

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 26 July 2023

7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Lee Croxton (Chair)
Cllr Rajinder Atwal (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Ejaz Aslam
 Samir Jassal
 Alan Metcalf
 Lyn Milner
 Peter Scollard
 Alison Williams

Note: Councillor Metcalf arrived part way through agenda item 5b. Councillors Burden, Deborah Croxton and Dibben were also in attendance.

Shazad Ghani	Head of Planning
Richard Hart	Team Leader (Development Management)
Faye Hobbs	Team Leader (Development Management)
Ethan Bonthron	Career Grade Planner (Development Management)
Lisa Williams	Career Grade Planner (Development Management)
Laura Caiels	Assistant Head of Legal Services (Place Team)
Karen Gingles	Committee Service Officer (Minutes)

8. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Gary Harding. Councillor Derek Ashenden attended as his substitute.

9. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 14 June 2023 were signed by the Chair.

10. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

11. Planning applications for determination by the Committee**12. 20230640 - Land At 270-340 Valley Drive Gravesend Kent**

The Committee considered application 20230640 - Land at 270-340 Valley Drive, Gravesend, Kent. The application was for a non-material amendment to planning permission reference number 20190155, to allow the change to the description of development wording, to enable people who are aged over 50 to live in the approved one bed rented units.

The Planning Officer outlined key points from the report:

- The site was situated in the urban area of Gravesend and had been developed in accordance with the planning permission, providing a total of 48 affordable units including 32 x 1 bedroom rented flats and 16 general needs flats.
- The Committee were advised that the flats in question were one bedroom sheltered accommodation and located in block A. This accommodation was currently for the over 55's. The non-material change was to amend this age bracket to over 50's. The accommodation in block B would remain as general need housing.
- The Planning Officer informed Members that the original permission did not control whether or not residents over the age of 55 would be in active employment or not. This meant the potential parking impacts would not differ from that of the original permission.
- Members were advised that the alteration to the resident profile would not impact on any aspect of the original approved application. The change would not result in an amendment to the number of potential occupiers and was therefore considered non-material and an acceptable amendment to the description.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask questions and provide their comments.

RESOLVED that the Non-Material Amendment be approved.

13. 20230136 - Land At Worcester Close, Istead Rise, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 9LB

The Committee considered application 20230136 - Land at Worcester Close, Istead Rise, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 9LB. The application was for the construction of 8 new affordable rent residential dwellings (Use Class C3) with associated vehicular and pedestrian access, car parking, cycle parking, refuse storage and landscaping.

The Planning Officer outlined key points from the report:

The application site was an informal amenity green space, 0.14 hectares in size on a triangular piece of land located on Worcester Close. The site was within the Green Belt and adjacent to residential properties to the east, south and west. A public bridle way was located directly next to the western boundary with the Downs Way Medical Practice to the north of the site.

The proposal was to build 8 sustainable, low carbon and energy efficient affordable rent dwellings, which would all meet national space standards for gross internal floor space. The proposed development would house the apartments within an L shaped building, offering 10 parking spaces for residents and visitors. The ground floor properties would also have private outside amenity space.

Due to the site's location within Green Belt, the Planning Officer highlighted paragraphs 147 – 149 of Section 13 from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021, and the detail set out within the report. The Planning Officer advised Members that in the case of this application the proposal met exception 149 e) – limited infilling in villages.

Members were informed that the design characteristics of the proposal were in keeping to that of the surrounding properties in Worcester Close, The Drove Way and Bramley Close, explaining that the proposed elevation of the structure varied to reflect the varying heights of the surrounding properties.

The Planning Officer explained how the design of the development addressed issues of neighbouring properties being overlooked, by including obscured glass and assured the Committee that conditions set out in the report would safeguard neighbouring amenity.

The Planning Officer took Members through a plan setting out the trees and hedges to be removed from the site. The Officer clarified that landscaping would be provided on site and replacement trees provided off site via a Unilateral Undertaking on a 3-1 basis.

