

Minutes of a meeting of the **Planning Committee** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Wednesday, 27 September 2023** 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, C. Stevens, J. Thorne and M. Tary

36 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 August 2023 be approved as a correct record.

37 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Sachdeva and Torra.

Councillor Stevens joined the meeting at 8.00pm and therefore did not vote on planning application relating to the White Lion Public House, 40 Linkfield Street, Redhill.

38 Declarations of interest

Councillor McKenna stated that he had neither a pecuniary nor a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 (22/02444/F & 22/02460/LBC - White Lion Public House, 40 Linkfield Street, Redhill) however it was noted that he was named in the marketing report relating to this item.

39 Addendum to the agenda

RESOLVED that the addendum be noted.

40 22/02444/F & 22/02460/LBC - White Lion Public House, 40 Linkfield Street, Redhill

The Committee considered an application for the change of use of existing from public house to single dwelling and the erection of two semi-detached houses. As amended on 24/08/2023.

Jonathan White, a local resident, spoke in objection to the application stating that he was speaking as a member of the Friends of the White Lion, a community group set up in 2019 when the previous application had been submitted. The application had received 136 online public comments opposing it and 13 in support. The report highlighted the 18 month marketing exercise and that concluded that the requirements had been met to demonstrate "that there is no reasonable chance of the building being bought back into use as a pub or other such community facility". The report explained



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that “Whilst a number of enquiries were made for public house use, with a number of internal viewings, ultimately these were not pursued either because the asking price was not met, or the potential difficulties and potential expenditure required to take on a Grade II listed building”. It was felt that the report lacked any discussion of the asking price. Demand was a function of price, and it was clear that the problem was not the pub but it’s price and at the right price the pub would be viable. From the Friends’ perspective, the plans they had to make a community-use purchase were rendered complete non-starters by the amount of money the applicant wanted. The property was bought by the applicant in 2018 for £525,000 and, post covid, without the benefit of any capital improvements or additional planning permissions but with the drawback of an ongoing and worsening process of dilapidation, the price selected for the “marketing exercise” was £575,000, an increase of nearly 10% on the purchase price. Furthermore, considering the responses of prospective buyers as set out in the report, the applicant potentially overpaid when buying the property. There was disagreement by the public speaker with the officer’s report, with the assertion that the applicant had satisfied the requirements of policy INF2 and Annex 3 of the Development Management Plan and that their marketing exercise was an entirely false construct and therefore put that forward as a reason for refusal of the application. It was felt that the applicant was seeking to monetise history for their private financial gain.

Alexi Rea, a local resident, spoke in objection to the application stating, that this building was said to be the oldest building in continuous use as a licenced premises in the borough. The public house has an 16th century core, and a detailed overview of the pub’s internal history was given. The public speaker had viewed the property a couple of years ago to be hugely dismayed by the state of the building. It had clearly been used as an HMO with no regard to the interior. When it was on the market the current owners made it extremely difficult to purchase, with no intent to return it to the state it was bought in. An estimate to bring the pub back into use was at a cost of at least £30,000. It was not purchased by the applicant to be an ongoing venture to serve the community. It was solely bought to develop and make a profit and concern was raised regarding some of the brewery’s business decisions whilst it was operating as a public house. An explanation of how the pub had been used over the decades was given and it was questioned why this historical pub could not be made available for all to enjoy.

Mark Sennitt, the Agent, spoke in support of the application, stating that the two main issues that were raised by the public speakers related to the listed building and design. In respect of the listed building the best way to preserve a building was to make sure that it is used. As the previous speakers acknowledged the building was starting to fall into a state of disrepair and the application provided the opportunity to refurbish, occupy and bring the building back to life. The proposals represented an improvement on the previous application for 3 flats, not least as it allowed for minimal alterations to the listed building and allowed for the majority, if not all, of its qualities and features to be retained. In terms of viability, the site had been marketed for 18 months, well in excess of the minimum 6-month marketing period required by policy. Whilst there have been a number of viewings of the site, this has not been reflected in firm offers. Those that have been made lacked substance and could not be backed up financially and were not proceedable. The application was supported by a marketing report that demonstrated that the continued use as a pub was not viable. This report had been prepared by a fully qualified local surveyor with many years’ experience of working with this local authority. The format of the report was standardised and would have been reviewed by Council officers to confirm its robustness.

