

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 2 November 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Tom Kelly (Chair), Steve Liddiard (Vice-Chair), Colin Churchman, Graham Hamilton, Roy Jones, Tunde Ojetola, Gerard Rice, Graham Snell and Joycelyn Redsell (Substitute) (substitute for Terry Piccolo)

Steve Taylor, Campaign to Protect Rural England Representative

Apologies: Councillor Terry Piccolo

In attendance: Andrew Millard, Assistant Director Planning & Growth
Matthew Gallagher, Principal Planner
Julian Howes, Senior Engineer
Jonathan Keen, Principal Planner
Chris Purvis, Principal Planner
Sarah Williams, School Capital and Planning Project Manager
Vivien Williams, Planning Lawyer
Charlotte Raper, Democratic Services Officer

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.

40. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 28 September 2017 were approved as a correct record.

41. Item of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

42. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Ojetola declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding Item 8, 17/01171/FUL: Smurfit Kappa Lokfast Site, London Road, Purfleet, RM19 1QY in that he had previously had a number of dealings with Harris given their two sites within his ward.

Councillor Redsell declared she would be presenting a statement in her capacity as Ward Councillor in objection to item 9, 17/01107/HHA: 18

Brookmans Avenue, Stifford Clays, Grays, Essex, RM16 2LW and therefore would not participate in the debate or vote on that item.

43. 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

The Chair declared receipt of an email regarding Item 10, 17/01165/FUL on behalf of the entire committee.

Councillors Churchman, Hamilton, Jones, Ojetola and Rice also declared that they had received phone correspondence in relation to the same item.

44. Planning Appeals

The report provided information regarding planning appeals performance.

Councillor Rice questioned whether the appeal would mean that flats could be expected on the 76 High Street, Grays site. The Assistant Director of Planning and Growth advised the Committee that it was not the Council building the flats but matters could progress.

RESOLVED:

The Planning Committee noted the report.

45. 17/01171/FUL: Smurfit Kappa Lokfast Site, London Road, Purfleet, RM19 1QY

The application sought planning permission for the redevelopment of the site to construct a 6 form entry secondary school for 1,150 pupils, including 250 sixth form pupils in 8,850m² new school building. The Principal Planning Officer advised that there were suggested slight amendments to conditions 20 and 21 and minor revisions to a number of submitted plans as detailed below:

Plan no. 17075-LSI-A1-RF-DR-A-1304 now Revision A

Plan no. 17075-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1350 now Revision A

Plan no. 17075-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1351 now Revision A

Plan no. 17075-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1370 now Revision A

Plan no. 17075-LSI-A1-ZZ-DR-A-1371 now Revision A

Plan no. 17075-LSI-A1-XX-DR-A-1400 now Revision A

Condition no. 20: insert “of the playing pitch” after “development”.

Condition no. 21: substitute “above finished ground level” with “of the MUGA”.

Councillor Ojetola felt that it was good to see applications for new schools in the borough, but expressed concern at issues regarding highways and access. London Road was not wide and this might cause problems regarding

turning in and out of the site, similarly the access was in close proximity to the railway station and he was worried there would be tailbacks during peak hours when the barriers were down at the crossing. The Committee was advised that the site had previously been used by HGVs which had ingressed and egressed the site with the current road layout and width; it was therefore deemed acceptable. The Transport Assessment had also included a traffic count and predicted movements relating to the proposed use which gave no indication of great impact. The existing use of the site was greater than the proposed use.

Councillor Ojetola continued that he felt more should be done to encourage alternative travel to the site and to reduce the number of vehicle movements, however he accepted that presently there was not a complete cycle route to the site. Members heard that there were two bus routes within 300m of the site. The modal share of cycling would be monitored through the Travel Plan condition and addressed if not met. There were also physical measures within the transport assessment such as the introduction of a puffin crossing immediately outside the entrance to the site and the proposed drop off facility at Cornwall House. The site was deemed to be fairly accessible to secondary school pupils and the traffic plan was a starting point. There were aspirations to enhance sustainable travel including a mode shift star system managed by road safety officers which would push the school to improve its sustainable transport modal figures. Similarly the Council could look at highway improvements for better cycling and other options.

