

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 27 March 2024 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors S. Parnall (Chair), M. S. Blacker (Vice-Chair), 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 V Chester and S Khan (attended virtually).

95. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

98. ADDENDUM TO THE AGENDA

RESOLVED that the addendum be noted.

99. 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.

Councillor Khan, a visiting member, addressed the Committee stating that he was not against 11 properties being built on this site, but he had concerns over the access road. Merstham Football Club, which was a relatively small club compared to others in its league, had been trending on social media with one of the top five attendances in the south-east just below Sittingbourne FC with a population of 65,000. Decisions were best made by local people and although the housing was wanted, there needed to be a change to the access into the site. It was hoped that members had seen the letter written by Alison Dadswell from Age Concern. It was noted that Age Concern would not sell or rent the visibility splays required for this development. It was however noted that this was not a planning matter. There was no issue with development on the site, but this should not use the shared access road due to the stress it would cause to the two organisations. Age Concern had an increasing number of members year on year who needed the access road to be dropped off easily. All residents needed to be considered including the elderly who required access to Age Concern. A former director of Merstham FC has taken the

time and money to pay an architect to redesign the development to provide access from Weldon Way, while still maintaining the 11 units.

Members of the Committee were also concerned about the use of the shared access for the new development, parking was at a premium in this location. Age Concern used the access for dropping off elderly members to the venue. Access by the new residents would clash with users of the football club and Age Concern and members wanted to prevent conflict.

A reason for refusal was proposed by Councillor Blacker and seconded by Councillor Torra, whereupon the Committee voted and **RESOLVED** that planning permission be **REFUSED** on the grounds that:

The proposal, by reason of the layout, the siting of the dwellings and the dominance of parking and hard landscaping, together with the access and approach being shared with neighbouring community uses, would result in a cramped overdevelopment of the site, harmful to the character and appearance of the locality and unattractive for future occupants of the development with potential for harm to amenity arising from conflict in the shared use of the access, contrary to policies DES1 and RED5 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 and chapter 12 of the NPPF.

100. 23/00879/F - SOUTH PARK SPORTS ASSOCIATION, WHITEHALL LANE, REIGATE

The Committee considered an application at South Park Sports Association, Whitehall Lane, Reigate for the Proposed increase to existing car park. As amended on 14/06/2023, 06/07/2023, 21/07/2023, 16/09/2023 and on 02/02/2024.

It was noted that there was a reciprocal arrangement with Sandcross School and the football club for parking and there was concern that this may not continue with the increase in parking at the club.

There was some discussion about whether the road could accommodate a 2-metre-wide path which was suggested by Surrey Highways to encourage people to walk, however members felt that the people would simply park on the pavement. Officers did not think the path would be appropriate.

An informative was requested that the material used for the car park extension be more sympathetic to the greenbelt.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** as per the recommendation and changes in the addendum with condition 9/16 to be varied to permit continuation of existing uses. To be agreed with the ward member.

Plus additional informative to encourage permeable surfacing appropriate to rural area.

101. 21/02938/F - BOLTERS CORNER REST HOME, BOLTERS LANE, BANSTEAD

The Committee considered an application at Bolters Corner Rest Home, Bolters Lane, Banstead for the proposed two-storey extension of an existing care home to

increase the number of bedrooms by 18, internal and external building alterations, associated landscaping, car and cycle parking, plant, and new access arrangements. As amended on 08/11/2023, 29/11/2023 23/02/2024, 06/03/2024 and on 07/03/2024.

There was concern regarding traffic around the site and the Committee felt that it was good that the entrance to the site was moving. There would be a robust traffic management plan during construction.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions and changes in the addendum.

102. 23/02064/S73 - LAUREL ACRE, PICKETTS LANE, SALFORDS

The Committee considered an application at Laurel Acre, Picketts Lane, Salfords for the change of use (part retrospective) of land from agricultural use for the stationing of 6 Gypsy and Traveller Pitches with associated hard and soft landscaping. Variation of Condition 6 of permission reference 19/02276/CU. Erection of walls to the external boundary. As amended on 01/02/2024.

Claire Minter, Clerk of Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council, spoke in objection to the application stating that the Parish Council was elected to represent a population of about 3,500, of which 2,700 were electors, in 1400 households. One of the key mandates for their Parish Council was to protect the Green Belt. This was a retrospective application to retain the brick walls and piers which have been built at the entrance to this site. These walls and piers were completely different from what was mutually agreed by the applicant and the Borough. This site was in the greenbelt where there was a presumption against inappropriate development and this development clearly failed to satisfy both Borough and national greenbelt policy. What has been built was an incongruous feature on this otherwise very rural stretch of country lane. It did not respect the character or openness of the greenbelt; it detracted from it. The site layout was one of the reasons for the Borough agreeing to withdraw their enforcement notice and allow a five-year temporary consent for this gypsy traveller site. The piers and walls which have been built were much bulkier and higher than the agreed wooden fence. There was no agreement for wing walls or end piers, nor a fifth pier in one of the walls. The bright colours of the substantial brick piers and walls stand out in a way that wooden fencing did not. Their impact on the openness of the greenbelt was clear. These departures from the agreed plan were significant - not 'marginal' as stated in the Committee report.

The Committee report was correct when it said;

'The matters identified as important in such works are the massing and bulk of the works, the height, location, position and visual prominence of the works and consideration of whether they respect the character and openness of the greenbelt.'

