

Runnymede Borough Council

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 29 November 2023 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Council present: Councillors M Willingale (Chairman), P Snow (Vice-Chairman), A Balkan, T Burton, V Cunningham, T Gates, C Howorth, A King, C Mann, S Whyte, S Jenkins (Substitute) (In place of I Mullens) and S Williams (Substitute) (In place of E Gill).

Members of the Council absent: Councillors M Nuti, M Singh and J Wilson.

In attendance: Councillors A Berardi.

**32 Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

To record the following substitutions:

Councillor S Jenkins for Councillor I Mullens  
Councillor S Williams for Councillor E Gill

**33 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**34 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr M Nuti and J Wilson.

**35 Declarations of Interest**

None received.

**36 Planning Applications**

**37 RU.23/0607 - Parklands, Bittams Lane, Chertsey, KT16 9RG**

*Proposal: Approval of reserved matters application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for the construction of 172 dwellings*

The proposed achievement of carbon net zero on the scheme was welcomed by the committee, along with the fabric first approach and affordable housing provision.

The preservation of trees and biodiversity net gain was also acknowledged, and it was confirmed that the change of levels would mean there was no risk of overlooking the properties on Waverley Drive.

The Head of Planning confirmed that it would not be possible or necessary to impose a condition that restricted the number of occupants at the scheme pending the completion of the A320, as this was a reserved matters scheme and this was considered outline but not considered necessary. In any case were the scheme to be approved it was likely that the completion of the A320 works would occur prior to occupation of the scheme.

Clarification was also provided around the condition of the A320 that included a target to

achieve 100% clawback from development, however this was subject to viability. Clawback received on the scheme would go into further highways infrastructure improvements, the HIF money sought to fully fund the scheme in advance.

An elected member questioned the wording of a recommended condition requiring updates with regards replies, bats and badger surveys. The Head of Planning confirmed that the case officer would check this to ensure that this was consistent and in line with best practice.

**Resolved that –**

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

- a) **Conditions 1-7**
- b) **Informatives 1-2**
- c) **Addendum notes**

**38 RU.23/1240 - Augustine House, Gogmore Lane, Chertsey, KT16 9AP**

*Proposal: Demolition of existing building and construction of a new mixed use redevelopment including up to 840sqm commercial space (Class E); 9 residential units; and associated refuse, cycle parking and landscaping.*

There was significant debate around the building's size, scale and mass, with many committee members considering the scheme overbearing and the building out of character with the area. Officers acknowledged that in terms of its size and mass the building was borderline a borderline recommendation, however it was considered that on balance the scheme was acceptable, was an efficient use of the land and not out of keeping with the character of the area. This however was a subjective matter and a decision for the committee who were entitled to disagree with this assessment.

There was concern around the scheme's relationship with the buildings on the neighbouring street, however officers confirmed distances to nearby properties had been fully assessed and were considered acceptable and comparable to similar schemes.

Following a query from a member it was also confirmed by officers that the applicant had gone into significant detail around additional loss of light studies, and there were no grounds for refusal based on loss of light to neighbouring properties.

Officers advised that loss of efficiency to neighbouring solar panels was a material planning consideration, however not one that in this case would attract significant weight and this alone was not considered a strong or compelling reason to turn down the application.

There was further concern from the committee on the balance of parking spaces for residential properties against commercial premise, and a desire to ensure that standards in the SPD were upheld. The Head of Planning advised of the flexibility available around parking standards when schemes were located in sustainable locations, which this one was given it was a town centre location with easy access to amenities. It was therefore considered that the parking provision was justifiable, which was backed up by technical advice from Surrey County Council.

Debate took place around the 24-hour access to the gym and the potential disruption to residents by the comings and goings of gym users as well as the potential for antisocial behaviour arising.

It was advised that the business model of many gyms was to operate on a 24 hour basis, and there was no evidence to suggest that that particular gym would generate more antisocial behaviour or impacts than any other 24-hour gym, of which there were several

others in the borough.

On this basis the committee were advised that adding a condition to limit the hours of use would not be suitable on antisocial behaviour grounds relating to the use of the inside of the commercial unit as a gym.