Councillor Jones sought clarity around the bus drop off points in relation to the site, and whether the Cornwall House car park would continue to be available in the future. The private school coach drop off point would be within the site itself, which was in place to facilitate the relocation of pupils from the temporary Chafford campus. There were also local bus routes nearby and the Cornwall House car park was a 370m walk from the site. Cornwall House was owned by the Council however it fell within the proposals for the Purfleet Centre Regeneration and therefore there were no guarantees that it would be available permanently. In the long term the Cornwall House site would not be available however the school's catchment area would potentially be more specific to Purfleet by that time. The Assistant Director for Planning and Growth summarised that the application proposals as they stood were deemed to be acceptable. Purfleet would be in a state of flux in the near future however the car park was not likely to be part of the earlier phases of the regeneration and the issue could be kept in mind as part of the development. Councillor Jones agreed it was necessary to be mindful as schools were often causes for concern with regards to traffic impact on the local area.

Councillor Hamilton stressed that the level crossing at Purfleet was very different from that in Grays, and there would be vehicles as well as pedestrians crossing. The pathway was very narrow and he was concerned that conditions could be hazardous for pedestrians at peak times. He added that he would not personally wish to cycle along such a busy road and given the narrow, traffic intensive nature of the road there was no possibility of a

cycle lane. He asked whether there might be any additional parking than proposed to the western part of the site, which was proposed to be for ecological purposes. The land had been left for ecology purposes, to enhance the biodiversity interest of the site and to offer habitat improvement. To the west of the site the angle became more acute which would prove difficult for manoeuvring cars, and would be closer to residential properties, therefore causing increase noise and disturbance. As the school did not permit 6th form students to park at school the provision was deemed acceptable.

Councillor Hamilton asked whether a footpath might be created to the rear of the housing to provide increased safety for pedestrians. Members were advised that there was currently a private right of way which would require negotiation with the landowner. Similarly a change to the proposal would require a new consultation with residents, and there would likely be increased objections if pupils were expected to walk along the back of residents' gardens.

Councillor Redsell agreed that Thurrock needed additional schools however stated that if the Cornwall House car park were no longer available there would be problems. She asked whether the timber company to the east of the site had a separate access. It was confirmed that there was existing access roughly 300m away from access to the proposed school site.

Councillor Churchman referred to the possibility of the railway station relocating as part of the Purfleet Centre Regeneration and whether it might be possible to improve access and egress. The existing outline permission for the Purfleet Centre Regeneration included relocating the railway station. The emerging master plan, which had not yet been officially submitted, appeared to retain that aspiration and there were hopes to bridge London Road which could provide an opportunity for pedestrian improvements.

A resident, Mr Phélut, was invited to the Committee to present his statement of objection.

The agent, Laura Meyer, was invited to the Committee to present her statement of support.

Councillor Hamilton questioned whether access to the car park would be prohibited to prevent parents being tempted to drop children off on site. It was confirmed that a car park management scheme would be in place, as per condition 26.

Councillor Ojetola sought assurance that the width of the entrance was sufficient for coaches, as there were examples across the borough of coaches being forced to stop on the main highway as they could not turn into school sites. The access width was 6.2m, as wide as the carriageway and therefore ample for coaches to turn into and access the site. There was a controlled parking zone along London Road and therefore no coach would be able to stop on the main highway.

Councillor Ojetola agreed that good schools were hard to come by and the Committee would want to encourage them so commended Harris but reminded Members that this was an opportunity to start from scratch and address concerns which arose at schools across Thurrock. He was not objecting to the application but hoped to improve the proposals to reduce challenges of vehicle impact on the local area. The Assistant Director of Planning and Growth agreed that the situation could be monitored and reviewed over time, as the area would undergo significant flux.

Councillor Rice expressed that the prospect of a new school was exciting, and that it was particularly nice to see facilities developing ahead of homes. He accepted there were some issues however officers had worked closely with the applicant to rectify them and he would support the application.

Councillor Redsell agreed that all Members wanted new schools for Thurrock, and so she would support the application, but reiterated the need to address issues around parking, given the number of schools in the borough with problems at present. She felt officers had addressed most of the issues but more could be done around parking.