It was also correct when it said;

'The walls are more visible within the greenbelt than the fence arrangement originally approved,'

It is unfortunate the report only showed what had been built. While it referred to what was agreed - it did not show this, so the differences were not easy to understand. These wall and piers presented an overbearing, urban feature which had no place in the greenbelt or in this country lane. The number of objections to this application on the portal, very much reflected the concern of the local population. The members of the Planning Committee were requested to recognise that the walls and piers which have been built bore no relation to the agreed boundary treatment, did not maintain the openness of the area and were inappropriate development in the greenbelt.

The Committee was urged to refuse this application.

However, if permission was granted the Parish Council requested that there should be an additional condition which said no lighting be permitted on the roadside, or above, the piers and walls to respect the character of the area and openness of the greenbelt.

Claire Minter spoke on behalf of Fiona Byerley, an objector, stating that in the application the applicant ticked the box which said it cannot be seen from a public road. This was not true. The Boundary wall proposed has already been built and was within a foot of Picketts Lane itself. It was immediately visible due to its very incongruous nature and size to anyone passing down Picketts Lane. The gate piers were more than double the original width agreed, and over 50% higher in height. There was no provision for wing walls, nor end pier, nor a fifth pier at 2.75m in one of the walls. The walls did not appear to have been completed and were likely to end up higher. The significant brick structures have been built in front of and were additional to, instead of replacing the fencing. Indeed, one of the wing walls cut across and sat in front of where previously agreed hedging would have been placed. There was no comparison with other boundary treatments locally, and little comparison with traveller sites nearby. Once fully constructed and closed, this structure would be an overbearing feature of Picketts Lane, an urban feature, which had no place in the greenbelt and was against national and RBBC policy. Highways comments were noted regarding the visibility and danger of this access on Picketts Lane. There was significant traffic which used Picketts Lane, of which the Council were fully aware. Any vehicle coming from the junction would not see a vehicle person or cycle in the gateway until they were almost upon it, given the size of the wall and pier built to the right of the gate as one leaves the plot. The fencing previously agreed, did not obstruct visibility to the same extent, and in any event the vegetation could be trimmed back. It was requested that this be given significant weight by the Committee in reaching their decision. Electrical wiring had been installed along the wing wall on both sides of the gates. There was no reference to this in the application, and indeed lighting was not provided for, given the proposed screening of one of the walls entirely with laurel.

It was understood that the applicant believed that the brick structures were required for privacy and security. No other resident had required such structures in the immediate area, and they had no place in a greenbelt setting.

There had been circa 200 comments on this particular application, most of which objected to an urban structure being built in this part of the greenbelt. It was felt that the applicant has had no due regard for the planning process, national or local guidance and they asked the Committee to refuse the application.

Angus Murdoch, the agent, spoke in support of the application stating that the Secretary of State's Inspector had granted a five-year temporary planning permission for 6 pitches, each of which would contain a mobile home a touring caravan and a boundary treatment that included a 1.8 metre high close boarded fence and a gate. That permission did not expire until 10 November 2026. All this application sought was to retain the brick boundary walls and piers for that temporary period. The officer accepted that walls of 2 metres in height could be built under permitted development. The difference between the permitted 1.8 metre, close boarded fence and gate, and the walls and piers there now on site was modest, minor and localised and could be mitigated by the landscape proposals produced by the appellant's landscape architect. There were many examples of similar brick walls locally, so the proposal was in keeping with the existing character of some houses in the area. The applicants have worked constructively with officers by amending the proposals so that it minimises the impact on the Green Belt, that no trees or hedges were harmed and that the privacy and security of the site residents has been ensured.

Councillor Chester, a visiting member, spoke in objection to the application, highlighting the significance between the current built structure compared to the original plan. Looking at the photographs the walls were large and double the width to what was in the application. It was visible from the road and was detrimental to the amenity. DES9 – impact on the greenbelt and harm to the natural built environment was cited. This was a permanent structure built on what was a temporary permission. When considering reasonableness, how could something so different be deemed acceptable? What has been built was markedly different to what was agreed at the beginning, and this was not reasonable.

Members were reminded that they had to consider the application as if it had not yet been built.

Councillor Thorne read out excerpts from policies CS2, CS3 and DES1 to give context to the reasons for refusal.

Reasons for refusal were proposed by Councillor Thorne and seconded by Councillor McKenna, whereupon the Committee voted and **RESOLVED** that planning permission be **REFUSED** on the grounds that:

1. The proposed wall, by virtue of its excessive height, scale and permanence would constitute inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt, harmful to its openness which, without very special circumstances to outweigh this harm, would be contrary to Policy NHE5 of the Development Management Plan 2019, Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy 2014 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023.
2. The proposed wall, by virtue of its height, scale and permanence would appear as a prominent and urbanising feature, significantly out of keeping with the rural character of this part of Picketts Lane contrary to Policy DES1 of the Development Management Plan 2019, Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy 2014 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023.

103. 23/01425/F - 11 - 12 WATERHOUSE LANE, KINGSWOOD

The Committee considered an application at 11 - 12 Waterhouse Lane, Kingswood for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of part 2 and part 3 storey building containing commercial space at ground floor with 9 apartments above. Layout parking, bin stores and cycle store. As amended on 13/10/2023, 22/11/2023, 23/11/2023, 01/12/2023 20/02/2024 and on 05/03/2024.

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

104. 24/00118/F - 40 - 46 BRIGHTON ROAD, SALFORDS

The Committee considered an application at 40 - 46 Brighton Road, Salfords for the proposed roof extension to provide 2x one bedroom and 2x two bedroom flats with the removal of the existing garage and construction of a new storage building at the rear of the site.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions as per the recommendation and addendum with an additional informative relating to storage for electric bikes.

105. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

The Meeting closed at 10.09 pm