

Runnymede Borough CouncilPlanning CommitteeWednesday, 25 October 2023 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Willingale (Chairman), P Snow (Vice-Chairman), A Balkan, MK Cressey (In place of C Mann), T Gates, E Gill, C Howorth, S Jenkins (In place of I Mullens), A King, M Nuti, M Singh, D Whyte (In place of T Burton), S Whyte and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor V Cunningham.

In attendance: Councillor S Ringham.

23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr V Cunningham.

25 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Howorth declared a non registerable interest in application RU.23/0357 due to his association with the applicant. Cllr Howorth left the room whilst this item was discussed.

Cllr Jenkins declared a non registerable interest in application RU.23/0833 due to living in close proximity to the application site. Cllr Jenkins left the room whilst this item was discussed.

26 RU.23/1066 - Weybridge Business Park, Addlestone Road, Addlestone, KT15 2UP

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and the development of employment units (Classes E(g)ii, E(g)iii, B2 and B8) with ancillary office accommodation, vehicular accesses, associated external yard areas, car parking, servicing, external lighting, hard and soft landscaping, infrastructure, and all associated works.

The application stimulated significant debate from the committee, with one of the key issues being concerns about the proposed 24/7 usage on the site and the impact this would have on the surrounding properties, many of which were residential.

Early on in the debate it was proposed to include a condition that put a restriction on usage of the site between the hours of around 7am – 9pm to avoid overnight disruption. The Head of Planning advised that conditions had to be necessary and for good planning reasons and officers believed that the mitigations put in place by the applicant, along with the lack of an objection from the council's Environmental Health suggested there would be no evidence of significant harm arising that would justify a condition around usage. Whilst it was within the gift of the committee to disagree, any condition could still be appealed and subsequently removed if there was no evidence to suggest it was necessary.

There was also debate around the proposed timing of the restrictions, with some members preferring an earlier finish time whilst another proposed overnight movement to minimise

the impact on the road network. The Head of Planning advised that 7am – 9pm would be a reasonable condition to impose and more stringent timings would be unduly restrictive and could incentivize the applicant to appeal the condition. Applying financial penalties for not adhering to these times similar to an airport penalising airlines flying outside of agreed hours was not an option available to committee.

The location of the site and the fact that there was only one vehicle entrance/exit in and out of the area caused concern, particularly in the context of the large increase of vehicle movements in and out of the site along with the fact that area was a mixture of residential, retail and commercial properties and residents would have difficulty parking.

Concern was also raised about disruption during construction, however the Head of Planning advised that a condition imposed a construction management plan and inconvenience caused during construction was not a planning consideration, a certain degree of disruption was to be expected.

Addressing member concerns about highways capacity, the Head of Planning advised that the Council was applying for Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) to improve part of the strategic network, however the county council's position as highways authority was that there was no evidence that highway capacity would be impacted by the application, which meant there were no highways grounds for refusal. It was confirmed that the assessment was carried out in 2022, whilst it was also acknowledged that there was no onus on the developer to deliver targets made by Surrey County Council around improvements to public transport and connectivity.

The Head of Planning added that unevidenced reasons for refusing an application was likely to result in significant costs going against the council in the event of a public inquiry, whilst due regard had to be given to previous planning applications to ensure local authorities act in a consistent manner when considering planning applications. Within this context the committee were advised that no objections were raised to the previous application's proposed parking scheme, whilst this application had a slightly improved parking arrangements involving a bespoke car parking scheme considered appropriate for flexible use by both Runnymede and Surrey County Council officers.

When asked to clarify the point around 'less than substantial harm' to the conservation area, officers highlighted that the National Trust had felt the scheme was a marked improvement on previous applications in the area and in-keeping with the conservation area.

Several members acknowledged the strength of feeling from local residents, with numerous letters of objection received. It was suggested that an additional condition preventing the long-term integration of separate buildings into one larger building be put in place to preserve the feel and character of the local area. The committee were supportive of the proposal.

