

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the
UPLANDS AREA PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE
held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon
at 2.00pm on Tuesday 3 January 2017

PRESENT

Councillors: J Haine (Chairman), D A Cotterill (Vice-Chairman), A C Beaney, R J M Bishop, N G Colston, C Cottrell-Dormer, A M Graham, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, A H K Postan, G Saul and T B Simcox

Officers in attendance: Catherine Tetlow, Hannah Wiseman, Kim Smith, Michael Kemp and Paul Cracknell

49 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 5 December 2016, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

There were no apologies for absence or temporary appointments.

51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers relating to matters to be considered at the meeting.

52 APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing giving details of applications for development, copies of which had been circulated. A schedule outlining additional observations received following the production of the agenda was circulated at the meeting, a copy of which is included within the Minute Book.

RESOLVED: that the decisions on the following applications be as indicated, the reasons for refusal or conditions related to a permission to be as recommended in the report of the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing, subject to any amendments as detailed below:

3 16/02695/FUL Stone Farm, Lidstone, Chipping Norton

The Planning Officer introduced the application and reported receipt of observations from Ms Simpson received following publication of the report of additional representations.

Mr James Moore addressed the meeting in opposition to the application. A summary of his submission is attached as Appendix A to the original copy of these minutes.

Mr Peter Butler then addressed the meeting on behalf of the Enstone Parish Council in opposition to the application. A summary of his submission is attached as Appendix B to the original copy of these minutes.

The applicant, Mr Nick Bolton, then addressed the meeting in support of the application. A summary of his submission is attached as Appendix C to the original copy of these minutes.

The Planning Officer then presented his report containing a recommendation of refusal.

Whilst agreeing with the Officer recommendation of refusal, Mr Beaney questioned the relevance of reference to Policies EI, OS2 and T1. In response, the Planning Officer advised that, whilst the NPPF allowed for small scale developments, Policy EI had been applied as it was considered that the application was in an unsustainable location. Policy OS2 had been included as Officers considered that the proposal did not constitute farm diversification as it was not commensurate with the present scale of operation.

Policy T1 of the emerging Local Plan had been incorporated as it was considered that travel by means other than the private car is not a realistic alternative. Mr Beaney questioned whether this approach was consistent with other recent decisions and, in response, the Principal Planner explained that office accommodation located in settlements such as Shipton-Under-Wychwood had a degree of locational sustainability whereas the remoteness of the current application site and the total lack of facilities in Lidstone were such that the application site was not considered acceptable in sustainable transport terms.

Mr Colston expressed his support for the application, indicating that employment opportunities would be required in response to increased levels of residential development in Chipping Norton. He did not believe that the development proposed would have a significant impact in terms of additional traffic generation and supported the concept of farm diversification through the creation of alternative employment opportunities as he did not consider the site to be viable as an agricultural holding. However, Mr Colston indicated that he did not consider the design of the proposed development to be acceptable.

Mr Owen concurred, indicating that he did not consider the question of sustainability to militate against development. In response, the Principal Planner explained that the NPPF required developments to demonstrate sustainability and reiterated that the application site was not considered acceptable in sustainable transport terms.

Mr Postan expressed his support for the application as he considered farm diversification to be essential.

Mr Beaney then proposed that the application be refused subject to the deletion of reference to policies OS2 and T1. In seconding the proposition, Dr Poskitt indicated that she considered the site to be too isolated and the local highway network inadequate.

The Principal Planner explained that, in making a recommendation of refusal, Officers sought to identify all reasons for refusal.

Mr Graham acknowledged the conflict between the need for diversification and the concerns expressed by the Parish Council regarding the potential usage of the pavilion for events. Given the applicant's assurances, he assumed that these concerns could be addressed through conditions but remained concerned over highway issues.

Mr Bishop expressed his support for farm diversification and the creation of employment opportunities.

Mr Saul indicated that there was already a need for employment opportunities in Chipping Norton and questioned the extent of any employment generation from the application. He also noted that the proposed buildings were of a lesser footprint than those existing. In response, the Planning Officer advised that the character and scale of the proposed buildings were considered to be out of keeping in this rural location.

Dr Poskitt suggested that, given the low unemployment levels in Chipping Norton, the need was for housing for those already employed in the area.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer suggested that there were already sufficient office sites in Chipping Norton and, given the remote nature of this site, any employees would be forced to travel by private car. Given the dangerous nature of the local highway network, he considered that this ought not to be encouraged.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer questioned how the passing places suggested by the County Council could be provided on land outside the applicant's ownership. The Planning Officer advised that this was an issue for the County Council to resolve.

Mr Haine expressed his concern at the omission of reference to Policies OS2 and T1.

An amendment was proposed by Mr Cottrell-Dormer and seconded by Mr Cotterill that the application be refused for the reasons set out in the Officer recommendation. On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and was carried.