Members were further concerned about amenity issues potentially arising from gym users coming and going and the potential disruption this might cause. This was considered to be a potential issue as the car parking for the gym was in close proximity to the flats above and surrounding properties. Members were particularly concerned that late night users of the gym may disturb residential amenity through comings and goings, noise from vehicle usage (such as stereo usage, doors slamming, engine noise etc) as well as post work out conversations in the car park. Whilst some of this could occur in a residential setting the usage type of a gym, with customers coming at irregular hours for relatively short periods of time significantly increased this risk.

The presence of a gym contributing to the health and wellbeing of residents was acknowledged, however there was discomfort from the committee around the potential for loss of amenity particularly during night-time hours.

The risk of impact from amplified music also raised concern, however the committee indicated that this could be controlled by condition (either hours it can be played or soundproofing).

**Resolved that –**

**The HoP was authorised to REFUSE planning permission.**

In the subsequent debate around reasons for refusal, the committee unanimously voted that the proposed development by reason of position, form, scale, mass and significant bulk would result in an overtly prominent, dominant and visually overbearing form of development which would have a detrimental impact to the character and appearance of the area and streetscene in general.

Furthermore, the proposed use would result in a loss of residential amenity to surrounding residential properties. This loss of amenity would be due to due noise and disturbance from the likely numbers of comings and goings of customers and vehicles the proposed commercial use would attract, particularly at anti-social hours of the day and night.

*Mr Jeff Marshall, objector, and Mr John Mumby, agent for the applicant, addressed the committee on this application.*

39 **RU.23/1078 - 10 Larchwood Drive, Englefield Green, TW20 0SH**

*Proposal: Double storey side extension and change of use from a single dwelling to a HMO (Sui Generis)*

Some members of the committee were unhappy with the lack of parking spaces associated with the scheme, and made it clear their strong preference for a second parking space to be added. Some added to this by stating that there was an existing overspill of parking in the area, the bus network was inadequate and the nearest train station was a 39 minute walk. Some members highlighted that the area was also a hot-spot for learner drivers and the volume of existing parked cars meant that they considered there was a highways safety risk. However, Surrey County Council as highways authority had not objected on safety grounds and it was unlikely to be demonstrable that an increase of 2 bedrooms was likely to have a severe impact (which was the relevant NPPF test)

Members indicated that they would like to be certain that all efforts had been exhausted with regards improving parking on the site. A member indicated that they were minded to defer the item for further investigation of options by officers with the developer.

It became clear that most of the committee supported this position, officers would seek to negotiate with the developer to attempt to secure an additional parking space, and should an additional space be forthcoming officers would be authorised to issue permission under delegated authority. Failure from the developer to provide an additional space would result in the application coming back to committee for further debate.

During the debate several councillors commented on the conversion to HMO and the prospect of the property being permanently removed from family housing stock in the area, and there was debate on the overall issue of policy on HMOs. Officers advised that the use of the building as an HMO did not in principle conflict with planning policy.

The Head of Planning advised that for planning purposes the scheme continued to meet the need for housing in the borough, the design of the building was one that had previously been approved in a 2017 scheme on the site.

The concerns of some of the committee with regards HMOs was noted however the committee was sitting in an applications determination capacity rather than a policy formulation capacity. As such the scheme had to be judged on the council's existing policies rather than where it aspired to be. Any other issues must be taken up at the appropriate time, which was likely to be during the local plan review.

**Resolved that –**

- a) **The application was deferred and delegated to the HoP to secure an additional parking space secured by condition.**
- b) **Should the additional parking space not be secured the application would be returned to planning committee for further debate.**
- c) **Should the additional parking space be secured the HoP was authorised to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement and conditions 1-6.**
- d) **The HoP was authorised to refuse planning permission should the S106 not progress to his satisfaction or if any significant material considerations arose 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 were delegated to the HoP.**

**40 Proposed Fees and Charges 2024/25**

The Committee received the context and rationale for the changes to fees and charges for the next financial year for the services managed by this committee.

**Resolved that –**

**The proposed fees and charges were approved to be effective from the dates within appendix A or as soon as practical thereafter.**

(The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.)

Chair