Concern was raised about the aesthetics of the proposed building, particularly around signage and numbering. The Head of Planning advised that the final materials would be done by condition so the council would have some control over the final look. Furthermore advertising consent would be required and considered on a case-by-case basis.

Resolved that –

- i) The HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:**
 - a. The completion of a Section 106 legal agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.**
 - b. Planning conditions 1-17.**
 - c. Additional condition on the hours of usage being between 7am – 9pm.**

d. Additional condition on the number of units that could be provided to each tenant.

- ii) **The HoP was authorised to refuse planning permission should the S106 not progress to his satisfaction or if any significant material considerations arise prior to the issuing of the decision notice that in the opinion of the HoP would warrant refusal of the application. Reasons for refusal relating to any such matter are delegated to the HoP.**

Ms Heidi Dennis, an objector, and Mr Tim Bradshaw, agent for the applicant, addressed the committee on this application.

27 **RU.23/0357 - 2 & 2a Guildford Road, Chertsey, KT16 9BJ**

Proposal: Outline application for the erection of a 4 storey building comprising 47 one and 2 bed apartments following demolition of existing vacant office building and residential home (Matters reserved: Landscaping) (Revised Plans received 18/09/23 comprising removal of 1st and 2nd floor rear balconies to Building 1)

The committee acknowledged the improvements to the scheme compared to previous applications at the location, however there was concern around the lack of car parking spaces, particularly in the context of public transport not being convenient for shift workers at places such as St. Peter's Hospital.

The Head of Planning acknowledged that the transport options in the area were not ideal, however the location had decent links to basic facilities such as shops and schools and would be considered sustainable in planning terms.

In the event that the application was approved officers would seek clarification from the applicant on the arrangement for the six parking spaces to ensure it was appropriate to the development.

The affordable housing element and provision of five accessible units was welcomed by members of the committee, and it was acknowledged that whilst Runnymede borough was one of the biggest employers in the county the provision of housing was lagging some way behind. Approval of this scheme would help to bridge that gap.

Despite the improvements to the scheme there was still concern whether it was in-keeping with the character and layout of the surrounding area, the view of the development from Highcroft Place being overbearing and whether it fully overcame the objections raised by committee to previous applications. The Head of Planning advised that the scheme had been sensitively designed, and praised members for the suggestions put forward that provided officers tools to negotiate with the developer.

The Head of Planning added that the Victorian houses on Guildford Street were in the minority, whilst a new development such as this could be the catalyst for improvements to the Guildford Street area and help address some of the derelict sites in the nearby area.

Resolved that –

- i) **The Hop was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:**
- a. **the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to secure obligations 1-7.**
 - b. **Planning conditions 1-30**
 - c. **Informatives 1-19**
 - d. **Addendum notes**

- ii) **The HoP was authorised to refuse planning permission should the S106 not progress to his satisfaction.**

Mr Ron Enticott, an objector, and Mr Andrew Thornley, agent for the applicant, addressed the committee on this application.

28 **RU.23/0833 - Crown House, High Street, Egham, TW20 9HL**

Proposal: Conversion and extension of existing building to create a mixed - use development comprising of 9 apartments (4 x 1- bedroom apartments, and 5 x 2-bedroom apartments) and Class E(g)(i) office use, together with associated alterations, parking, landscaping, cycle storage and refuse storage.

In response to sustainability concerns, the Development Manager confirmed that the scheme was not a major development and therefore did not need to adhere to the policy requirements around renewable energy, however sustainability features existed such as electric charging points, whilst the scheme drew biodiversity net gains.

There was further debate around the lack of parking, however the scheme was considered to be in a sustainable location close to the station and other local amenities, whilst being smaller units would mean they were unlikely to be occupied by a family.

Issues around access to bin collection highlighted by the recycling officer had been overcome by internal arrangements around relocating the bin storage, whilst concerns about the size of the extension in relation to the existing building were eased by the Development Manager's confirmation that there was no size limit to the extension of an existing building.

