subject to appropriate conditions and would also have regard to planting of appropriate size and species

In response to a suggestion from a Member for the developer to assist in addressing flooding concerns for a separate site in the Causeway, Officers confirmed that it would not be reasonable to compel this developer to provide flood mitigation measures for an adjoining site, above and beyond that which was required to bring forward this site for redevelopment.

However, an informative could be imposed advising the applicant that the Committee strongly encourage the developer to work with other developers of adjacent sites to optimise mitigation of flood risk.

Officers confirmed that the noise assessment submitted as part of the application concluded that with the recommended mitigation, the predicted noise levels from the site operations would not have an adverse effect on properties either side of the river.

Officers confirmed that the architectural finish of the buildings was focussed on functionality and adaptability for future users. As the site was within the strategic employment area the design approach was considered appropriate. Landscaping at the back of the site would also be retained and enhanced.

The EA, SCC Drainage and the Council's Drainage Officer had raised no objection to the drainage arrangements subject to appropriate conditions. The harvesting of grey water for reuse would be taken up with the applicant

The Committee was supportive of the application as it would bring vacant (but previously developed land) back to employment generating use and deliver increased employment floorspace

Resolved that

The CHDMBC be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990(as amended) to secure a Unilateral Undertaking submitted to Surrey County Council as the Highway Authority to secure the auditing fee of £6,150 for the monitoring of the Travel Plan and subject to the conditions, reasons and Informatives listed on the agenda, and additional informative stating that the Committee strongly encourage the developer to work with other developers of adjacent sites to optimise mitigation of flood risk

51 **RU.21/2186 Rear of 1 North Street**

Construction of a residential development to the rear of 1 North Street, Egham comprising 6 flats together with associated amenity space, parking, refuse and recycling store and bicycle store.

Some members of the Committee raised concerns over the narrow access from North Street particularly for larger vehicles and emergency vehicles, loss of car parking, exacerbation of existing parking problems in the area, and impact on amenities of surrounding residential properties, and contribution of the development to the carbon neutral target.

There had been no objection raised by SCC Highways Authority to the access arrangements subject to appropriate conditions. Whilst the concerns regarding parking in the area were noted, it was not reasonable for the applicant to address existing parking problems which needed to be addressed via other means of control which sat outside the planning process. The test with regards impact in the NPPF is severe. The applicant had offered to demolish a lean-to extension to enable the access to be widened and the Committee was supportive of this offer and a condition would be imposed to require this. The issue of access for emergency vehicles would be covered by other legislation and Building Regulations.

The loss of the car park was considered acceptable as its current use was minimal and there were alternative public car parking facilities close by. There was no evidence available to the Council that indicated that the car park had significant levels of use.

With regard to the carbon neutral target, the CHDMBC advised the Committee that only the current Local Plan standards could be enforced and recommended that condition 11 be amended to state that no development can be commenced until details of the proposed renewable energy scheme had been received and approved in writing by the Council.

The applicant had also offered improved landscaping density and screening to protect amenities of neighbouring properties and an additional condition would be imposed to this effect.

The Committee was supportive of the application which would make a good use of the site and deliver new homes.

Resolved that

The CHDMBC be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the conditions (condition 11 amended to state that no development can be commenced until details of the proposed renewable energy scheme had been received and approved in writing by the Council), reasons and Informatives listed on the agenda, and additional conditions requiring removal of lean-to extension to provide wider access, and requiring an improved landscaping density and screening.

(Ms Hall, an objector, and Mr Phillips, agent for applicant, addressed the Committee on this application)

52 RU.22/0086 Fairmont Windsor Park Hotel

Retention of existing illuminated hotel lettering sign mounted on a stone wall with trough fountain at main hotel entrance on Bishopsgate Road (retrospective application)

Following the speech by the objector, the CHDMBC, on a point of clarification, confirmed that the recently installed lights on the main entrance brick columns to either side of the sign and on the entrance gate to the hotel could not be considered as part of this application and would be considered separately by the LPA. This application only related to an application for advertisement consent.

