

Runnymede Borough CouncilPlanning CommitteeWednesday, 29 May 2024 at 6.30 pm

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

Members of the Committee absent: None.

## 1 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

Councillor Gahir substituted for Councillor Williams.

## 2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## 3 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

## 4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 5 **RU.24/0002 - 2 Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0AY**

*Proposal: Change of Use from Restaurant to Mixed Use Restaurant with Takeaway (sui generis use) and minor configuration of the kerb, a new refuse store and cycle parking.*

A Member raised concern that the scheme would result in an increase in litter, noise and road traffic accidents at the location.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed by the committee that condition five around bin store provision would be amended to include external bins for customers.

Whilst it was noted that the site was in an area with active and sustainable modes of transport available to visitors, many would have to cross two roads on a busy roundabout on the A30 at the bottom of Egham Hill. There was also concern in the anticipated increase in footfall from three people per hour to 19 people per hour. A member stated that they had been informed that there had been seven road traffic accidents in the vicinity of the location in the past six years.

The Head of Planning advised that most of the matters being raised around highways safety was an existing problem and in planning terms it was necessary to consider what additional harm would be caused by the increased number of movements on the site and whether or not a severe impact would arise. From the data provided by Surrey County Council as highways agency that number of movements would not increase to a material extent, and in the absence of an objection from Surrey County Council as Highway Authority it would be very challenging to defend a reason for refusal based on highways safety or capacity.

Any existing highways matters were for the Highway Authority to consider in its wider role, this planning application could not be expected to address existing matters. If the County Highway Authority considered that there was an existing highway safety matter to address it could consider appropriate measures. In considering the Application before the committee the Highway Authority would make assessments based on normal usage, and whilst they could not plan for extremes would make reasonable and rational assumptions.

Furthermore it was acknowledged that the site had previously been used as a restaurant and pedestrians had a certain responsibility to look after their own safety, which could not be pinned on an unknown takeaway operator, whilst any existing safety risk associated with pedestrians crossing roads was not for this development to solve. Whilst it was also acknowledged that Surrey County Council's recommendations were based on what was defensible, the situation at other sites and striking a balance between some degree of risk and dealing with matters at appeal, officers agreed bring the matter committee's concerns over road safety in this vicinity to the Highway Authority's attention.

Addressing concerns about the potential for the pavements to be blocked by scooters, officers advised that there was a reasonable degree of offsite frontage, and whilst not dedicated storage there was room around the periphery of the site. Furthermore deliveries of such nature were ancillary to restaurant use so permission was not generally required.

During the debate the planning balance around the installation of EV chargers was discussed. On the basis that the proposed use was for a takeaway unit rather than restaurant, officers had considered that EV charging was not necessary and it would be preferable to keep a turnover of vehicles entering and exiting the car park, rather than encourage vehicles to stay longer in the car park to charge which could have parking capacity issues. Additionally, the amount of time a vehicle was likely to spend in the car park in collecting a takeaway would not be sufficient to generate a full charge.

Nevertheless, the committee considered the advice from officers and concluded that the trade-off between making efficient use of the car park against the need to provide EV charging in the context of the council's climate change strategy tipped the balance in favour of installing EV chargers. The proposal was moved, seconded and agreed by the committee.

A Member asked about the prospect of the Council creating its own Supplementary Design Guide (SPD) to assist with littering. Officers advised that this wasn't a matter that had been raised before by the public or Councillors, but it is something that could be considered in the future if a significant issue arose in the Borough.

Noting the information around the ventilation system, a Member considered it appropriate to upgrade the information to a condition that prior to any change of occupier on site, a scheme of ventilation should be provided to the planning authority dealing with the suitability of the ventilation system, which should be maintained for the lifetime of occupancy.

Whilst it was noted that the current ventilation system was appropriate for a pizza/pasta establishment and any change of operator would have environmental health rules to satisfy, the proposal around ventilation was moved, seconded and approved by committee.

Addressing concern about the end user being unknown, the Head of Planning advised that planning permission gets granted for the use of land rather than specific occupiers, whilst any material change in the building may require future planning permission. Advertising would require express advertisement consent.

**Resolved that –**

The HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- **Planning Conditions 1-7, including amended condition 5 to state that the refuse strategy would provide external bins for customers.**
- **Additional condition to provide EV charging points in accordance with the council's parking standards.**
- **Additional condition – previously an informative – that prior to any change of occupier on site a scheme of ventilation should be provided to the planning authority dealing with the suitability of ventilation, which should be retained for the lifetime of occupancy.**
- **Informatives 1-6 and 8&9 (informative 7 to be a condition as per bullet point above)**

6 **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.*

Several members were disappointed that the scheme showed minimal alterations from the application previously considered by the Committee. Some members felt that the scheme was not an appealing design, in the heart of the commercial belt with negligible community benefit and a relatively modest financial contribution to social housing in lieu of there being none on the site.

The Head of Planning advised that the scheme was in a sustainable urban location with nearby residential schemes, many of which offered more limited parking due to their sustainable location in planning terms.

The design had been to an independent design review panel (consisting of planners, architects and landscapers) and the design review panel did not raise concerns over the quality of the design. The scheme provided a number of benefits, and whilst the lack of affordable housing was considered regrettable, the scheme made a good contribution to the Borough's Housing supply. The local plan had assumed a windfall rate, which were sites that had not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process usually comprising of previously developed sites that had unexpectedly become available. The supply of housing in a sustainable location had afforded the scheme significant weight.

