

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 16 December 2020

7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Lauren Sullivan (Chair)
Cllr Harold Craske (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Conrad Broadley
Brian Francis
Bob Lane
Jordan Meade
Elizabeth Mulheran
Tony Rice
Steve Thompson

Jo Horne	Legal Officer (Medway Council)
Wendy Lane	Assistant Director (Planning)
Richard Hart	Principal Planner (Major Sites)
Alison Webster	Career Grade Planner
David Herrington	Digital Services Manager
Lauren Wallis	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

29. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

30. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 25 November 2020 were signed by the Chair.

31. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Steve Thompson made a voluntary announcement of an other interest in respect of agenda item 5b - Application reference 20200561 Former St John's Ambulance, Brigade HQ, Armoury Drive, Gravesend as he owned a property and resided 300 metres from the site and he was also one of the Ward Councillors for this area.

Cllr Tony Rice declared a significant interest in agenda item 5a – Application reference 20200343 – Land at Market Square and Horn Yard Car Parks, New Swan Yard, Gravesend, as he was a member of the Rosherville Limited Board who had a pecuniary interest in this development. Cllr Rice left the meeting during discussion and voting on this item.

Cllr Jordan Meade made a voluntary announcement of an other interest in respect of agenda item 5b - Application reference 20200561 Former St John's Ambulance, Brigade

HQ, Armoury Drive, Gravesend as he had formerly been a St John's Ambulance Cadet and had an enhanced knowledge of the site.

Cllr Jordan Meade also made a voluntary announcement of an other interest in respect of agenda item 5b - Application reference 20200561 Former St John's Ambulance, Brigade HQ, Armoury Drive, Gravesend in that he lived within the Windmill Hill Conservation Area.

32. Planning applications for determination by the Board

32.1 20200343 - Land at Market Square and Horn Yard Car Parks New Swan Yard, Gravesend, Kent - Erection of 242 no. residential units for Build to Rent (C3 Use Class), within three blocks ranging from 3 to 10 storeys, together with multi-storey car park as well as access, pedestrian links, landscaping, highway and other associated works - report herewith

(Cllr Tony Rice left the meeting.)

Further to a meeting of the Planning Committee held on 22 July 2020, the Committee considered an application reference 20200343 in relation to land at Market Square and Horn Yard car parks, Swan Yard, Gravesend for the erection of 242 residential units for Build to Rent (Cs Use Class) within three blocks ranging from 3 to 10 storeys together with a multi-storey car park as well as access, pedestrian links, landscaping, highway and other associated works.

The Principal Planner (Major Sites) advised that a revised planning application form had been submitted with changes relating only to the notice given/publicised to owners of the site. The information originally provided on previous application form had been incomplete, specifically as there were very small portions of the site which were 'unregistered' land, in that the ownership was unknown, and notice had to be made in the local press to attempt to make those potential owners of the unregistered land aware of the application. The officer explained the process followed and stated that this technical error did not affect in any way the validity of any conclusions regarding the merits of the development made of officers or members of the Planning Committee at 22 July 2020 Planning Committee. The officer confirmed that the scheme had not been altered and displayed a land registry plan which showed the unregistered areas of land in white.

The re-consultation process had resulted in 35 responses which had all been addressed in the main and the supplementary reports. One comment mentioned the additional shops and the officer confirmed that the scheme was 100% residential with no retail element. Another comment stated that the application was not policy compliant. However, the officer considered that no further material considerations warranted a change to the application

In conclusion, the officer stated that the application was policy compliant and confirmed that the decision agreed by the Committee on 22 July 2020 still stood.

The application had originally been referred for consideration as a major development proposal.

The Committee heard the views of the public speakers in support of and against the application who answered questions from Members.