Members were informed that the applicant would be making a SAMMS payment through a Unilateral Undertaking which will also secure wildlife enhancements proposed as part of the building itself, to include bird boxes, bat boxes and bee bricks.

The Planning Officer referred the Committee to the supplementary report, which set out all new representations received from third parties after the publication of the agenda. Members were advised that the content of the document did not however impact on the application.

The Chair invited the Head of Planning to clarify the reason the application had been removed from the previous Planning Committee. The Head of Planning explained that the application had been removed from the Planning Committee agenda in June 2023, as it had transpired that the proposal would not be exempt from 'Right to Buy', thereby rendering the proposal a departure from Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS16 which requires affordable housing in the rural area, to be affordable in perpetuity. Due to this the application had to be advertised as a departure from the Development Plan, with the departure notice consultation not ending until 4th August 2023.

Cllr Metcalf joined the meeting and apologised for his late arrival. Through the Chair, the Assistant Head of Legal Services advised that as the Councillor had missed the presentation for the application, he would not be able to take part in the decision to determine the planning application.

The Committee were invited to ask questions for clarification and raised the following:

- Clarity was sought regarding paragraph 149 of Section 13 from the NPPF and whether the extract presented only related to exception 149 (e) (limited infilling in villages). The Planning Officer advised that exception 149 (e) was the most relevant exception to this proposal.
- Members queried the height of the proposed apartments in relation to the neighbouring properties. The Planning Officer advised that the height of the flats broadly reflected that of the surrounding properties, however the elevation on the wing adjacent to Bramley Close was marginally taller.
- The Committee queried which trees on the site would be removed for the proposed development. The Planning Officer showed Members a plan from the presentation indicating which trees were to be removed and two trees on western edge that would be retained. They went on to say that additional trees would be planted off site to mitigate the loss.

The Committee heard the views of a registered speaker in favour of the application and had their questions answered:

- A Ward Councillor queried how the proposed development would meet the needs of the Istead Rise Community. The speaker advised following a survey being undertaken by Gravesham, there was a need for more housing and the proposal had therefore been designed to meet the needs of the local community.

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

- The Committee asked for clarity on the proportion of residents in Istead Rise who had objected, as a ratio in relation to the entire population of the area. The speaker advised with approximately 530 objections this was a quarter of Istead Rise.
- Members asked for more explanation as to why the development would mean the access for cyclists would be considered unsafe. The speaker explained that the walking and cycling links from the site to Meopham Railway Station and the urban area were unsafe and that they did not meet LTN 1/20 standards.

The Committee heard the views of Councillors Dibben, Ward Councillor for Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown

In response The Head of Planning informed the Committee that a public consultation was carried out by the Gravesham Housing department in 2022, as the applicant. This consultation was not undertaken by the Council in its role as the local planning authority, therefore concerns being raised were not a material consideration for Members. He went on to say that the proposal would not reduce the width of the bridle way.

There was some discussion that Istead Rise did not fall under the status of a village but was considered a community. The Head of Planning clarified that Istead Rise was considered to be a village as set out in the report, and that the Planning Inspectorate reached a similar conclusion when they considered the planning appeal for land at Willerby Farm.

After further discussion the Chair advised the Committee they must focus on the material considerations when making their decision.

RESOLVED That the Head of Planning is given delegated authority in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to issue the planning permission and impose conditions and informatives, subject to the completion of the current departure notice period and completion of a unilateral undertaking.

That the Head of Planning is given delegated authority to make changes to the wording of the committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions, informatives, planning obligations or reasons for the decision) prior to the decision being actioned, provided that the Head of Planning is satisfied that any such changes could not reasonably be regarded as deviating from the overall principle of the decision reached by the committee nor that such change(s) could reasonably have led to a different decision having been reached by the committee.

Should the Head of Planning consider that a different decision could have been reached by the Committee (having considered any further objections received) the application is to be reported back to the next meeting of Planning Committee.

Note: Asri Asra (Architect) spoke in favour of the application and John Knight, Alex Hills and Jackie Luckhurst (Residents) spoke against the application.

14. 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 8:15pm