

PLANNING COMMITTEE

- * Councillor Marsha Moseley (Chairman)
- * Councillor Jenny Wicks (Vice-Chairman)

- * Councillor Richard Billington
- * Councillor David Bilbé
- * Councillor Philip Brooker
- * Councillor Adrian Chandler
- * Councillor Nils Christiansen
- * Councillor David Elms
- Councillor Matt Furniss

- * Councillor Angela Gunning
- * Councillor Liz Hogger
- * Councillor Susan Parker
- Councillor Tony Phillips
- * Councillor Caroline Reeves
- Councillor Paul Spooner

*Present

PL99 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Matt Furniss and Tony Phillips for whom Councillors Jo Randall and David Goodwin acted as substitutes respectively. An apology was also received by Councillor Paul Spooner for whom there was no substitute.

PL100 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest declared.

PL101 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 9 January 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

PL102 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Committee noted the procedure for determining planning applications.

PL103 18/P/01668 - 1-5 THE QUADRANT AND THE CASINO NIGHTCLUB, ONSLOW STREET, GUILDFORD, GU1 4SQ

Prior to consideration of the application, the following persons addressed the Committee in accordance with Public Speaking Procedure Rules 3(b):

- Mr John Baylis (Secretary of the Guildford Society) (to object)
- Mr Jayesh Patel (Agent) (in support)

The Committee considered the above application for redevelopment of the site to provide a 14-storey building comprising a mix of uses, with either retail (A1); or financial and professional services (A2); or restaurant and café (A3); or drinking establishment (A4); nightclub, casino (sui generis) or offices (B1); or leisure (D2 – including cinema, concert hall and bingo hall) on the lower ground and ground floors, and student accommodation (sui generis) on the upper floors; and a leisure unit at roof level, ancillary secure cycle and refuse storage and landscaping following demolition of all existing buildings.

The Committee was informed that the applicant had lodged an appeal against non-determination on 7 December 2018 and that determination of the application now lay with the Planning Inspectorate. As such, the Planning Committee was advised that it had to consider the application and determine it as it would have done if the final decision was still theirs. Officers clarified that the reason for the submission of the non-determination appeal was owing to the fact that a statutory consultee, the Environment Agency did not submit their objection to the scheme until Christmas Eve and the appellant appealed before its receipt.

The site was located in the Bridge Street Conservation Area and opposite the Grade II listed Rodboro Buildings as well as adjoining Locally Listed Buildings. The Committee was advised that the proposed development would be an extremely dominant form of development that would be harmful to the historic setting and significance of the Conservation Area. By virtue of the buildings overall mass and scale, it was contrived and failed to take into account the historic setting of the Conservation Area. The 14-storey building would appear imposing upon arriving into Guildford. As seen from Bridge Street, the surrounding buildings in the area all shared a consistent alignment that the proposal would dwarf and look out of character.

The Committee noted that the development was predominantly for the provision of student accommodation, with the exception of the basement and the top two floors, which was allocated for a restaurant and leisure facilities. Officers were concerned about the quality of the rooms provided for students with many served only by a light well and would receive little natural light. This combined with a small areas of communal space was considered to be detrimental to the residents overall enjoyment of their amenities.

In conclusion, it was the planning officer's view that the scheme represented an overly dominant form of development that was harmful to the Conservation Area and had a poor standard of design. The scale and mass of the building was poorly conceived and would provide a poor standard of accommodation. The public benefits of the scheme were limited. In addition, the area was located in an area at a high risk of flooding and the increased use of the building for overnight accommodation by students would place them at greater risk. No management plan being provided by the applicant to deal with flood events. It has not been effectively demonstrated how the residents could be save from harm in the potential event of a flood.

In response to comments made by public speakers, the Planning Officer confirmed that the planning team had engaged with the applicant about the principle of student accommodation on the site but they had never given pre-application advice on the scheme as presented. Planning officers had fundamental concerns about the scheme from the start but they therefore did not seek to progress decisions in respect of planning obligations. The site was not considered essential for the provision of student accommodation in Guildford given the number of student developments that had already been approved by the Committee.

The Committee discussed the application and was concerned regarding the flood risk posed to the residents of the proposed development. Those concerns were reflected by the Environment Agency's (EA) objection to the scheme. The EA also objected to the fact that the submitted Flood Risk Assessment did not reflect the proposed development and referred to an 8-storey high development without a basement. This significant difference was concerning to the Committee as the assessment lacked consistency with the application as proposed. The Committee also noted the concerns raised by the Police Community Officer regarding the access the public appear to have to the student accommodation. In addition, the toilets located in the basement were remote from the public area and could be prone to anti-social behaviour.

The Committee was concerned regarding the cramped rooms and lack of amenity provision for students. The bike storage proposed in the basement was also perceived as an odd location and that students were more likely to bring their bikes up to their rooms. The Committee

recognised that the overly dominant form of development would impact upon views of the River Wey, as well as upon views from Castle Keep. The Committee also noted that Historic England had objected to the scheme as it failed to respond to the identity of Guildford as an historic county town and would be an unsympathetic feature. The lack of sufficient fire access points was an additional concern, particularly in view of the proposed cladding and height of the development when considering recent tragic events such as Grenfell. The top of the building, the Committee noted appeared to be covered in glass that would be overly reflective and the colours of the building incongruous compared with the surrounding environment. The trees shown in the CGI images were also considered an odd placement that would not thrive.

The Planning Officer in response to a query raised over the energy efficiency of the building confirmed that conditions could be imposed that ensured energy standards were met.

