

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD
PLANNING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held at the New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate on 6 March 2024 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors S. Parnall (Chair), M. S. Blacker (Vice-Chair), J. S. Bray, P. Chandler, Z. Cooper, P. Harp, K. Fairhurst, J. Hudson, S. A. Kulka, S. McKenna, K. Sachdeva, C. Stevens, J. Thorne, D. Torra and M. Tary.

Also present: Councillors .

86. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

89. ADDENDUM TO THE AGENDA

RESOLVED that the addendum be noted.

90. 22/02067/F - FORMER MERSTHAM LIBRARY, WELDON WAY, MERSTHAM

The Committee considered an application at the former Merstham Library, Weldon Way, Merstham for the Demolition of existing building and redevelopment to provide 11 residential dwellings with associated amenity space, landscaping, car and cycle parking. As amended 19/10/2023, 30/10/2023, 01/11/2023, 23/11/2023, 20/12/2023 and on 23/01/2024.

Mr Paul Glasgow, the Chairman of Merstham Football club, spoke in objection to the application stating he was also representing Age Concern. The former Library site was a stand-alone site that was owned by Surrey County Council (SCC) and it had a definitive fenced off boundary along the length of the football club's access road. SCC also owned most of the adjacent land, on which the clubhouse sat including the access road. Both Age Concern and the club have been using this for access and parking to carry out day-to-day activities. It has worked successfully for over 40 years. Both were concerned to see that Raven now wanted to use the access to double up as access for their new residents. If this current scheme was approved with joint access, their concerns were as follows:-

The comings and goings of the residents would severely affect the day to day and evening activities of both Age Concern and the club. This would inevitably affect their ability to successfully provide the community facilities that they both, in our separate ways, currently provided. Age Concern operated from 8am to 4pm and many of their volunteer drivers bring their members and park close to the entrance

to disembark, as many of the members have less mobility. This could create an issue for residents who wanted to get out quickly. The same applied to when the members went home. It might mean that the volunteer drivers would not want to put up with any aggravation and simply decide not to volunteer their service. Age Concern have several staff, who have for many years, been parking along the fence and it was noted that Raven have said that their scheme gives an extra six spaces, but there were more spaces present. The issue with these six spaces related to: -

- Who were they for, and
- Who would monitor it?

Parking was a very emotive subject, and the Club foresaw potential conflict between the new residents and the staff and visitors of the two organisations. The club also operated a parcels delivery and collection service, and this was on a 24/7 basis and was a benefit to many in the community. These movements would also affect the residents. It was possible to see that from the many online objections that the existing residents of Weldon Way and adjacent roads have complained that Weldon Way was already over parked and that this scheme could only make it worse. The estate was built in the 50's and not many houses had off road parking. The adjacent St Theresa's Church, and the Baptist Church did not have off road parking and the redevelopment of the recreation ground would only make matters worse. In conclusion, and only if residential redevelopment was necessary on this site, it should be confined to the existing library site and leave the access road entirely for use by the two community organisations.

Mr Martin Burr, a retired Chartered Surveyor and Finance Director of the football club since 2002, spoke in objection to the application stating that he was speaking on behalf of the Club and Age Concern. Page 24, item 6.3 stated Policy RED 5 has allocated up to 10 homes or other relevant community use. As Age Concern had purchased their freehold from SCC in 1997, Mr Burr had written to SCC several times to ask if they would sell their freeholds for more community use. It was not until September 2022 that the Club heard Raven had purchased the site. On Page 32, 6.35 Raven claimed that the Club did not have permission to park on the access road, but as the Club had been doing this for over 40 years therefore the Club must have some inherent rights. Page 32, 6. 39. showed this scheme involved two visibility splays. However, one of them was on freehold land owned by Age Concern and as they did not want to sell, it was questioned as to what happened now as a result. On Page 33, 6.40 it was noted that CHA and the Council's Neighbourhood Team advised that the turning overlays for the big vehicles showed that parking restrictions would be needed in Weldon Way, with the loss of on-road parking. It stated that "If these restrictions cannot be provided, then the site must be serviced from the highway - which is exactly what happens now." Clause 6.41 confirmed that there would be "pinch points" for the refuse vehicles, but as a potential new Raven resident they would be more worried about these large vehicles coming into such a confined space of housing.

