

Runnymede Borough CouncilPlanning CommitteeWednesday, 28 February 2024 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Willingale (Chair), P Snow (Vice-Chair), A Balkan, V Cunningham, T Gates, E Gill, C Howorth, S Jenkins, E Kettle, A King, C Mann, M Nuti, S Whyte and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors T Burton.

In attendance: Councillors I Mullens.

59 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

There were no changes to committee membership.

60 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

61 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Burton.

62 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

63 **RU.23/1396 - 262-264 Chertsey Lane, Staines, TW18 3NF**

Proposal: Change of use of garage and workshop from (Class B2) general industrial use to a (sui generis) tyre fitting place and associated works. (Revised plans received 15/12/23)

Clarification was sought by a committee member on Surrey County Council's (SCC) comments around receiving different versions of the same plan by the applicant, as well as there being no requirement for a noise impact assessment. The Environmental Health Officer had not objected to the scheme or required a Nature Improvement Area (NIA), having given due regard to the fallback position on the site. The fallback position was that B2 Class usage of these buildings had become lawful by virtue of passage of time. B2 uses had many activities associated with it that would generate noise and at the request of a member examples of B2 uses were provided. Furthermore it was noted that the use preceding this was as a petrol station which also had the potential to cause amenity and operational issues.

The Head of Planning confirmed that highways officers had looked at the plans in detail and were now satisfied that any initial concerns had been fully addressed. Whilst the prospect of charging points for e-bikes was welcome by the committee, it was explained that SCC had not requested a charging point for electric vehicles.

Members noted that there was a complicated history to the site, which had previous commercial uses (either as a repair place or as a petrol station). Members recalled that there had been a previous desire from the landowners to turn the location into a residential dwelling which would have been a more compatible use of the land, but this had not been

deemed possible due to various issues, primarily due to the flood zone constraints.

Committee also noted that the application dealt only with the front part of the site, however there was concern around the aesthetic nature and the visual amenity that any potential storage build-up of tyres would have on neighbouring residents. Members considered that a condition would be relatively hard to enforce. The Head of Planning agreed to add an informative to have follow up conversations with the applicant around maintaining this to acceptable levels.

It became clear as the debate progressed that the Committee, had some concerns about amenity particularly with regards noise, and collectively deemed that a condition with regards operating hours on the site would be appropriate.

The requirement for a fine balance was noted, given that there was currently no restriction on operating hours for the now immune B2 use of the former petrol station buildings. There was some debate about whether 6pm or 6.30pm was an appropriate closing time, following further discussion 6.30pm was considered reasonable. It was noted that the applicant was not seeking to operate on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Following debate, a restrictive condition limiting the use to 8am – 6:30pm, Monday – Saturday (with no trading on Sunday) was proposed by a member and supported by the Committee.

Resolved that –

The HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- a) Conditions 1-6**
- b) Informatives 1, 3 and 4**
- c) Addendum notes**
- d) Additional condition restricting operating hours to 8am – 6:30pm, Monday – Saturday.**
- e) Additional informative to follow up with the applicant around the aesthetics of the frontage.**

Mr AJ McNulty, an objector, and Mr Martin Moss, agent for the applicant, addressed the Committee on this application.

64 RU.23/0356 - Land at Syward Place, 40-48 Pyrcroft Road, Chertsey, KT16 9JT

Proposal: Removal of existing car park ramp off Bell Bridge Road and erection of a residential apartment building (Use Class C3) comprising 46 no. flats with associated site layout amendments, as well as the provision of parking; refuse and recycling storage; substation; landscaping; tree works; public open and informal play space; and alterations to access from Fox Lane North.

The Committee were keen to find out about the relationship between a scheme of this nature and the proposed work on the A320, which had not yet commenced.

The Head of Planning advised that for Runnymede's local plan to be considered sound the Council had to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examiner that there would be no significantly negative impact on the strategic network. The Local Plan assumed a windfall rate and as such schemes that were not allocated were expected to come forward in sustainable settlement locations. There was no objection from the highway authority.

Significant HIF funding had been secured and the County Council was moving towards delivery of the A320 improvements to assist with strategic capacity. In any case the flats proposed were to a very low parking development and as such the impact of the scheme would be unlikely to be significant. A highways reason for refusal relating to harm to the

A320 could not be reasonably sustained.