A query was raised on the scale of the consultation, and it was confirmed that a variety of methods had been utilised to make residents and businesses aware, and it was further confirmed that those living in nearby Floral House Independent Retirement Living had been consulted.

With regards the affordable housing element this had been subject to viability testing. Both local and national policy indicated that affordable housing provision was to be made where a scheme was viable. If a scheme could not provide affordable housing on demonstrable viability grounds then it was still policy compliant.

A Member proposed the inclusion of a clawback mechanism as part of the section 106 agreement that would ensure that the developer made a contribution to the Council's affordable housing provision in the event that the development was more profitable than anticipated. It was confirmed that the figures this would be based on would be reviewed by an independent consultant. The proposal was moved, seconded and agreed by the committee.

In response to a query from the committee the Head of Planning was confident that the

Council were applying policies SL19 – housing mix and size requirements – and SL20 – affordable housing – consistently. All sites would not deliver housing mix uniformly and practical realities must be considered in terms of the most efficient use of land. On this small urban site such as this a flatted scheme is clearly the most efficient and appropriate use of land and is always likely to lead to more smaller units being delivered. The efficient use of land is a stated objective of national planning policy.

**Resolved that –**

- **The HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:**
  - **The six obligations under the section 106 agreement**
  - **The addition of a clawback mechanism as part of the section 106 agreement.**
  - **Planning conditions 1-32**
  - **Informatives 1-16**
- **The HoP was authorised to refused planning permission should the section 106 agreement not progress to his satisfaction.**

**7 RU.23/1547 - Longcross Studios, Chobham Lane, Chertsey, KT16 0EE**

*Proposal: Full planning application for two x (2,107sqm) stage buildings (retention of the two stage buildings previously granted temporary planning permission under ref. RU.21/1556)*

The committee noted the lack of objections to the scheme, which was in contrast to earlier applications on the site, and concluded that residents had got used to Netflix being established and operating on the site.

However, concern was raised about the alleged cumulative impact of the increase in the size of vehicles in the area and the effect on the condition of local roads. It was advised that large vehicles using this area was a historic issue that had been raised by residents for many years there are many different users of large vehicles in the area and that use the area as a through route, and to attempt to pin damage to the roads on one user would not be feasible. Furthermore, options were available to Surrey County Council as highways authority to oblige a developer to make good any road deterioration if there was proof that the deterioration had been caused by that developer. Whilst that option had not been taken up by the County Highways Authority, the Committee debated whether the travel plan that had been recommended by the county highway authority was needed and why officers had deemed it not necessary.

Officers explained that they felt the condition was being requested to try to address the wider film studio use of the back of a relatively minor planning application that made up modest proportion of overall site use. The land could be used lawfully as a film studio and production lot and as such there was the issue of proportionality.

Whilst the Committee noted that the travel plan would predominantly monitor the modes of transport taken to the site rather than protect the quality of the local highway, there was widespread support for its inclusion as a condition/in the legal agreement, with the Committee satisfied that elements of the travel plan were in-keeping with the Council's climate change ambitions.

It was further noted that the travel plan would involve a financial contribution from the developer to the County Highways Authority, and was justified by being the tipping point of an accumulation of multiple schemes across the site affecting overall highways capacity. It was confirmed that planning officers were in regular contact with Surrey County Council officers about a multitude of elements around Longcross.

The proposal to include a travel plan as part of the conditions of the application was moved, seconded and agreed by committee.

**Resolved that –**

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

- **Planning conditions 1-3**
- **Additional condition for a travel plan and financial contribution from the developer to the County Highways Authority to be secured.**

## **8 Runnymede Local Plan production timetable (April 2024)**

The report was outlined to members, who were in support of the provisional local plan timetable that had been submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

The Committee noted the updated recommendation that removed specific paragraph numbers and incorporated the entire report.

**Resolved that –**

**Planning committee approved the proposed timetable for the review and update of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan as set out in the officer report.**

## **9 Draft Energy Supplementary Planning Document**

The Committee were briefed on the report, which sought approval to carry out statutory public consultation on the draft Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The purpose of the SPD would be to provide supplementary guidance to support and improve the implementation of planning policies contained in the Council's adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan that relate to energy use and carbon emissions.

The Committee were pleased that the document had come forward and felt that the questionnaire would be simple for residents to use. On the basis that the consultation period cut across a general election it was proposed, seconded and agreed by committee to extend the consultation period to eight weeks. This would be double the statutory consultation length of four weeks, whilst officers would arrange a private briefing for the Committee.

**Resolved that –**

**The draft Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was approved for public consultation for a period of eight weeks from Wednesday 5 June to Wednesday 31 July 2024.**

## **10 Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople: Supplementary Planning Document**

The Committee were updated on the progress made in relation to the development of a new draft Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for the pitches and plots allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan.

Work was paused on the document in 2021 however now that the Council had sites with planning permission officers felt it was an opportune time to seek adoption of the policy to ensure that allocated pitches and plots went to households who met the tests of the policy,

which were that they were members of the Gypsy and Travellers community with a local connection to the area.

On the basis that the consultation period cut across a general election it was proposed, seconded and agreed by committee to extend the consultation period to eight weeks. This would be double the statutory consultation length of four weeks, whilst officers would arrange a private briefing for the Committee.

**Resolved that –**

**The draft Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD was approved for public consultation for a period of eight weeks from Wednesday 5 June to Wednesday 31 July 2024.**

(The meeting ended at 8.52 pm.)

Chair