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A vote was taken on applications 22/02444/F and 22/02460/LBC and it was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions as per the recommendation and addendum.

41 23/00615/F - Kimberley Clark Europe, Douglas House, 40 London Road, Reigate

The Committee considered an application for the redevelopment of Douglas House (including demolition) to provide a replacement office building (use class e) with associated car parking and landscaping works. As amended on 21/06/2023, 20/07/2023, 01/09/2023 and on 08/09/2023.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions as per the recommendation and addendum (to include a Section 106 agreement as per the report).

42 23/00822/F - Land at Partridge Mead, Banstead

The Committee considered an application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 4 residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping. As amended on 12/06/2023, 02/08/2023 and on 15/08/2023.

Alex Lyne, a local resident, spoke in objection to the application, stating that he was a resident of Parkwood Road, and these houses would tower over his property. There had been many months where residents had expressed their concerns and been looking for answers on important related factors. There was concern regarding safety, application inaccuracies, community impacts as well as ensuring a healthy and balanced community. Although there were a number of conditions there were still a number of concerns outlined as follows:

- The access road to this site was not suitable. This was a side alley, not suitable for four houses worth of traffic, whether vehicular or foot. No pathways were required or street lighting for circa 12 children as suggested in the proposal of 5 person households.
- This same access road, once refuse was considered, measured only 2.7m in width at its narrowest point due to trees owned by the neighbouring property.

This raised serious safety concerns with regards to emergency vehicles and did not consider foot traffic and concern was raised regarding the safety of children walking to school.

- Regarding the refuse, the solution did not consider the government guidelines, which stated that "Where the location for storage is publicly accessible or open, an enclosure should be considered." Placing the refuse in an enclosure, as recommended, then further reduced this width access to circa 2.6M.

The furthest bin to the furthest house was not 35m, but 47m. This did not align with Council or Government guidelines. The traffic report was taken outside of vital school hours. Asbestos sits on every single garage roof has not been considered. No studies, tests, removal RAMS or prevention of nearby exposure have been submitted. Within the speaker's objection he proposed that the area could be turned into allotments which would satisfy the community and promote eco living in the area. Privacy was also an important factor, and this proposal would take this away. There was an

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understanding of the need for affordable housing however this was an inappropriate site.

Charlotte Reason, a local resident, spoke in objection to the application stating that the site was unsuitable for the proposals due to potential road safety hazards and lack of fire services access. Concern was raised regarding the safety of residents, particularly children. There were asbestos related concerns associated with this site. This posed a significant health risk to anyone residing or working nearby. Local residents had not seen the plans as to how this would be dealt with. False drawings and misrepresented plans raised doubts about the project's transparency and integrity. The plans presented did not accurately reflect the site and approving inaccurate plans could lead to significant problems in the future. There was an ongoing legal challenge regarding boundaries and solicitors had suggested that the plans before the Committee for approval were unlawful. Concern was raised regarding access during construction as residents needed to be able to access their properties. It was also felt that the "no infilling rule" was being overlooked. Local residents empathised with councils trying to fulfil a government quota to build affordable housing. However, the issues around overlooking, safety issues, legal issues and general suitability raised significant concerns here.

Stephen Clements, Assistant Development Director for Raven Housing Trust, spoke in support of the application, stating that Raven was a Housing Association based within Borough, that currently owned about 6500 affordable homes, which they were looking to grow in borough by approximately 50-80 homes per year, aligning themselves to the Councils' task of delivering 100 new affordable homes each year. Raven were being proactive in investing in the delivery of more affordable rented accommodation. This was the second of a number of applications within the Borough that would see the transformation of sites that have come to the end of their useful life. The proposal was in keeping with that of Downland Close, which was approved by the Committee the previous month, providing four three bed properties. The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document set this type and tenure as the second highest target, which reflected the demand for these properties and the ongoing housing need. They exceed national space standards and followed principles of inclusivity. They would achieve net zero carbon (in use) utilising Air Source Heat Pumps and PV panels, which would reduce energy bills for occupiers. The homes were 50% faster to build than traditional construction, which meant that disruption to surrounding residents would be significantly reduced and, these four houses could be occupied by Summer 2024 if permission was granted at this meeting.

Following a vote, it was **AGREED** that this application be **DEFERRED** to the next meeting to allow for a site visit, where the access road could also be measured.

43 Any other urgent business

There was none.

The meeting finished at 9.54 pm