

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 18 May 2017 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Tom Kelly (Chair), Chris Baker, Colin Churchman, Tunde Ojetola, Terry Piccolo, David Potter and Gerard Rice

Steve Taylor, Campaign to Protect Rural England Representative

Apologies: Councillors Kevin Wheeler (Vice-Chair) and Steve Liddiard

In attendance: Andrew Millard, Head of Planning & Growth
Leigh Nicholson, Development Management Team Leader
Nadia Houghton, Principal planner
Jonathan Keen, Principal Planner
Vivien Williams, Planning Lawyer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

112. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 20 April 2017 were approved as a correct record.

113. Item of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

114. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

115. Declarations of receipt of correspondence and/or any meetings/discussions held relevant to determination of any planning application or enforcement action to be resolved at this meeting

There were no declarations of any correspondence relevant to any of the applications to be resolved at the meeting.

116. Planning Appeals

The report provided information regarding planning appeals performance.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report.

117. 2016/17 Performance Report

The Development Management Team Leader presented the report which outlined the performance of the planning service. The service maintained its position within the top 2% of services nationally, with over 81% of applications having been approved. Over £113million had been put into Thurrock's economy, with 638 new homes and over 2500 new jobs created as a result of applications approved by the service, and the Committee.

Councillor Ojetola appreciated the work of the Committee and expressed that the report showed that Members could work together in the best interests of Thurrock despite political differences. He asked if the Council was fulfilling its quota on new houses. The Committee was advised that while the number fell slightly below the Government's expectation it was the highest figure for 10 years. Thurrock had always been appealing to commercial development but housing applications were more of an issue. The Head of Planning & Growth added that there was an upward trend over recent years, which was a positive sign. Councillor Ojetola wished for information to come back to Members in the near future to see how many of the approved houses had actually been built.

Councillor Rice noted the achievement of 638 new homes for the borough and the increased commercial floor space. He asked whether there was sufficient capacity within the planning department to allow for the 1000 homes/year target and what the consequences would be of failing to meet the target. There were only sanctions for the speed of approving applications and Members were reminded that the planning service was within the top 2% nationally, 7th in 339 Authorities. The Head of Planning & Growth noted comments about delayed responses but added that on the whole the service had a reputation as being responsive. Ultimately the service, and the Committee, could grant permission but the market would dictate how and when homes would be delivered. There were plans to increase delivery through a revision of the Local Plan but the importance of quality was stressed, development for development's sake was not the solution. Councillor Rice stressed the importance of ensuring the target of 35% affordable housing was met to reduce the waiting list for Council housing and to support local people.

The Chair expressed his view that it had been an enjoyable year on the Committee. He thanked Officers for their hard work and hoped the continuation of work on the Local Plan would help Thurrock meet the quota for new homes.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report.

118. 17/00301/NMA: 8 Crowstone Road, Grays, Essex, RM16 2SR

The Non-Material Amendment application sought approval for changes to the window pattern and overall height of the roof as approved under a previous planning application granted permission in 2016. The changes were considered to be non-material and the alterations to the approved plans would not be detrimental to neighbour amenity.

Councillor Piccolo queried whether there was any instruction or requirement for the windows to be obscured. The Officer advised that there was no planning condition requiring the obscure glazing of the previously approved window, however, the current Non Material Amendment application stated that the applicant intended all three new windows to be obscure glazed.

The meeting was adjourned at 18.28 and commenced again at 18:33.

A resident, Andy Reddington was invited to the Committee to present his statement of objection.

A Ward Councillor, Councillor Redsell, was invited to the Committee to present her statement of objection.

Councillor Rice asked for clarification on points raised in the resident's statement of objection, particularly claims that the height constituted overdevelopment. It was confirmed that the development complied with policy.

Members queried what power the Committee had in terms of the objections raised. The objections raised were almost entirely civil matters or matters associated with building control and, as such, were not directly relevant to the powers of the Committee. The change to the window pattern had actually reduced their size, two were obscured and all three faced a 2m high wall. Similarly there had previously been a window and doorway in place. The 20cm change in roof height was also not considered to be a material impact.

