

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 01 February 2023

19:00pm

Present:

Cllr Brian Sangha (Chair)
Cllr Harold Craske (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Gary Harding
Les Hoskins
Bob Lane
Lyn Milner
Emma Morley
Elizabeth Mulheran
Tony Rice

Note: Councillors John Burden, Jordan Meade, Ejaz Aslam and Diane Morton were also in attendance.

Shazad Ghani	Service Manager (Planning)
Richard Hart	Team Leader (Development Management)
Faye Hobbs	Team Leader (Development Management))
Jo Horne	Planning Solicitor
Ben Clarke	Committee Service Officer (Minutes)

46. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Brian Francis and Cllr Samir Jassal; Cllr Lyn Milner and Cllr Les Hoskins were their respective substitutes.

47. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 04 January 2023 were signed by the Chair.

48. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Tony Rice declared an Other Significant Interest with regards to item 5a as he was an appointed director on the board of Rosherville.

Cllr Tony Rice agreed to leave for the duration of item 5a and return for item 5b.

49. Planning applications for determination by the Committee

49.1 20211540 - Lord Street Car Park, Lord Street, Gravesend, Kent

The Committee considered application 20211540; the application was for the change of use from the existing car park to the erection of four to seven storey buildings with a ten-storey

tower (Ground + nine storeys) to provide 156 flats, 2612.40 sqm of commercial space, including office, retail and workshops, with ancillary car parking, open space and access to Eden Place.

The Team Leader (Development Management) advised that one objection to the development based on the height of the building and parking provision was received on the day, but that the matters raised were dealt with in the report.

The Team Leader (Development Management) delivered a presentation to Members outlining the proposals for the site.

The Team Leader (Development Management) summarised the reasons for recommendation and advised that the proposed development was deemed to be a sustainable form of development that accorded with national and local planning policy and the agent/applicant had confirmed that they would provide all of the S.106 financial contributions which would meet the relevant tests set out within the NPPF (2021).

The Team Leader (Development Management) concluded that permission was recommended subject to the Section 106 (S.106) being signed and appropriate planning conditions.

The Committee were invited to ask questions for clarification.

Members questions were answered by the Service Manager (Planning) and Team Leader (Development Management):

- The S.106 monies would be held by Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) and would only be transferred to Kent County Council (KCC) once they had given GBC significant evidence of what the money would be used for, to ensure expenditure would be compliant with the S.106 agreement. That process meant that only projects that Members had previously agreed to were funded and no S.106 monies were spent elsewhere
- All businesses that currently have access to Eden Place from behind their buildings would retain full access following the completion of the development.
- Following a Members concern about the height of the building, the Committee was informed that the Gravesham Conservation Architect was consulted as part of the application and he felt that the building should not exceed eight stories, however it was for the case officer to balance all comments including those around housing need, design and the extant permission of nine stories already in place. Taking a balanced view, the Team Leader (Development Management) had come to the conclusion that ten stories was an appropriate height for the tower element of the development. Further reasoning for the decision could be found in the report
- Parking in the development would be a mix of residential parking and street parking; all parking spaces within the development would be for residents and a number of the on street parking spaces would be for the commercial premises. Parking allocation for the commercial premises and residents would be conditioned on the application
- The Team Leader (Development Management) had discussed Historic England's concerns with them, and he was confident that the scheme was policy compliant
- There was a total of 336 cycle spaces proposed with a mixture of secure cycle site locations dotted around the development with full details of this being conditioned.

- In regard to the parking provision there was a requirement to have a maximum of: 1 car parking space per dwelling for 1 bed dwellings; 2 car parking spaces per dwelling for 2 and 3 bed dwellings. A total of 51 spaces were provided. It was noted that under the extant scheme 108 spaces were provided with 28 of those spaces being on Eden Place which served 106 residential units.
- Following a Members concern about additional retail units when there were vacant units in the Town Centre, it was explained that as the application was in the Town Centre, the proposals for retail units to be included in the development was compliant with the core strategy. The Committee were reminded that officers reacted to the planning applications submitted and the developer had proposed retail units on the ground floor; due to the site sitting on a busy road within an AQMA the ground floor was unsuitable for residential accommodation
- The rooftop gardens on top of the development would be accessed by residents only via several different accessways in the development
- The development would comply with building standards which included making it accessible to the disabled; that would include illuminated signs and doorways large enough for wheelchair users

The Committee heard the views of the registered speaker for the application and had their questions answered:

- Any development has the same issues around residents and recycling, but education was vital to ensure household waste was correctly recycled. The development would have appropriate signage advising residents where to put their waste and each resident would also receive a pack telling them of the waste chutes and how to correctly split up waste into recycling and rubbish. In the future, it was likely that there would be different ways to recycle but the developers would ensure that residents were informed of any changes
- The recycling information packs for residents would be in a variety of languages
- The agent was confident that the retail units would be a success as they were located on a primary route into the Town Centre and would be in constant use by other commercial premises and the resident located above them. Those retail units and a lack of parking spaces would encourage residents to shop local and spend their money in Gravesham
- A portion of the development would be allocated to young people and the aim was to have a mixed group of people living in the development; those units dedicated to young people would have an age requirement. The 'young person units'; would also be located close to the proposed community hub which the Council could choose to run or outsource it to an external organization
- The live work units would attract a variety of users and would be beneficial to the development