Councillor Snell supported Councillor Ojetola's concerns regarding traffic but had faith in the short term. He was worried that the Committee was somewhat blinded by the prospect of a new school, as he felt the design itself was uninspiring and he hoped future schools might be more impressive. He also expressed concern around the football pitch which would soon become unplayable. There were slight issues with the application which he felt could be missed because the application was for a new school.

Councillor Hamilton remained concerned regarding the safety of pedestrians as he felt the situation was somewhat unsafe.

The Chair stated that it was a fantastic opportunity. He agreed that there were a host of concerns however the officers' recommendation was for approval. The car park was important and he could foresee issues for residents with parents parking in the surrounding areas and on double yellow lines. He would like to see London Road to the North East of the site widened to provide drop off bays however accepted there were funding issues. He also wished for the private school bus to remain a permanent option. He accepted there were enough positives to vote in favour of approval but stressed he would like officers and the applicant to take comments regarding re-evaluation seriously.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones and Seconded by Councillor Jones that the application be approved, subject to amended conditions, as per the Officer's recommendation.

For: Councillors Tom Kelly (Chair), Steve Liddiard (Vice-Chair), Colin Churchman, Roy Jones, Tunde Ojetola, Gerard Rice and Joy Redsell.

Against: (0)

Abstain: Councillors Graham Hamilton and Graham Snell

RESOLVED:

That the application be approved, subject to conditions.

46. 17/01107/HHA: 18 Brookmans Avenue, Stifford Clays, Grays, Essex, RM16 2LW

The application sought planning permission for the erection of a summer house / home office. The application was scheduled for determination by the Planning Committee because it had been called in by councillors to assess the impact of the proposal in terms of overshadowing the garden and the dwelling to the south.

The Vice-Chair sought confirmation that the height of the proposed building was fairly standard. The Committee was advised that, were the summerhouse further from the fence, residents could build up to 4m high within Permitted Development.

Councillor Hamilton asked officers to clarify the function of a 'sunpipe'. There would be a dome on top of the roof to provide natural light.

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

The applicant, Mr Preou, was invited to the Committee to present his statement of support.

Councillor Ojetola questioned the issue regarding the height and the proximity to the fence. The Principal Planning Officer advised that the proposed building was closer to the property at the rear than the existing building; however given the direction both properties faced the shadow would fall within the applicant's garden.

Councillor Rice referred to page 67 whereby the proposal complied with the Council's policy. He sought verification that the outhouse could have been built without the demolition of the existing garage. Given the policy regarding percentage of footprint, it would be acceptable for the applicant to have both structures simultaneously.

Councillor Hamilton noted that, whilst the work must commence within 3 years, there was no limit for when the works should be completed. He questioned whether, given the restrictions regarding commercial use, the building could be used as a granny annex in future. Condition 4 limited usage of the building to ancillary purposes of the existing property as a single dwelling; the proposed building could be used for guests with on occasion but

could not be used for independent living. The time limit was a standard condition and it was not considered reasonable to place a limit upon completion date.

Councillor Jones asked whether the proposal was acceptable in terms of height. The Principal Planning Officer reiterated that it was a standard height and could have been taller within Permitted Development. Councillor Jones continued to question whether there were any regulations regarding the distance from the property boundary. The Council held no specific regulations however if the building were shorter it could reasonably be built closer to the fence and cover a larger footprint.

Councillor Ojetola questioned the “home office” use. It was confirmed that use like a study would be deemed acceptable however if it were used to meet clients that would be contrary to the conditions in place.

The Campaign to Protect Rural Essex Representative noted the plans included a business address, which matched that of the property. Councillor Ojetola questioned what enforcement was possible if the conditions were broken. It was clarified that, within Condition 4, working from home with a computer and phone line would be appropriate however not commercial use, such as a large number of deliveries or meeting clients.

The Chair recognised the frustration of the neighbours however the application complied with all policies and therefore he could not see grounds for refusal.

It was proposed by the Vice-Chair and seconded by the Chair that the application be approved, subject to conditions, as per the Officer’s recommendation:

For: Councillors Tom Kelly (Chair), Steve Liddiard (Vice-Chair), Colin Churchman, Graham Hamilton, Roy Jones, Tunde Ojetola, Gerard Rice and Graham Snell.