Councillor Ojetola asked whether the unobscured window was positioned in such a way that it looked directly into a window on the neighbouring property, and in relation to the approved plan. The neighbouring property's window was obscured, but also there was a 2m high wall between the two. The window in question was in broadly the same place as the window on the approved application.

Councillor Rice asked whether the Committee could impose a condition that the top of the window be obscured. The applicant had stated in the Non

Material Amendment application that all 3 windows would be obscured and as such it could be insisted upon.

Members expressed empathy for the resident. They stressed that the majority of the objections raised were civil matters and building control matters and therefore beyond the remit of the Committee. Section 8.1 of the report included obscurity of all three windows and as such this could be imposed.

It was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Piccolo that the application be approved, subject to conditions, as per the Officer's recommendation.

For: Councillors Tom Kelly (Chair), Chris Baker, Colin Churchman, Tunde Ojetola, Terry Piccolo, David Potter and Gerard Rice.

Against: (0)

Abstain: (0)

RESOLVED:

That the application be approved, subject to conditions.

119. 16/01512/FUL: Land Adjacent Astons Villa And Appletons, Brentwood Road, Bulphan, Essex

The application sought permission for the change of use of the land to residential use to allow occupation of the site by a Gypsy Traveller family, with permission for one caravan and one campervan on site. As the site was within the Green Belt, the development would be considered inappropriate. The applicant had put forward what they considered to be "very special circumstances" however these were not deemed by officers to outweigh the harm identified to the Green Belt.

A Ward Councillor, Councillor Brian Little, was invited to the Committee to present his statement of objection.

The agent, Joseph Jones, was invited to the Committee to present his statement of support.

Councillor Ojetola asked for clarification around the weighting of the very special circumstances put forward by the applicant. The Principal Planner referred to pages 42-44 of the report which analysed the very special circumstances put forward by the applicants.

Councillor Rice asked whether the Council was looking to authorise some of the existing "tolerated" sites in the emerging Local Plan, to address the unmet need for Traveller sites in the borough. The Presenting officer advised that a Gypsy and Traveller Need Assessment was taking place. The figures were not currently public but the assessment would review sites in the Borough.

The site proposed in this application was a new site and there were no residents on site. The Head of Planning and Growth advised that figures for the Borough's requirements would be likely to be available by September 2018.

The Chair queried whether the unmet need within Thurrock might be a relevant factor were the applicant to appeal a refusal. The Committee was advised that the Planning Inspectorate would look at both the existing and future provision and would weigh up with the Very Special Circumstances. The unmet need alone would not be enough to allow permission. The Head of Planning and Growth advised the Council was currently reviewing its Local Plan, including provision for Gypsy and Traveller need, and that if the applicants wished to propose new sites that would be the best way to approach the site. National Planning Guidance stipulated that applications for traveller sites should be assessed in the same way as conventional housing.

Councillor Rice stated he would support the Officer's recommendation; however it was becoming apparent that there was a need to look at transit camps within Thurrock and the possibility of authorising "tolerated" sites to safeguard against unmet need.

Councillor Ojetola sought clarity as to the definition of temporary. Members heard that there was no set timeframe for "temporary" permission, which was defined on a case by case basis. The application had been assessed and the recommendation was for refusal, rather than temporary permission. Councillor Ojetola agreed there was a need to ensure there was enough provision for gypsy and traveller sites within the borough but supported the Officer's recommendation on this application.

Councillor Piccolo felt that, while there may be a lack of sites in Thurrock, granting permission for 2 pitches would have no real impact in the wider provision and the harm to the Green Belt would have more weighting. He expressed support for the Officer's recommendation.

It was proposed by Councillor Rice and seconded by Councillor Churchman that the application be refused as per the Officer's recommendation.

For: Councillors Tom Kelly (Chair), Chris Baker, Colin Churchman, Tunde Ojetola, Terry Piccolo, David Potter and Gerard Rice.

Against: (0)

Abstain: (0)

RESOLVED:

That the application be refused.

The meeting finished at 7.21 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**