Following discussion, the Committee raised the following points:

- The young people units could be utilised for those young people coming out of foster care
- Several Members raised concerns that the development was too tall, too near the conservation area, there was no agreed materials for the scheme and the tower would dominate the skyline behind Stone Street; they felt further work was needed on the application to make it suitable for approval

- The general agreement from the Committee was that the proposal was much better than the current site which is an eyesore to the Town; it was noted that it would bring additional homes to Gravesham and encourage more residents to shop locally

In response to concerns raised over the height proposed, the Service Manager (Planning) advised that the conservation officer and Historic England's height related concerns were specifically tied to the views from conservation areas. They wanted to ensure the historic views from Windmill Hill, the view of St Georges Church and the wider views of Essex were not obscured by the development. The report further explained the reasoning for the height of the development and the need to have a balanced view when taking into consideration all of the requirements.

The Chair thanked everyone for their views and summarised the points made on page 56 of the report which needed to be taken into account in support of the scheme.

The Vice-Chair further added that the application proposed was a vast improvement over what was currently at the site.

Before a vote was called, the Service Manager (Planning) asked to amend the recommendation.

Resolved that application **20211540** be **DELEGATED** to the Service Manager (Planning) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee, to grant **PERMISSION** subject to the applicant agreeing pre-commencement conditions, finalisation of planning conditions and the completion of a section 106 legal agreement, as outlined in the report.

49.2 20221179 - Land at St Columba's Close, Gravesend, Kent

The Committee considered application 20221179; the application was for demolition of 26 units, comprising Nos. 1-12 St Patricks Gardens, Nos. 36-41 St Patricks Gardens and Nos. 28-42 (even nos. only) St Columbas Close, and the caretakers facility, with the erection of 2 no. 2 storey buildings, 1 no. 3 storey building and 1no. part 3 / part 4 storey building to provide 46 residential dwellings (Class C3), with associated vehicle and pedestrian access, amenity space with hard and soft landscaping, car and cycle parking, refuse and recycling storage provision, and other associated works.

The Team Leader (Development Management) delivered a presentation to Members outlining the proposals for the site.

The Team Leader (Development Management) summarised the reasons for recommendation and advised the proposed development was deemed to be a sustainable form of development that accorded with the development plan and material considerations. The applicant had confirmed they would provide all of the financial contributions which met the relevant tests set out as statutory tests in regulation 122 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended by the 2011 and 2019 Regulations) and as policy tests in the NPPF (2021).

The Team Leader (Development Management) concluded that subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report, it should be delegated to the Service Manager (Planning) for permission subject to planning conditions and the completion of a unilateral agreement.

The Committee were invited to ask questions for clarification.

Members questions were answered by the Team Leader (Development Management)

- The area and public right of way in particular would have more natural surveillance once the development was built as the additional buildings would create doors and windows overlooking the area making the public feel more secure. The current development had no surveillance and it was unpleasant and felt unsafe walking up the side alleys at night
- There would be an overall slight net loss of amenity green space, but the amenity green space would be of a vastly superior quality than what was there currently; the new green space would include areas for residents to grow their own garden as well as soft and hard landscaping. The current green space was unkempt and needed major refurbishment
- Planning condition three for the application ensured protections for the current occupiers of the site
- The S.106 monies were held by Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) and would only be transferred to Kent County Council (KCC) once they had given GBC significant evidence of what the money would be used for and ensured it would be compliant with the S.106 agreement. That process meant that only projects that Members had previously agreed to were funded and no S.106 monies were spent elsewhere. If KCC were vague about where the money be sent, then GBC officers challenged KCC and requested further clear information before any S.106 monies were transferred
- The new development including the soft and hard landscaping would be accessible to disabled residents and be inclusive
- The proposed development would reduce levels of anti-social behaviour
- Lighting on the site would be conditioned as part of the application; Planning Officers had learnt from previous applications that low level lighting caused several problems and would work with the applicant to determine the best lighting for the development

The Committee heard the views of the registered speakers for the application and had their questions answered:

- Extensive consultation was carried out with the public including two public exhibitions where the public were shown images of the proposed schemes and a discussion was held. The overall response was positive with particular praise for the enhancement to the public gardens and the residents' concerns over anti-social behaviour was addressed
- The development would be accessible to disabled people; the steps were being removed from the development and replaced with a gently sloped path at a gradient that everyone could easily use
- The heat pumps were an efficient method of utilising underground heat which would then be fed into the blocks of flats

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed it was a vast improvement over what was currently on the site and would provide affordable modern housing for residents in Gravesham.

Resolved that application 20221179 be **DELEGATED** to the Service Manager (Planning) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee, to grant

PERMISSION subject to the applicant agreeing pre-commencement conditions, finalisation of planning conditions and subject to the unilateral agreement being signed, as outlined in the report.

50. Planning applications determined under delegated powers by the Director (Environment)

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

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 20:53pm.