Refused for the following reasons:-

1. The development as proposed would be sited within a remote and isolated location within the open countryside, which would be distant from neighbouring settlements of any substantial scale. The combination of the scale of development proposed, the isolated location of the site and its poor accessibility and the subsequent dependence on private means of transport would fail to represent sustainable development and would be contrary to the aims of Existing Local Plan Policy E3; Emerging Local Plan Policy E1; and Paragraphs 17 and 24 of the NPPF.
2. The cumulative scale, mass and volume of the proposed development would be overbearing, excessive and insufficiently commensurate with the scale and character of the immediate built form and the rural character of the site and adjacent open countryside. The development would have an unduly urbanising influence on the rural character of the area in particular how this is experienced by users of the adjacent public rights of way. The development as proposed would be contrary to Policies BE2, E1, NE1 and NE3 of the Existing West Oxfordshire Local Plan; Policies OS4, E1 and EH1 of the Emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan; and Paragraphs 17, 58, 64 and 109 of the NPPF.

16 16/02851/OUT Land South of Milton Road, Shipton-Under-Wychwood

The Principal Planner introduced the application and made reference to an exchange of emails between the applicant's agent and the Shipton-Under-Wychwood Parish Council confirming that the Parish was satisfied with the proposed level of developer funding and would not be seeking further contributions.

The applicant, Mrs J Stevenson, then addressed the meeting in support of the application. A summary of her submission is attached as Appendix D to the original copy of these minutes.

As this development was significant in local terms, Mr Simcox proposed that consideration of the application be deferred to enable a site visit to be held to give Members the opportunity to assess the potential impact of the development on site.

The proposition was seconded by Mr Cotterill and on being put to the vote was carried.

Deferred to enable a site visit to be held.

39 16/03411/FUL Alfred Groves and Sons Ltd, Groves Business Centre, Shipton Road, Milton under Wychwood

The Planning Officer introduced the application.

The applicant's agent, Ms Lucy Smith, then addressed the meeting in support of the application. A summary of her submission is attached as Appendix E to the original copy of these minutes.

The Planning Officer then presented her report containing a recommendation of conditional approval.

Whilst acknowledging that the existing buildings had reached the end of their useful life, Mr Haine expressed concern with the application. He cautioned that approval of the current application could set a precedent for the loss of other commercial elements on the site in future and expressed concern that, given their relationship with Poppy Cottage and Patience Cottage, the proposed buildings represented an over-dominant form of development.

Mr Haine also suggested that, if permitted, further residential development on the site would be incompatible and conflict with the existing commercial uses. Further, there was a need to retain employment uses on the site.

For the reasons cited above, Mr Haine proposed that the application be refused.

The proposition was seconded by Mr Colston who reiterated the importance of retaining employment uses on the site.

Mr Postan concurred, indicating that he would prefer to see the creation of micro business units on the site.

In response to a question from Mr Graham, Mr Haine advised Members of the recent and current uses of the commercial buildings the subject of the application.

Mr Cotterill questioned whether the Council would be able to defend a refusal on appeal and suggested that the removal of the existing commercial buildings would be beneficial to residents of the two cottages referred to by Mr Haine. Mr Cotterill sought clarification of the proposed boundary treatment and the Planning Officer advised that it was proposed to construct a close-boarded fence to a height of 1.8m throughout.

Mr Postan acknowledged the importance of privacy but suggested that the views of the existing residents should be taken into account in determining the height of boundary fences.

Dr Poskitt expressed concern that the current proposals would isolate Elms Cottage and suggested that, in order to separate the residential and commercial elements, boundary fencing should be re-aligned to encompass that property. Mr Haine explained that there were other residential properties on the site that would remain outside any such enclosure.

Mr Owen expressed his support for the application, indicating that any future applications resulting in the further loss of commercial uses on the site would be considered and determined on their own merits.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer agreed with Mr Haine's concerns with regard to the loss of employment use and precedent.

In response to a question from Mr Simcox, it was confirmed that there was no intention to allow vehicular access or egress through the southern edge of the application site. Mr Haine indicated that this would remove the existing route for through traffic on the site.

Mr Bishop expressed his support for the application, indicating that Members should consider the current application, not future precedent.

The proposition that the application be refused was then put to the vote and was lost.

The Officer recommendation of conditional approval was then proposed by Mr Cotterill and seconded by Dr Poskitt and on being put to the vote was carried.

Permitted

51 16/0360/FUL Land West of Witney Road, Finstock

The Planning Officer outlined the application and recommended that, given the outstanding consultation responses, consideration of the application be deferred to allow Members an opportunity to visit the site in order to consider the impact of the ecopods within the woodland context

The Officer recommendation of deferral was proposed by Mr Cottrell-Dormer and seconded by Mr Graham and on being put to the vote was carried.

Deferred to enable a site visit to be held.

53 APPLICATIONS DETERMINED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS AND APPEAL DECISION

The report giving details of applications determined under delegated powers together with an appeal decision was received and noted.

The meeting closed at 3:50pm.

CHAIRMAN