Concerns around overshadowing to existing properties were addressed by the results of the daylight NSL (No Sky Line) assessment demonstrating that all rooms tested would meet the Building Research Establishment criteria for daylight NSL. Therefore, given the amendment to the scheme to reduce the built form to the south and the dual aspect nature of the existing flats the scheme was not considered to result in harmful overshadowing to existing flats at the site.

Resolved that –

The HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- a) **Planning conditions 1-15**
- b) **Informatives 1-5**
- c) **Addendum notes**

29 **RU.23/0568 - Lilypond Farm, Longcross Road, Chertsey, KT16 0DT**

Proposal: Demolition of existing lawnmower storage building and erection of 2 no. single storey storage buildings (as permission RU.20/1465) but with basements added.

The committee were pleased to receive the additional condition relating to the need for all waste material to be recycled or disposed of in accordance with the Site Waste Management Plan.

The existence of portacabins at the location site caused concern amongst the committee, and whilst it was advised that it would not be appropriate to include a condition stipulating removal of these buildings, the committee were supportive of the suggestion to escalate to the council's enforcement team to investigate the matter further.

Further concerns around the loss of hard landscaping were addressed by the condition that prevented any above ground construction until biodiversity improvements were made, whilst it was advised that it would not be appropriate to stipulate that only equipment used or Lilypond Farm could be stored on the site.

The committee were keen to see renewable energy utilised on the site, and in the event of the application being approved officers would follow up with the applicant to see whether the council could appropriately require renewable energy to be part of the scheme.

A member queried the existence of the 1992 planning permission, and it was clarified that the approval of the scheme would supersede the 1992 permission, which had commenced and not concluded and had no expiration date.

Resolved that –

The Hop was authorised to grant planning permission subject to:

- a. the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to ensure that the storage buildings approved under the 1992 permission cannot be constructed should this permission be implemented and vice versa, subject to no call in from the Secretary of State to whom the application needs to be referred under the Town and Country Planning (Consultation)(England) Direction 2021.**
- b. Planning conditions 1-9**
- c. Addendum notes**

30 **Local Plan Update Report**

The report provided an update on the government's planning reforms since the options for the review of the local plan were last considered by planning committee in June 2023, as well as setting out a high level picture of the current and future workstreams up until the new plan making system was expected to commence in late 2024.

Officers would bring a further report to committee when the evidence required for the new plan was known and once there was clarification from central government about when plan making could commence in Runnymede. Runnymede had requested to be one of the government's ten front-runners on plan making, although it was acknowledged there was no guarantee the council would be chosen. Officers were intending to update the borough's land supply position to understand the availability of sites to be in the best possible position to commence plan making at the appropriate time.

It was asked if the future workstream for the Planning Policy team could also include the justification work around the Article 4 directive for Houses in Multiple Occupation, particularly in the context of the recently approved council motion asking the Planning Committee to consider the feasibility of implementing an Article 4 directive within the Egham Town and Englefield Green West Wards. It was agreed that this would be added.

A key part of the council's ambition to deliver on its climate change objectives would centre around cultural change, and the Council's emissions were a very small percentage of the overall borough emissions so developers would be engaged to ask to consider options to build more sustainably sooner. A Member added that incentivising developers to meet the initial capital cost of providing ground source heat pumps and improving cooling would be a key thing to address.

31 **Englefield Green Conservation Area - proposed amendments and Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

Following a recent public consultation that generated nine responses it was the view of officers that the proposed revised boundary to the Englefield Green Conservation Area was worthy of designation as a Conservation Area, alongside the recommended adoption of the associated Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Policy officers occasionally review conservation areas and make suitable and relevant changes to them in accordance with the council's statutory duty, culminating in a conservation area appraisal for the continued protection and enhancement of each conservation area.

Resolved that –

The Committee approved the revised Conservation Area boundary at Englefield Green and adopted the Englefield Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as technical planning guidance, subject to the Local Planning Authority giving notice to the Secretary of State, the Commission (Historic England) and publishing particulars of its effect in the London Gazette and in at least one newspaper circulating in the area of the local planning authority, as required by section 70 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

(The meeting ended at 9.56 pm.)

Chairman