The following points were made during discussion on this application:

- Following a “nonsensical design” comment, Members were advised that one of the speakers felt that while there was a need for additional housing in the Borough, this development was aimed at the overflow from London boroughs who would commute to their jobs in London. It would not be popular with Gravesham residents as families did not want to live in 2 bedroom flats in the town centre but would prefer more rural locations. It was considered that the economic landscape had changed this year and that this development did not provide for the people of Gravesham.
- A question was raised on the development not matching the town centre build density which had always been 3 to 4 storeys which some modern builds had followed. This was a super density scheme which would have an impact on the living conditions of residents and neighbouring dwellings because of its height, bulk and architectural design. It was noted that efforts had been made to make the development acceptable but this had not made an appreciable difference. It was advised that higher density developments in the town centre would take the pressure off the Council to build on the Green Belt to meet with the Government housing targets. However, it was considered that the previous scheme considered by the Committee in July 2020 was exactly the same as this application and therefore the above comment was a therefore a technicality. One of the public speakers did not consider the scheme to be policy compliant as the east and west quarters had been separated and a mixed use had not been insisted upon which they considered contrary to Policy CS5 of the Local Plan Core Strategy. It was considered that the officer’s report relied on the extant scheme which had not been commenced so could not be used as a justification for this application and therefore re-commencement conditions had not been complied with.
- The Principal Planner (Major Sites) confirmed that:
 - all neighbours to the application site would be consulted on design issues when the conditions were discharged,
 - all comments on the application received as a result of the re-consultation due to the unregistered land issue had been summarised in the report (paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3) and legal advice had been sought.
 - paragraphs 2.5 to 2.9 of the report showed the works to the site that had been lawfully implemented and an explanation was given on why the works had commenced in the archaeological zone 1.
 - nothing in the proposal had been changed since the Planning Committee’s resolution in July 2020

Resolved that application 20200343 be delegated to the Planning Manager (Development Management) in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee, for the issue of planning PERMISSION subject to planning conditions and informatives as set out in the report and the completion of a Section 106 Legal Agreement.

- Note:
- (a) Pete Langly-Smith (Agent)(a supporter) addressed the Committee.
 - (b) Cos Constantinou (Architect) (a supporter) was present.
 - (c) Nick Diment (Planning Agent)(a supporter) was present.
 - (d) Les Woollends (an objector) addressed the Committee.
 - (e) Deborah Cameron (an objector) addressed the Committee.
 - (f) Mr Martin McKay (an objector) addressed the Committee.

(Cllr Tony Rice was re-admitted to the meeting.)

32.2 20200561 - Former St Johns Ambulance, Brigade HQ, Armoury Drive, Gravesend - Demolition of vacant brick buildings and erection of 2 no. one bedroom bungalows and a two storey block containing 4 no. two bedroom flats with associated access from Albert Murray Close and Armoury Drive, car parking, landscaped amenity and ancillary enclosure

The Committee considered an application reference 20200561 for the demolition of vacant brick buildings and the erection of 2 one bedroom bungalows with flexible living space on the first floor and a two storey block containing 4 two bedroom flats with associated access from Albert Murray Close (the block of flats) and Armoury Drive (the bungalows), car parking, landscaped amenity and ancillary enclosure at the former St John's Ambulance Brigade HQ, Armoury Drive, Gravesend.

The Career Grade Planner showed a site location plan and described the location of the site in relation to the surrounding locality and the buildings currently on the site which included a former barracks building and a water tower. It was noted that the skylights in the bungalows pointed skywards to reduce the impact on neighbouring properties. The bungalows were also sited lower and therefore would not cause any detrimental effect regarding loss of light on neighbouring properties. A plan demonstrating the massing in the area and the location and effect of the proposals was shown as were photographs of the existing buildings on the site.

In conclusion the officer stated that the application was policy compliant and hence the recommendation as set out in the report.

The application had been referred to the Committee as Gravesham Borough Council was the applicant.

The Committee heard the views of public speakers in support of this application who answered questions from Members.

The following points were made during discussion on this application:

- Eighteen objections had been received which mainly related to the character and appearance of the proposal which abutted the Windmill Hill Conservation Area. The officers noted that the design was of a modern development which matched the design of residences to the north of the site. The Conservation Area to the south was separated from the site by a wall.
- Following a question on heritage concerns, Members were advised that Kent County Council (KCC) Archaeological Service had been consulted. KCC had then posed a specific question in relation to the water tower to Historic England who had advised that the water tower was not worth saving and could be demolished after being recorded for historical purposes. Members were shown a map of the location of the water tower on the site and it was noted that the Committee had little faith in opinion of KCC. It was suggested that the water tower be re-evaluated as to whether it was valuable or useful for Gravesham from a heritage point of view and Policy CS20 (paragraph 5.16.10) was quoted in relation to the protection of local heritage.
- Other Members of the Committee were content to accept to opinion of Historic England and for the water tower to be recorded and then demolished. It was also noted that the financial resources for conversion or preservation of the water tower were not available. In addition, some considered that the brownfield site should be used to alleviate the housing shortage in the Borough.

