

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 31 January 2024

7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Lee Croxton (Chair)
Cllr Deborah Croxton (Acting Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Ejaz Aslam
Gary Harding
Alan Metcalf
Lyn Milner
Peter Scollard
Benjamin Sizer
Alison Williams

Note: Councillors: John Burden, Jordan Meade, Shane Mochrie-Cox, Derek Ashenden, Helen Ashenden, Rajvinder Atwal and Daniel Adewale King were also in attendance

Tava Walton	Assistant Director (Planning)
Shazad Ghani	Head of Planning
Richard Hart	Team Leader (Development Management)
Laura Caiels	Assistant Head of Legal Services (Place)
Karen Gingles	Committee Service Officer (Minutes)

26. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rajvinder Atwal (who attended the meeting in his role as Ward Councillor) and Cllr Samir Jassal. Cllr Deborah Croxton and Cllr Ben Sizer attended as their substitutes.

27. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 25 October 2025 were signed by the Chair.

28. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

28.1 20231149 - Cobham Lodge, Valley Drive, Gravesend, Kent

The Committee considered application 20231149 - Cobham Lodge, Valley Drive, Gravesend, Kent. The application was for a residential mixed development which would result in 32 new dwellings. The proposal consisted of:

- The conversion of the existing house to 10no. flats, including side and rear extension and loft conversion.
- Conversion of the rear annex building to 2no. dwelling houses including proposed new dormers.
- Construction of new apartment building to form 11no. new apartments.
- Construction of 8no. semi-detached and 1no. detached houses and associated development.

The Team Leader gave the Committee an overview of the site advising it was primarily located in the urban area of Gravesend, with part of the rear annex situated within the Green Belt. The site was in close proximity to the A2 and located in a residential area, surrounded by large, detached properties with extensive gardens and the more modest detached properties of Sheldon Heights, a more recent back land development.

Members were informed that the proposed development was a resubmission of the previously refused planning application (ref: 20220839), which was refused on 25 Nov 2022. In October 2023 an appeal was made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, against the refusal to grant planning permission by the Local Planning Authority. Although the Planning Inspector found no reason to dismiss the planning appeal based on the development itself, the planning appeal was dismissed due to there being no signed s.106 agreement, which would mitigate the impact of the development on the necessary physical or social infrastructure. The Committee were informed that as part of this planning application the applicant had committed to agree to Section 106 agreement that would mitigate the impacts of the development on physical and social infrastructure, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. However, due to viability reasons, the proposal could not deliver affordable housing, and this would need to be the subject of a viability review prior to the commencement of development.

The Committee were informed of the current street scene and were advised that the main property was screened by existing trees, many of which were protected by tree preservation orders. It was explained that the proposed apartment block and dwelling to the rear of the existing Cobham Lodge dwelling would not be visible to the street scene and would sit behind the existing Cobham Lodge and 'Alva'. The Team Leader highlighted that 2 pocket parks were proposed within the wider development plan. One located behind the existing dwelling (Cobham Lodge) and the second in the northeast corner of the site (adjacent to the existing rear annexe).

Access to the site would be obtained via the existing north entrance which was served by a small access road which ran alongside Valley Drive. It was noted that traffic flow ran at a slower speed along this access road due to its width. Members were informed that KCC Highways, National Highways, GBC Highways and Kent Fire and Rescue were satisfied with the proposal and road network surrounding it.

The Team Leader concluded by informing Members that as Gravesham could not demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, the proposed development would provide a

substantial contribution towards meeting the local need and should therefore be accorded significant weight. The proposed development was deemed to be a sustainable form of development which met national and local policy.

Members were invited to ask questions for clarification:

- It was asked whether there would be a requirement for smoke alarms and a sprinkler system within the proposed units in which the Team Leader advised would be covered by Building Control.
- Members queried whether the parking provision was deemed sufficient. The Team Leader advised the Committee that the plans set out the appropriate level of parking and highlighted that there had been no objection on this from KCC Highways or GBC Highways teams in relation to parking.
- The Committee queried the planning history of Sheldon Heights. Members were informed that previously the site had been one dwelling, which following planning approval, was demolished and the land redeveloped to deliver seven, four bedroom detached homes.

The Head of Planning advised members that after publication of agenda, an e-mail was received from Kent County Council (KCC's) asking that their request for Planning Obligations be met in full. The Head of Planning provided a summary of KCC's e-mail and provided an overview as to why the NPPF requirements were not being met and directed Members to the report.

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

- Members queried how many properties would be accessible for wheelchair users. The speaker was not able to confirm this however advised that all properties would be policy compliant and in line with building regulations.
- The Committee wondered whether the development backing onto the gardens of Sheldon Heights, would be appropriately secure and privacy would be protected for the neighbouring homes. Assurance was given that the gardens of the adjacent units would be fully secure by design requirements.

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

- In response to concern that many local residents had not been notified of the Committee meeting. The Team Leader advised notification of the Committee meeting was sent via post/email, to those who had objected to the application. The Head of Planning assured the Committee that this process was carried out for all applications that are reported to Planning Committee, but that the Council had no control over the delivery of post/email to individuals.
- In response to concern regarding access via the narrow access road, the Head of Planning reiterated that National Highways and KCC Highways were content with the proposal in terms of highway network.

The Committee heard the views of Councillors Rajinder Atwal and Daniel Adewale King, Ward Councillors for Singlewell.

The Committee heard the views of non-board Members Cllr Helen Ashenden and leader of the opposition Cllr Jordan Meade.

In response to concern about the development creating additional pressure on local infrastructure including schools. The Head of Planning reminded Members that the matter was dealt with in the accompanying report and that insufficient information had been provided by KCC to request funds for land for a new secondary school.

The Committee were invited to make any further comments:

- There was concern from some Members regarding access into the development via the small access road. The Chair reiterated to the Committee that the Planning Inspector had agreed an identical proposal to the one before Members was considered to be acceptable, all apart from the omission of a full Section 106 payment, which had since been addressed by the applicant. No objections had been received from National Highways, Kent County Council Highways, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue regarding access, as such the application could not be refused on that basis.
- Members observed that the past development of Sheldon Heights was approved which was of a similar back land context to the proposed scheme. The Team Leader confirmed that Sheldon Heights was a smaller development consisting of larger properties on a smaller plot. However, it was noted that the constraints would have been similar in terms of development.
- There was concern that the proposal would mean over development on the plot. The Head of Planning reinforced that the Planning Inspector and Planning Officers had not reached this conclusion and advised that the Committee's decision would need to be based on evidence with none being available to reach a contrary viewpoint.
- Members recognised that there was a demand for housing in Gravesham and this development would help towards the housing need.

RESOLVED that the application be delegated to the Head of Planning to grant PERMISSION subject to the finalisation of planning conditions and the completion of a section 106 legal agreement.

29. 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.

The meeting ended at 8:16pm