In conclusion Page 25, 6.7 stated that community facilities were vital, and whilst this was what the Club would have preferred, they were not opposed to residential redevelopment however do not use the Club's access road. The Club was aware that Councillors had suggested to Raven that the existing crossover nearest the club's access could be used, but Raven's experts (Sweco) concluded it would be dangerous. As a retired developer, Mr Burr's architects have shown that if 10 or 11 units were built by using both existing crossovers, then the problem would be

solved. The refuse vehicles would continue to collect along Weldon Way, as they do at present. Thus, no necessity for any road restrictions. The Club's existing access road has been fenced off and used by the Club for access and parking for over 40 years, it should not be changed. The decision tonight was very important indeed for the future well-being of the residents of Merstham and Mr Burr asked that the Committee deferred its decision to arrange a site visit to understand all the issues raised. They would be happy to sit down with all parties to agree a way forward that suited the whole of the community.

Councillor Khan, a visiting member, addressed the Committee stating that he was not against the proposal for 11 units on this site. In fact he welcomed it. The issue was the proposed design's vehicular entrance was halfway up the access road to Merstham Football Club and Age Concern. Merstham Football Club was a Step 4 football club in the non-league pyramid structure. It was a village football club that punched above its weight. Merstham FC competed against big towns and cities, such as Ramsgate – with a population of 40,000 and Chichester with a population over 30,000. Hundreds of home and away supporters attended games. Merstham FC has found itself trending on social media many times as one of the clubs with the highest attendances for a Step 4 team. The access road was essential for car parking and for deliveries to the clubhouse. The access road needed to stay as it was. The club had around 17 teams of all age groups. With so many teams, one needed to consider what happens when away teams come to Merstham on a Saturday morning. The area gets very congested. Parking was already at a premium. The access road provided vital car parking. Councillor Khan visited Age Concern, the community centre at the front end of the access road. While there he saw volunteers driving into car park at the back but unable to find parking spaces. He also observed a continuous stream of elderly visitors to centre. The Chief Officer explained that having a shared access road would affect elderly people being dropped off at the day centre. Thankfully, the current access road allows elderly people to be dropped off directly outside the centre stress-free. He was not convinced that this would continue to be the case if the access road was shared with this new development. Merstham FC and Age Concern were vital components to the local community. A local community that has taken some significant hits in the last few months, with the loss of the Mix Cafe at The Hub on Portland Drive and a whole parade of shops on Nutfield Road. If the Council approved this application in its current form, it would be another kick in the teeth for Merstham. The current levels of hardstanding, hard infrastructure and hard landscaping within this application gave scope for the development to be redesigned with access coming directly from Weldon Way. It may be a case of changing the orientation of the units. It might even mean that the number of units drops to 10. If it dropped to 10, it was not a start-up developer having to fold because of the loss of one unit as it was Raven's development. Councillor Khan had looked at their accounts and saw millions of pounds of surplus last year. It was not beyond possibility for this development to be redesigned with the access coming directly from Weldon Way, leaving the current access road to Age Concern and the football club untouched. Councillor Khan urged the Committee to not approve the application in its current form.

Members of the committee raised questions including about the ownership, whether the part of the site was located outside of the site allocation, as well as how shared housing operates upon the transfer of properties/sales. Officers advised Councillors that part of the site lay outside of the site allocation, but that this land was within the

urban area, as well as confirming that matters of land ownership were not material to the decision and confirmed how shared ownership typically operates when transferring/selling properties.

Councillors expressed support for new affordable housing in the Merstham area and the associated benefits of the scheme.

Members expressed concerns about the layout of the scheme, the dominance of the parking and it appearing cramped due to siting of the dwellings and including how the occupiers of the new dwellings maybe impacted by access arrangements.

Councillor Blacker proposed a motion to defer the application to consider reasons for refusal, this was seconded by Councillor Bray, whereupon the Committee voted and **RESOLVED** that the application be **DEFERRED**.

91. 23/02214/F - LAND REAR OF 19 CROYDON LANE, BANSTEAD

The Committee considered an application at the land rear of 19 Croydon Lane, Banstead for the removal of 9 buildings and erection of a replacement commercial building to comprise of light industrial (Use Class E) units with associated parking and landscaping. As amended on 21/11/2023 and on 29/01/2024.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions as per the recommendation and addendum.

