

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor B Deering (Chairman)
Councillors D Andrews, T Beckett,
R Buckmaster, B Crystall, I Kemp,
S Newton, T Page, C Redfern, P Ruffles and
T Stowe

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor J Goodeve

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Steve Fraser-Lim	- Principal Planning Officer
Richard Freeman	- Interim Development Management Team Leader
Steven King	- Finance Management Trainee
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Victoria Wilders	- Legal Services Manager

388 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

389 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There we no Chairman's Announcements.

390 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

391 3/21/0498/FUL - BARN 1 - OFFICE ACCOMMODATION, AND 6 UNITS OF OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION (WITH 14 BEDS IN TOTAL) FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS WORKING ON THE FARM SITE (CLASS E(G); BARN 2 - 12 SELF-CONTAINED HOLIDAY LODGES, OUTBUILDING FOR SHOWER AND LAUNDRY FACILITIES (CLASS C3 BUT OCCUPATION RESTRICTED TO SHORT STAYS ONLY); BARN 3 - 3 RETAIL/WORKSHOPS (CLASS E(A) / E(G)); BARN 4 - LEARNING AND MEETING/EVENTS SPACE WITH KITCHEN AND TWO OFFICES AT FIRST FLOOR (CLASS F.1(A) / F.2(B) AND CLASS E(G)); ERECTION OF 3 DWELLINGS (CLASS C3); WIDENING OF ACCESS AND FOOTPATH AND ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING PROVISION AT CHURCH FARM, MOOR GREEN ROAD, ARDELEY, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG2 7AH

The Head of Planning and Building Control recommended that in respect of application 3/21/0498/FUL, planning permission be granted subject to the conditions detailed in the report.

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the key features of the proposed development and presented a detailed series of plans and visuals in respect of the application site. He detailed the key features of the scheme and referred to there being a certificate of lawfulness for the residential caravans on the site.

The Principal Planning Officer said that a large tree referred to in the report was located in an area of open space that was close to the boundary of the application site and was within the grounds of a school. Members were presented with a proposed layout plan and the Officer set out the location of the main vehicle entrance and he detailed the existing uses of the site.

The Principal Planning Officer said that Ardeley was a category 3 village in the rural area beyond the green belt, in an area where housing development would not normally be permitted and this matter should be balanced against the need for the council to demonstrate a 5 years supply of housing land. He advised that the village was accessible to some services and the proposed development did include some employment floor space.

Members were provided a detailed summary of the key planning issues with a particular reference to policy GBR2 and Officers were of the view that the application was broadly in accordance with that policy in terms of supporting rural economy.

The Principal Planning Officer said that some concern had been raised in respect of the numbers of visitors coming into the village from the holiday

accommodation. He said that there was a significant level of separation and Officers did not consider that there would be too much noise nuisance as this would be a managed site.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the tree report had indicated that the condition of the tree close to the boundary of this site would be improved due to the removal of hardstanding in the application site. Members were advised that the overall appearance of the site would improve significantly due to more areas of soft landscaping and a decrease in building footprints on the site.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the policy conflicts in respect of VIL3 were outweighed by the other considerations that had been identified. He said that the proposed parking provision was in accordance with what was required by policies and the application was also in accordance with the provisions of the development plan.

Members were referred to the additional representations summary with a particular reference to the comments from the local ward Member in support of the application and also a concern from a resident in respect of camping on the farm.

The Principal Planning Officer said that condition 24 had been amended at the request of the applicant to include a reference to volunteers as well as staff. The applicant had also requested a change to the times for the holiday from a 28 day stay to 60 to 90 days. Officers did not feel that they could support that

request due to the accommodation become more of a seasonal type of accommodation.

Sonja Day and Peter Natt addressed the Committee in objection to the application. Tim Waygood spoke for the application.

Councillor Andrews said that he was very aware of the roads around Ardeley and in particular those past the church, the pub and up to the school. He said that pupils had to walk from the school to the village hall for lunch and he felt that the construction management plan should take that into account in addition to school drop off and pick up.

Councillor Beckett expressed concerns in respect of the lack of detail regarding sustainability measures. He felt that there was insufficient information in respect of sustainability in terms of energy efficiency and water to determine this application.

Councillor Page expressed his concerns in respect of traffic and traffic movements. He asked for some clarity in terms of how the access and egress would work out. He referred to the bridleway to the south of the farm and asked about protection for residents and children. He asked if Officers could approach Hertfordshire Highways in respect of the national speed limit that applied in the village.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the matter of the construction management plan could be picked up with Hertfordshire Highways and this condition could be tightened up in respect of school lunchtimes. He

said that the applicant had mentioned a fabric first approach in their planning statement and the applicant had also referred to measures for improving building efficiency.

The Principal Planning Officer said that Officers did not feel that there was policy justification for stipulating a certain level of carbon reduction. Councillor Deering asked that if Members were to grant permission, could Members attach a condition that would require appropriate details to be provided in respect of sustainability details and could these details come back to Members for approval.

The Legal Services Manager advised that the details of the conditions would not come back to the committee as these details were delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control. The Interim Development Management Team Leader said that condition 7 was an above ground works condition and this would require a full list to be submitted to Officers in respect of carbon savings.