- Officers were advised that Historic England did not have the resources to get involved local heritage issues and was only interested in ancient monuments or Grade 2* listed buildings. It was suggested that the expertise of the Council's Conservation Officer be relied on who's opinion had been notably missing from Committee reports. It was also suggested that the former Barracks be considered for listing as it had been in use in the first and second World Wars as an artillery hospital.
- The Committee was advised that houses were not as space efficient as a block of flats and would have equated to 3 houses instead of 4 flats. Therefore the layout had been designed to make the most efficient use of the site.
- In relation to the heritage concerns, a question was raised on whether the architectural design of the water tower be reflected in the design of the proposal and also whether the plaque on the water tower could be incorporated in the soft landscaping. A suggestion was also made about the possible re-use of the water tower as a dwelling giving its solid construction which would accord with the Council's Climate Change objectives. The applicant agreed that given enough funding for renovation and future maintenance, the tower could be utilised. However, this would be costly and was therefore not feasible and, if retained, would result in the loss of two dwellings on the site. This possibility had been considered but budget had precluded going forward with this idea. Members were advised that construction material from the water tower would be re-used for the hard landscaping on the site.
- Following a question about the heritage of the site, Members were advised that there was a detailed heritage study that could be made available. However, the Chair advised that public speakers were not permitted to share documents during the meeting. However, the document was in the public domain and so officers displayed the document once the public speaking had finished.
- Members were advised that a condition on obscure glazing in windows on the side of the block of flats had been as a result on objections received. It was noted that these were also bathroom windows. The design of the bungalows incorporated high level windows to avoid overlooking.
- There was a Tree Protection Order (TPO) on the boundary of Love Lane which mainly included lime trees. There was an Acer to be removed but this was not included in the TPO and would be replaced with two new trees. No evidence of the presence of bats had been found on the site. There was also a condition that vegetation clearance could not take place during the bird nesting season.
- The site was privately owned with no access to the public and therefore had not been used as a community space.
- The Committee was advised that an informative with regard to the hours of construction had been included in the recommendation set out in the report.
- The Principal Planner (Major Sites) advised that the heritage statement for the water tower detailed the structure of the tower and the existence of a more modern extension which was built of yellow stock brick. Members were shown internal condition photographs.

A motion for a Covid secure site inspection was moved, seconded and put to the vote. The vote was lost.

A number of Members asked that their vote on the recommendation set out below be recorded and it was suggested that the Committee's vote as a whole be recorded as follows:

For the motion – Cllrs. Lauren Sullivan, Harold Craske, Brian Francis, Elizabeth Mulheran and Steve Thompson.

Against the motion – Cllrs. Conrad Broadley, Bob Lane, Jordan Meade and Tony Rice.

Resolved that application 20200561 be PERMITTED subject to conditions and informatives as set out in the report including:

- 1. A condition requiring the implementation of the Code of Construction Management Plan to control the hours of working and levels of noise and pollution. (Based on the wording for Clifton Slipways approval Code of Construction Management Plan Condition.)**
- 2. A heritage interpretation condition in relation to the preservation and conservation of the water tower dated plaque to be agreed before the demolition of the water tower.**
- 3. A condition requiring the re-use of the construction materials from the demolition of the water tower to be used in the construction of the boundary walls where appropriate**
- 4. A condition in relation to the soft and hard landscaping.**

Note: (a) Mrs Sharon Donald (Applicant)(a supporter) addressed the Committee.
 (b) Anna Kadziolka (Architect)(a supporter) addressed the Committee.

33. Planning applications determined under delegated powers by the Director (Planning & Development)

A schedule showing applications determined by the Director (Planning & Development) under delegated powers had been published on the Council's website.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.02 pm