The Committee lastly considered the comments of the Design and Conservation Team Leader who re-iterated that the proposed development would be an incongruous feature of the Bridge Street Conservation Area. The proposal was exceptionally tall in comparison to the surrounding historic buildings that were sympathetically consistent in height. The design had not addressed the immediate or wider context and impact upon the skyline of Guildford and the two-storey glazing at the top of the building would provide an unwelcome beacon at night.

In conclusion, having taken account of the representations received in relation to this application, the Committee

RESOLVED that given the application had been appealed against non-determination, the Committee would have been minded to refuse application 18/P/01668 for the reasons as detailed in the report.

PL104 18/P/02117 - 27 MERROW CROFT, GUILDFORD, GU1 2XH

Prior to consideration of the application, the following persons addressed the Committee in accordance with Public Speaking Procedure Rule 3(b):

- Mrs Janet Lalor (to object)
- Mrs Kirsty Weatherall (Applicant) (In Support)
- Mr Simon Collins (Agent) (In Support)

The Committee considered the above-mentioned full application for proposed front access, front porch, garage to side of property, single storey rear extension and changes to fenestration following demolition of existing structures and rear first floor infill extension (amendment to permission 18/P/01193 to increase the size of the single storey side element).

The Committee was informed by the planning officer that there was a long and extensive planning history associated with the site. The proposal was for a single storey side extension to the garage approved under planning reference 18/P/00362 whereby the width of the garage would be increased by 1.7 metres. Two previous applications had been refused owing to the extensions being out of scale and character with the already extended dwelling and surrounding area. It was the officer's opinion that the proposed extension outlined in this application by virtue of its cumulative impact would again be out of character with the area and visually intrusive in its surroundings.

The Committee considered the application and noted the neighbouring resident's objections to the proposed development owing to its scale and proximity particularly to the neighbouring boundary of no.26 Merrow Croft. A number of letters of support had been received however; the vast majority had come from people who lived outside of the borough. The beech hedging

commended in one of the letters of support as an effective form of screening from the development, the Committee noted had since been removed by the applicants.

The Committee agreed with the officers that the scheme represented an unacceptable form of development owing to its overall scale and size being out of character with the existing extended dwelling and neighbouring properties.

In conclusion, having taken account of the representations received in relation to this application, the Committee

RESOLVED to refuse application 18/P/02117 for the reasons as outlined in the report.

PL105 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT JANUARY 2019

The Committee received the Development Management Performance report for January – December 2018. The Committee noted the following key points:

- The number of applications received in 2018 was similar to that received in 2017.
- The number of major applications received was down from 60-70 per annum to the late 50's. This was mostly due to uncertainty over the adoption of the emerging local plan.
- 521 pre-applications had been dealt with, which reflected that the service was proving to be consistently popular.
- The number of Freedom of Information requests was high and took up a great deal of officer time.
- Approx. 30 complaints were received in the last two years and whilst nobody liked receiving complaints, given the amount of business we dealt with, this level was considered broadly acceptable. Further, the majority of complaints were not upheld or partially upheld.
- The government sets national targets for determination of applications. In terms of DM stats that are reported to government, they remain extremely positive. For majors the team achieved 98%. The government requires Councils to be above 60%. For minors the team achieve 94%. The government requires Councils to be above 65%. For householders and others the team achieved 88%. The government requires Councils to be above 80%.
- The percentage of appeals dismissed in 2018 was 51%. This figure was lower when compared to previous years. We are used to being between 60% and 75% in respect of dismissed appeals. Planning Inspectors appeared to be more generous in allowing appeals and raising the bar as to what should be refused/dismissed. In response, planning officers had received training on what to look out for, and all refusals have been rigorously challenged. Due to the appeal process, it may take time for figures to improve. Positively, the statistics have been much better for the start of 2019 with four appeals so far being allowed out of 15 and 11 being dismissed.
- The Planning Department had undergone two audits by KPMG, one in relation to S106 agreements and the other was in relation to development management and its processes. The audits took a total of two weeks each and the department received an amber/green rating for each, which was considered good.
- When Development Management Performance was last reported on in 2018, there was concern around major appeal decisions as we were on the threshold for acceptability/becoming a standards authority. We were at 10-13.3% when the threshold was 10%. The figures have since improved and for major appeal decisions, (over a two-year rolling period) has dropped to 5.74%.
- With the emerging Local Plan, it was anticipated that more major applications would be coming forward, including the likely submission of one or more strategic sites.

- The Planning Development Manager advised Councillors that there was a great deal to be proud of in the Development Management service and we are in a fairly strong position going forward. The key is to maintaining this position.

The Committee considered the report and requested if it was possible to provide statistics on how successful the pre-application process was in relation to the resultant recommendation made by planning officers. The Planning Development Manager observed that ten years ago there was sometimes a mismatch between the pre-application advice given and the resultant recommendation made by planning officers. This had however greatly improved.

The Committee also noted a frustration amongst Council's more generally that Planning Inspectors were overturning decisions more readily and that Local Neighbourhood Plans were ignored.

The Committee agreed that bite-sized training on planning matters for committee members was sometimes lacking real-life and local examples. The Planning Development Manager agreed to explore this further for future training sessions.

The Committee commended the Development Management Service for their ongoing good work and for continuing to improve the Service to a very high standard.

PL106 PLANNING APPEAL DECISIONS

The Committee noted the appeal decisions.

The meeting finished at 8.05 pm

Signed

Chairman

Date