Against: (0)

Abstained: (0)

RESOLVED:

That the application be approved, subject to conditions.

47. 17/01165/FUL: Alexandra Lake, West Thurrock Way, West Thurrock, Essex

The application sought planning permission for the installation of a new ‘Flying Fox’ adventure course at Alexandra Lake, comprising the installation of start and finish platforms on the Boardwalk; connected by zip line to 5 station

structures positioned around the lake, together with associated fencing and hardstanding; and a new 'floating maze' platform.

Councillor Jones queried the distance of the zip line from the offices. The nearest points ranged between 16-23m from the office building.

Councillor Hamilton expressed concerns around access and density of platforms. It was confirmed that the application included no proposal for new staircases however the platforms were well spaced and the application had been accompanied by a health and safety document, though this was not within the remit of the Committee. The scheme would be an entire route followed from start to finish by groups as large as 16 with up to two instructors.

Councillor Ojetola asked for more details regarding the floating maze. There would be assault courses anchored in the lake bed. It would be visible and accessible from the Boardwalk for route climbing in groups. Councillor Ojetola continued to question whether noise assessments had been carried out regarding the two landing spots closest to the office building. There had been a noise assessment which concluded there would be no adverse impact and this had been checked and considered by Environmental Health Officers, who raised no objections to the scheme.

Councillor Rice referred to the Council's policies regarding open space and leisure and recalled that these would only support recreation on the east of the Lake, not the north and west. The Committee was advised that the policies did not prevent development but sought to protect and enhance what was already there. The application included an arboricultural assessment and a landscaping assessment; Members were advised that a planning condition required replacement of trees as 10 trees would be removed through the development. There had been no objections from relevant consultees as the condition was deemed to provide acceptable mitigation. Councillor Rice questioned whether the noise and distraction would be conducive to businesses situated within Alexandra House. The main noise would be from users rather than the zip wire itself. Following consultation with Environmental Health and the Landscape and Ecology Advisor there were no objections raised with regard to noise and visual impact.

Councillor Jones asked whether the proposed scheme was the first of its kind or whether there were others elsewhere. It was confirmed that the organisation was responsible for similar schemes.

An agent, David Maxwell, was invited to the Committee to present his statement of objection.

The applicant, Matt Nicholson, was invited to the Committee to present his statement of support.

Councillor Rice expressed concern that, in his view, policies were being ignored as it had been included that the north and west of the lake would not

be used for leisure purposes and therefore he could not support the application.

The Assistant Director of Planning and Growth clarified that nothing within the policies precluded development and the application had been considered acceptable. The Lakeside basin was a key growth hub for the Council and there were hopes to modernise and diversify the area. The application could be considered as part of the wider regeneration of the area.

Councillor Ojetola welcomed the proposal, in hopes of improving the area and allowing Lakeside to provide community entertainment. Improving the entire Lakeside basin was crucial. He felt that it was unlikely the impact on offices would be significant enough to justify refusal. The hotel on the lake had been commissioned and welcomed. The lake itself had not been used to its full potential and he was pleased to see such an application.

Councillor Jones agreed that it was a fantastic opportunity to enhance leisure facilities within Thurrock and echoed that the lake was underused. He supported the application.

Councillor Hamilton referred to page 87 of the agenda whereby there were no viable objections, though he reiterated his concern regarding the use of stairs to the car park by patrons.

Councillor Snell reminded the Committee that the lack of leisure facilities in Thurrock was one of the biggest complaints and felt that the application worked towards improving the situation. He added that the construction of the touch points was quite sympathetic to the landscape.

The Chair admitted the matter was not straightforward. Although the leisure facility was welcome he was concerned about the damage to views of the lake.

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

For: Councillors Tom Kelly (Chair), Steve Liddiard (Vice-Chair), Colin Churchman, Graham Hamilton, Roy Jones, Tunde Ojetola and Graham Snell.

Against: Councillor Gerard Rice

Abstained: (0)

RESOLVED:

That the application be approved, subject to conditions.

The meeting finished at 9.18 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**