The Interim Development Management Team Leader summarised the national guidance in respect of the use of conditions. He said that there were a number of technologies and techniques that could be used to follow the proposed fabric first approach and Officers were comfortable with using a condition to control those measures.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the transport assessment prepared by the applicant considers that there would be a reduction in vehicle movements due

to the proposed reduction in floor space on the site. He said that Hertfordshire Highways had recommended conditions around the access as well as works to be done which included the provision of a surfaced footway and bollards to prevent vehicles using the verge.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the speed limit could not be controlled by conditions and this was a matter for the Hertfordshire Highways speed management team. The Interim Development Management Team Leader said that planning applications could not be required to solve existing problems and the advice of Hertfordshire Highways was that this application would result in a reduction in traffic.

Councillor Crystall said that from the look of the proposed development, this could become a far better site which would bring a lot of benefits to the village. He stressed the importance of Members getting the basic level of information within the documents before them.

Councillor Crystall said that he was pleased to see the condition in respect of bird, bat and swift boxes. He asked if the electric vehicle (EV) chargers could be open for the public or were these purely for use by the staff on the site.

Councillor Newton said that she had noted the reference to wood burning stoves and she was concerned in respect of the state of the road. She referred in particular to the state of the highways

infrastructure in Ardeley and the conflict between tractors, horses, people and cyclists. Councillor Newton said that her only real concern was the impact on the well-established oak tree.

Councillor Buckmaster asked if the tree was covered by a tree preservation order (TPO) and she wanted to know where the business would go while the buildings were being demolished and would they return to the site.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the condition in respect of gas fired boilers was a standard condition from environmental health to mitigate the air quality impacts. He said that the proposed parking measures met the needs of the development and passing bays had not been requested by Hertfordshire Highways.

Members were advised that areas of hardstanding and buildings were due to be removed in the root protection area of the oak tree and these would be replaced by soft permeable ground in the form of residential gardens. A condition had been applied for tree protection measures during construction and the tree was protected by the conservation area status and not by a TPO.

The Principal Planning Officer said that some phasing might be possible to allow businesses to remain during construction. Officers could not guarantee that the business would return to the site and a phasing plan could be applied to ensure an overlap between new buildings going up and existing buildings being demolished.

Councillor Stowe referred to condition 14 and cycle parking being agreed prior to occupation and the intention that the long stay provision would be secure and lockable. He asked if the short stay provision could be similarly secured. Councillor Stowe asked if any tests had been done in respect of the proposed permeability ground in relation to the proposed block paving road surface.

The Principal Planning Officer said that Officers did not consider it necessary for the short stay cycle parking to be in a lockable enclosure. He said that permeable paving was proposed and the drainage strategy had been revised at the request of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). Members were advised that permeable paving was now proposed throughout the site and the drainage would be discharged into a pond elsewhere on the farm.

Councillor Kemp said that the business seemed to be appropriate in the rural area and it was good to see the proposed improvements to the buildings. He said that condition 24 should be further amended to include the removal of the words with or in before this was accepted.

Councillor Kemp said that there should also be some more clarity in terms of whether air source heat pumps were planned on the site. He questioned whether gas boilers should be ruled out altogether and commented on whether there was any gas supply to the site. He asked for and was given some clarity in

respect of whether camping was allowed and under what circumstances.

The Principal Planning Officer said that condition 24 could be changed as suggested. He said that Officers were not aware whether there was a gas supply to Ardeley and Officers could not say for sure that there would be no gas boilers as there was no energy strategy submitted with the application.

Members were advised that there was no policy that stipulated no gas boilers but there was a policy that talked in broader terms about building sustainability and sustainable design. The Interim Development Management Team Leader gave some advice in respect of the policies of the development plan and the measures that could be applied to mitigate the carbon impacts of the scheme. He said that there was insufficient policy support for a no gas boiler approach.

Councillor Beckett commented on the short stay cycle storage being secure and covered. He commented at length on there being insufficient details in respect of sustainability and whether the site was future proofed in terms of energy efficiency. He said that he would like to see the scheme deferred so that it could come back with the appropriate information for Members to determine the application.

The Legal Services Manager said that there was no policy basis for a deferral and Members must be clear what the applicant was being asked to do. She commented on the risk of an appeal for non-determination.

Councillor Andrews proposed and Councillor Newton seconded, a motion that application 3/21/0498/FUL be granted planning permission, subject to the conditions detailed in the report and subject to the following amendments:

- Condition 24 - "The hereby approved staff / student accommodation within Barn 1 shall be limited to occupation by persons working, volunteering or studying in the agricultural and associated rural enterprises on the application site.
- Construction management plan to include much tighter wording in respect of school drop off and pick up to include the lunch time period due to pupils walking to and from the village hall.
- All cycle storage provision to be secure and covered.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that in respect of application 3/21/0498/FUL, planning permission be granted subject to the conditions detailed in the report and subject to the following amendments:

- Condition 24 - "The hereby approved staff / student accommodation within Barn 1 shall be limited to occupation by persons working, volunteering or studying in the

agricultural and associated rural enterprises on the application site.

- Construction management plan to include much tighter wording in respect of school drop off and pick up to include the lunch time period due to pupils walking to and from the village hall.
- All cycle storage provision to be secure and covered.

392 ITEMS FOR REPORTING AND NOTING

RESOLVED – that the following reports be noted:

- (A) Appeals against refusal of planning permission / non-determination;
- (B) Planning Appeals lodged;
- (C) Planning Appeals: Inquiry and Informal Hearing Dates; and
- (D) Planning Statistics.

393 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm

Chairman
Date

DM

DM