The Committee commented on the scale of the sign and the extent of its illumination which was intrusive in the green belt, and its impact on wildlife. Comment was also made

regarding the negative impact caused by the inclusion of a fountain and associated noise.

The CHDMBC stated that illumination of the sign would be controlled by condition. There were a number of other light sources near to the sign which meant refusal could not be justified on the grounds of illumination/light pollution. The Surrey Wildlife Trust had raised no objection. The new signage was considered by officers to be proportionate and reasonable for the size of the business operation.

Councillor Mullens asked for the names of those voting to be recorded and the voting was as follows:

For approval: 9 (Councillors Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Cunningham, Gillham, Mann, Snow, Willingale and Wilson)

Against: 3 (Councillors Davies, Mullens and Whyte)

Resolved that

The CHDMBC be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the conditions (updated condition 3 as per addendum) and reasons listed on the agenda.

(Mr Gates, an objector, addressed the Committee on the above application. The applicant had not registered to speak)

53 Proposed Revision to Frequency of Planning Committee Meetings

The Committee considered amending the frequency of Planning Committee meetings to monthly from September 2022.

The Committee was advised that there were a number of issues with the current cycle. These included:

- little time between meetings to allow productive work on cases, due to the short cycle, every week there was either a committee meeting, or draft or final reports were due each week which detracted from Officer ability to focus on other work;
- Inconsistent meeting lengths/agenda sizes;
- When they arise, short agendas were not time/cost efficient.

The advantages of changing it to monthly included:

- more consistent agenda sizes;
- more time to make meaningful progress on cases between meetings;
- a need for physical fewer meetings, reduced cost and time;
- More cost efficient;
- More environmentally friendly/sustainable in line with the Council's draft Climate Change Strategy which in action CBP 1.0 stated that elected Members should seek to reduce transport through car shares, public transport, and online meetings
- More predictability when meetings would be (i.e. always a certain part of the month)
- Report preparation periods less likely to clash with Xmas and other events.
- More time available for Member policy briefing sessions and training sessions which could be held remotely

In periods where there was significant business arising, extraordinary/special meetings of the Committee could be convened if necessary, though this was considered to be a

relatively rare possible occurrence and was significantly more preferable than having meetings with limited business or that needed to be cancelled. Extraordinary meetings if required would be agreed with the Chairman and notified as far in advance as possible.

Subject to Committee approval, as many of the pre-existing dates would be used as possible. Only 4 new dates would need to be arranged, and 7 dates would be cancelled. All meetings up to the August 2022 break would remain unaltered.

The revised calendar of meetings from September onward would be as shown in the table below (existing meetings shaded grey):

Meeting Date
September 7 th 2022
October 5 th 2022
November 9 th 2022
December 14 th 2022
January 18 th 2023
February 15 th 2023
March 22 nd 2023
April 19 th 2023

The 7 cancelled meetings would be 28 September, 19 October, 30 November, 21 December 2022, 8 February, 1 March and 12 April 2023.

The Committee was supportive of the proposed changes for the reasons set out in the report. The benefits of being able to dedicate more time to policy discussions as well as relieving some of the pressure on officers were particularly welcome.

On a separate matter the Committee asked the CHDMBC to consider whether there was any suitable method of giving advance warning to Members of significant major planning applications which would be reported to Committee to give more preparation time in the lead up to meetings. The Committee also acknowledged that officers experienced pressures from the submission of late information and representations that made compiling the addendum challenging, however if this could come around earlier on meeting days this would be appreciated by the committee.

Resolved that:

- i) The frequency of Planning Committee Meetings be amended to monthly with effect from September 2022; and**
- ii) The calendar of Planning Committee meetings for the current municipal year be amended from September 2022 onwards as set out above.**

(The meeting ended at 9.05 pm.)

Chairman