It was noted that the government had rolled out widespread prior approvals that effectively de-regularised planning relating to conversion of office block and allowed the conversion of office blocks into flats whilst only having to meet minimal requirements/standards.

It was stated that separation distances to existing buildings to the north of the scheme was a negative aspect of the application that added weight against it, but in the opinion of officers would not be sufficient grounds for refusal of the scheme on its own.

During the debate disappointment was expressed by several members about the lack of affordable homes on the scheme, however it was clarified that following a viability report the developer had agreed to make an affordable housing contribution of some £346,000, however that figure was subject to going up or down at the review stage. Policy required affordable housing “where viable”. The viability report had been independently assessed by a professional viability company. Unfortunately, the rules set by government meant that certain criteria had to be taken into account in assessing these reports.

It was further clarified that the requirement for a 10% reduction in energy consumption could be achieved however the applicant saw fit so long as it was policy compliant, and the details were agreed in advance – there was no requirement for solar panels and heat pumps to be deployed. Furthermore, whilst there was a national desire to phase out gas boilers they were not currently forbidden by local or national planning policy.

Several committee members were disappointed by the lack of parking spaces, and some members considered that public transport in the local area was poor. The Head of Planning advised that the location would be considered sustainable in planning terms as it would have access to a range of facilities, shops and amenities by foot. As a sustainable location in planning terms a low or no parking scheme could be acceptable under the Council’s policies and SPG.

Further concern was raised in relation to the proposed building’s mass and size, as well as its proximity to locally listed buildings. However, it was highlighted that the Council’s heritage officer had raised no objections with regards heritage impact and there was significant separation from the station building which has other large modern buildings surrounding it.

With regards design and scale, the scheme had been to an independent design review panel who had reviewed plans and deemed the scheme an acceptable design.

Some members raised concerns about the level of biodiversity net gain and eco credentials.

Members had listed a number of concerns. A motion was put forward to defer the application. The purpose of the proposed deferral was:

- To see if the developer would be willing to make further improvements to the scheme, to resolve any of the matters of member concern listed in the debate.
- To consider further any advice such as the design review panel conclusions or viability assessment.
- To visit the site and gain further understanding of its context.

The Committee were in support of the deferral motion.

Resolved that –

The application was deferred for the reasons above. Officers would seek to arrange

a site visit for the Committee.

65 RU.23/1489 - East Course, Wentworth Golf Club, Wentworth Estate, Virginia Water, Wentworth Drive, GU25 4JZ

Proposal: Engineering works to the East Course including; creation of new golf tee positions, bunkers, cart path routes and general land profiling and associated works.

Members noted the proposals. Following a number of minor clarifications there were no significant issues arising and the motion to approve as set down on the agenda and addendum was moved and passed.

Resolved that –

The HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- a) Planning conditions 1-7
- b) Addendum notes

66 Amendments to the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement - Post-Consultation

A proposal to amend the Statement of Community Involvement had come to the committee in December 2023, which was unanimously supported by the committee, subject to further consultation.

The consultation had recently concluded on proposed amendments to the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

The purpose of the amendment was focussed on significantly reducing GDPR risk rather than making sweeping changes to the policy.

A limited response had been received to the consultation, with the majority of responses being provided by statutory consultees. Officers had discretion over the process and so where appropriate may make bespoke arrangements with statutory consultees.

It was confirmed to members that the planning department would continue to publish residents' comments on the website. The process would seek to ensure that personal data was separated at an early stage to limit GDPR risk. Residents would receive an auto-acknowledgement on submitting a webform. Digital Services would continue to seek to make the website and webform as accessible as possible.

Resolved that –

The amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement contained in Appendix 1 were adopted.

67 Service Plan - Planning, Economy and Built Environment

The business plan set out targets and ambitions of development management, planning policy, climate change and building control, which all set out to be aligned to the corporate plan. The vast majority of growth within the plan was in relation to climate change activity.

It was clarified that the development of clusters aimed to reap the benefit of having so many tech-based companies in the area.

Resolved that –

The 2024/25 Service Area Plan for the Planning, Economy and Built Environment Service was approved.

(The meeting ended at 8.44 pm.)

Chair