92. 22/01461/F - GREEN LINNETS & WILD WOOD, OUTWOOD LANE, CHIPSTEAD

The Committee considered an application at Green Linnets & Wild Woods, Outwood Lane, Chipstead for 2 new detached houses on the rear plot of land at the existing dwellings Wild Woods and Green Linnets at Outwood Lane, Chipstead. Proposals will include a new driveway link from Outwood Lane up to the rear site and associated parking. The existing conservatory serving green linnets will be demolished. As amended on 22/06/2023, 20/10/2023, 23/11/2023 and on 06/12/2023.

Mr Arnold, a local resident from a neighbouring property, spoke in objection to the application stating that his property was the nearest property to the proposed development. The entire rear of his property was glass and currently they benefited from complete privacy. Two 5 bedroomed properties were too much for the site and one 1.5 storey chalet style property would suit the plot far better. There were also highway safety concerns due to more cars using the road.

Mr Andrew Telling, the agent, spoke in support of the development stating that it would provide two robust family dwellings within the village, and this was key in providing sustainable new housing. This scheme was a positive enhancement from the original application. The developer had worked with the Council and made numerous additional changes in discussion and agreement with the Local Planning Authority and taken on the various planning and consultee comments and the comments from the officer. In all cases, they worked to achieve the supported position and take on board the layout comments. Access and egress from the site would be in a safe manner, and this has been confirmed by the Highways Authority, which included the access onto Outwood Lane. It was felt that proposal would not impact the neighbouring property Ashdene as there was separation and a walkway

between the properties. There would be retained landscape planting that would come forward with the scheme. Additionally, the new dwellings only provided aspect to the front and rear and therefore they would create no visual overlooking or impact to this neighbour. The proposals represented a robust application in keeping with the area.

Due to the topology, members were concerned about refuse lorries accessing the site however the County Highway Authority was not concerned about this or any other highway safety matters.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions as per the recommendation and addendum.

93. THE DESIGNATION OF THE CHIPSTEAD WALPOLE AVENUE & STARROCK GREEN CONSERVATION AREA.

Councillor Stevens was not present for this item.

The Conservation Officer gave an overview of the results of the public consultation on the proposed designation of Chipstead Walpole Avenue and Starrock Green Conservation Area. The benefits for the designation were outlined. The definition of a conservation area was an area of special, architectural or historic interest that was desirable to preserve or enhance. The benefits of a conservation area were statutory controls in terms of demolition and tree controls that prevented pre-emptive felling and the consideration of design in terms of preserving or enhancing the character.

A review of the borough's conservation area was undertaken in January 2023 and public consultation took place from July onwards. The purpose of the consultation was to consider views in the area and also to consider the boundaries of the areas proposed. It was noted that 8 residents had requested exclusion from the designation rather than 9 as per the report. A petition for exclusion from the scheme had been received but many signatories were from households outside of Surrey.

Historic England fully supported the designation and the County Conservation officer also strongly supported the designation but suggested omissions which were outlined. The proposed designation was amended and now it centred around Walpole Avenue and Doghurst Lane and the designation was in 2 parts.

The plan of the consultation area was shown, and it contained many properties designed by the Arts and Crafts designer Blair Imrie.

The Conservation Officer outlined 4 key issues:

- Exclusions: it was concluded that 2 buildings were of a modern design but were embedded in the area and other buildings contributed to the area.
- Controls: there were some additional controls within a designated conservation area, however solar panelling and double glazing fell under permitted development, subject to minimising the impact.
- Residential Areas of Special Character (RASC): A RASC alone did not provide any statutory controls on trees or demolition and was not a heritage designation.

- Tree Controls: some people were concerned about tree controls, but the Council stated that this was only for significant works that would generally involve a tree surgeon. For the average householder, looking at other areas, people have only had to apply every 10 years for such works, and they could include a number of works in such an application.

In response to a member question regarding tree work a household would need to submit a notice 6 weeks prior to undertaking work and either a permit would be given, or a tree preservation order would be served.

Members were reminded that conservation areas were an asset.

RESOLVED that the proposed Chipstead Walpole Avenue & Starrock Green Conservation Area is designated, as delineated on the attached plans in pursuance to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and that the appropriate statutory procedures had been undertaken.

94. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

The Meeting closed at 10.37 pm