

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 27 September 2023

7.00 pm

Present:

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

Councillors: Ejaz Aslam
Gary Harding
Alan Metcalf
Lyn Milner
Peter Scollard
Frank Wardle

Note: Councillors: Leslie Hills, Deborah Croxton and Daniel Adewale King were also in attendance

15. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Samir Jassal and Cllr Wardle attended as his substitute. An apology was also received from Cllr Williams.

16. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 26 July 2023 were signed by the Chair.

17. Declarations of Interest

A voluntary declaration of interest was received from Cllr Lee Croxton in relation to application 20221187 - The Maltings. He notified the Committee that he lived in close proximity to The Maltings and that although not a member of the church, he was aware of their work within the community. Cllr Lee Croxton informed Members that he had an open mind in regard to the application, however other than acting as Chair, he would not pass comment or vote in respect of the application.

18. Officer Delegation in Respect of Taxi and Private Hire Licence Revocations

The Committee considered the report relating to officer delegation in respect of taxi and private hire licence revocations. The purpose of the report was to update the Planning Committee on matters delegated to it, within the Council's Constitution and seek a temporary amendment to officer delegations, to support effective regulation of Hackney Carriage and private hire driver, vehicles and operators.

The Regulatory Service Manager informed the Committee that traditionally under the Council's current constitution, the decision to revoke a licence must be made through the Planning Committee. He advised that there had recently been an incident where urgent action was required and the most appropriate course of action was to immediately revoke a licence, due to the severity of the case. However, this was not possible due to need to present the case to Planning Committee. It was fortunate that in this particular situation an alternative option was established, with the driver in question surrendering his licence.

The Regulatory Service Manager informed the Committee he was seeking Member approval for a temporary 12 month delegated authority to be given to the Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth), to revoke licences until the Gravesham constitution was updated.

The Committee agreed the temporary amendment.

19. Planning applications for determination by the Committee

19.1 20221187 - The Maltings, Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent

The Committee considered application 20221187 - The Maltings, Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent. The application was for the change of use of the Maltings, Lower Higham Road, Gravesend, DA12 2LY from offices (formerly class B1), showroom (formerly class A1) and workshop (formerly class B1) to a mixed use of education (class F1a) and a place of religious worship (class F1f).

The Team Leader informed Members that the site was currently occupied by the City Praise Centre and the application was seeking permanent permission to use the site for mixed use purposes. The Committee were informed that the application only related to The Maltings area and not the Church itself.

Members were informed that temporary planning permission was first granted in 2017 for a 4 year period. The reason for the temporary permission was to assess the impact of the proposed use on the wider community, particularly in relation to the parking provision. The permission was renewed again in 2021 for a 2 year period as the impacts had not been able to be assessed due to Covid impacts, and now the applicant sought permanent permission.

It was noted that as part of the original permissions, the applicant had secured an additional 77 car parking spaces from the neighbouring North Kent College. This arrangement was based on a 5 year rolling contract which was dated January 2018. A revised agreement or proof that they agreement was still in place had not been provided. Members were informed however that the applicant had provided evidence of an agreement with Westcourt School to use their 100 car parking spaces as an overflow car park provision.

On the basis of satisfactory parking provision, the Team Leader advised that the application for continued and permanent use of the site for worship and education was acceptable in principle. She went on to say that a Section 106 agreement would ensure that a total of 128 parking spaces were provided both on and off site as well as the parking being monitored. This agreement would also include a Travel Plan which would ensure sustainable access, plus facilitate and promote the use of sustainable modes of transport to a target audience. The Team Leader explained that although the temporary permission had stood since 2017 with minimal impact in relation to parking in the surrounding area, this had been due to the

parking arrangement with the College. A renewed parking agreement with the college has not been provided alongside the application and therefore to prevent any detrimental impact on the surrounding area, it was imperative to secure sufficient parking through a Section 106 agreement.

The Team Leader concluded that subject to planning conditions and parking provision being secured via a Section 106 agreement, the proposal was compliant with national and local planning policies.

Members were invited to ask questions for clarification:

- Clarity was sought regarding the need for the review of parking restrictions in the surrounding area and the purpose of the Travel Plan. The Team Leader advised that if the applicant felt there was not sufficient parking onsite, they could seek to the review on street parking. Members were informed that this information had been relayed to the applicant with Kent County Council, as it was not within the remit of Gravesham Borough Council. Members were informed that the specific details of the Travel Plan would be negotiated to ensure there was sufficient parking provisions and that the congregation would be made aware of the number of spaces available.
- Members queried who would be responsible for monitoring the parking provision. The Team Leader advised that under the Section 106 agreement, this would be assigned to the City Praise Centre and as such they would be required to adhere to the agreement and monitor the provision. If monitoring measures were not in place, the planning department would need to investigate.

The Committee heard the views of registered speakers in favour of the application and had their questions answered.

- Members queried whether the church advocated the use of public transport. The speaker informed the Committee that this was encouraged with many of the congregation choosing to walk also.
- The Committee wondered where the congregation were located in relation to the church. The speaker informed Members that many were within walking distance with some slightly out of town within a few miles radius. There were a few however who travelled further.
- Clarity was sought regarding the current terms of the parking agreement with North Kent College. The speaker advised there was a good relationship with the college and the arrangement was ongoing. The Team Leader informed the Committee that the contract submitted with the application was a rolling contract for 5 years, which ended in January 2023 and had not been renewed. Even though the arrangement may be continuing, there was no evidence of a current signed agreement to formalise the arrangement.
- Members queried whether a Section 106 agreement was necessary. They were informed by the Team Leader that it was required, as the application was dependent on parking provisions outside the red line boundary of the application. This approach had been confirmed with Legal. Members were advised that in this situation, normal planning conditions regarding parking could not be included, as the required provision was outside the boundary. Therefore, a Section 106 was required.

The Committee heard the views of Councillor Hills, Ward Councillor for Chalk.

With the agreement of the Chair, the Committee heard the views of Councillors Deborah Croxton and Councillor Adewale King.

Also with the agreement of the Chair, the Team Leader read the views of Councillor Jenny Wallace who was unable to attend the meeting.

The Committee were invited to make any further comments:

- Members queried whether the Committee could permit the application without a Section 106 agreement. The Assistant Director (Planning) reiterated that this option would be against the planning recommendation, as the inclusion was in place as a safeguard in relation to the required parking provision and that there was no other way to condition parking into the permission and the permission related to the land and not the applicant. However, Members could determine to permit the application without a Section 106.

RESOLVED that the Head of Planning is given delegated authority in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to grant Permission subject to finalisation of planning conditions and the completion of a Section 106 agreement. In the event of the Section 106 agreement not being completed, the planning application will be reported back to Planning Committee for redetermination

Note: Michael Coveney (Applicant – City Praise), Graeme Baldwin (City Praise) and Yinka Tomori (City Praise) spoke in favour of the application.

20. 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 8:02pm