

## Planning Committee

Wednesday, 22 May 2024

7.00 pm

### Present:

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

Councillors: Ejaz Aslam  
Deborah Croxton  
Dakota Dibben  
Gary Harding  
Samir Jassal  
Lyn Milner  
Peter Scollard

**Note:** Councillor: Shane Mochrie-Cox was also in attendance

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

### 1. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Alan Metcalf. Councillor Dakota Dibben attended as his substitute.

### 2. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Tuesday 30 April 2024 were signed by the Chair, subject to officers who were present at the meeting being included.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

### 4. Planning applications for determination by the Committee

#### 5. 20231097 - 25A Hunt Road Northfleet Gravesend Kent

The Committee considered application 20231097 - 25A Hunt Road Northfleet Gravesend Kent. The application was for the change the use of the existing first floor residential flat (C3 use) to be used as a Dentist (E (e) use), in conjunction with the existing ground floor dentist.

This would result in an additional 3 dentist surgery rooms on the first floor. No changes were proposed to the external appearance of the building.

Members were informed that the premises were located in the urban area of Gravesham within the Painters Ash Ward in Northfleet, where the Local Plan Core Strategy supported development, subject to the wider provisions of the Development Plan and material (planning) considerations. Hunt Road ran alongside Coldharbour Road and had a narrow provision for motor vehicles. This area did not have reserved parking but was for all highway users.

The Head of Planning highlighted key points from the report:

- The proposed changes to the ground floor were limited. The existing staircase would be moved to make space for storage areas for the existing surgery rooms. This would be possible by reducing the kitchen area. Upstairs would be reconfigured to include 3 additional dental surgery rooms, bringing the total number of surgery rooms in the practice to 5.
- Due to the nature of the plot, no onsite parking could be included within the site. The local Highways Authority (Kent County Council (KCC)) had identified that the local highway network could cope with the additional capacity, following the applicant submitting evidence of this in the form of a parking survey.
- KCC had requested that a travel plan be included via a condition, to promote sustainable modes of travel in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- There were currently 9 members of staff, but the proposed changes meant this would increase to 12. Currently the surgery could accommodate 30 patients per day but if approved, this would increase to 75. Currently the parking need per hour was for 10 parking spaces, however the changes would mean the additional need would increase. This was deemed acceptable by the local Highways Authority (KCC).
- The proposal would bring an additional 35 dental appointments per day to the area.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions for clarification:

- Members queried the location of the bus stops near to the surgery and whether the route connected with the town centre. The Head of Planning confirmed that the surgery was accessible by a local bus to and from the town centre, but the frequency could vary at times. He advised that the surgery was also accessible by foot. Members were informed that a travel plan would advertise alternative modes of transport to patients.
- Members referred to page 29 of the report and noted that if private vehicle usage exceeded 67% for staff and 84% for patients the owner would need to provide additional elements to mitigate the impact. Further clarity was sought on how this would be enforced and what the additional elements would be required. The Head of Planning confirmed that this would be covered by the details submitted as part of the condition and the applicant would be required to comply with any Travel Plan subsequently approved.
- It was noted that although there was public transport available within walking distance of the site, there was no natural crossing point and Members wondered if

safety had been considered. The Head of Planning reminded Members that the practice was already operating, so this would not be different from the current situation. The Highways Authority were aware of the additional patients and staff and no additional measures were required to improve access, from the Highway's Authority's perspective.

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

- Members queried how long the current practice had been operating and if there had been parking issues previously. The speaker advised the surgery had been practicing for 35-40 years and there were no parking issues he had been aware of.
- The Committee wondered how many more NHS patients the practice could serve if the proposal were to be permitted and whether there was a catchment area for the surgery. The speaker stated that currently 80% of the patients were NHS patients, but the aim was to increase this. The practice generally served those in the Northfleet and Gravesham area but as demand was high for NHS dentists, patients travelled from outside the area. Where possible the priority was to serve the local area.
- Members asked how the surgery could serve those with access issues or sight and hearing impairments. The speaker advised that those with access issues would be accommodated on the ground floor and they would incorporate the necessary provisions to be accessible to all. The speaker informed Members that staff at his current practice were fluent in sign language and this would be a skillset he would encourage.
- Members noted the 10 objections from local residents in relation to parking and asked if the speaker had engaged with the residents. The speaker had not done so but was open to further discussion with residents.
- Members queried the planned open hours of the surgery. The Head of Planning informed the Committee that alternative opening times were not a consideration for the application. If working hours were to change this would require a further application in the future.

The Committee heard the views of a registered speakers against the application and had their questions answered.

- Members queried if residents had additional parking to the rear of their properties. The speaker advised there was a car parking area, but this was not considered safe at night.

The Committee heard the views of Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox

Following a comment relating to the Travel Plan, The Head of Planning informed Members that the purpose of the travel plan was to ensure measures were put into place to mitigate the impact to the local parking issues.

The Committee were invited to make further comments:

- Members were in agreement of the importance of the Travel Plan, to manage the level of parking provision in the local vicinity and that staff should be encouraged to consider other modes of travel.

The Head of Planning stressed that the additional impacts would be assisted by the Travel Plan and that KCC were content with the additional requirement of parking spaces would not have a detrimental impact on the road network.

- It was noted that many companies were encouraged to produce carbon reduction plans, with car sharing being one way to achieve this. It was queried whether this could be incorporated into the travel plan. The Head of Planning agreed this approach was integral to the travel plan.
- It was appreciated that that there was a great need for NHS dental care.

**RESOLVED** that Planning PERMISSION is granted subject to conditions as set out within the report.

Note: Dr Mihir Shah (Applicant) spoke in favour of the application. Richard Gardiner (local resident) spoke against the application.

## **6. 20231186 - The Amazon And Tiger, Harvel Street, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0DE**

The Committee were presented with application 20231186 - The Amazon And Tiger, Harvel Street, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0DE. The application was for the intended change of use of a Public House known as Amazon and Tiger to a single residential dwelling.

The Team Leader highlighted key points from the report:

- Members were informed that the public house was located within an existing residential area in the Harvel Conservation area. The property currently had residential accommodation to the first floor.
- The property was listed as an Asset of Community Value. This was explained in greater detail in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.4 of the report.
- For clarity Members were advised that the attached B&B would remain and did not form part of the application.
- The Committee were informed of the proposed changes to repurpose the building into a single residential dwelling. This was explained further in paragraph 3.2 of the report.
- Members were advised that a key consideration of the application was whether the loss of a public house was acceptable. The report outlined that pub performed several important functions, including providing leisure, entertainment and community facilities, as well as employment opportunities. The importance of pubs was also reflected in policies within the Local Plan.

- It was noted that under CS10 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy, the applicant believed the pub should not be considered existing infrastructure, as it had been closed for several years, with the public house no longer being a viable business.  
However, prior to closure, The Amazon and Tiger played a key role in meeting the social infrastructure requirements of the local community. The closure of the public house and retirement of the landlord had coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. The evidence provided by the applicant was considered insufficient, in justifying that a viable public house could not be operated from the location. If approved the closure would mean the permanent loss of the communities' asset, which was contrary to the Development Plan and material (planning) considerations.
- Members were advised of the revised officer recommendation, which was that in the absence of evidence to clearly demonstrate that the existing public house is not viable, the proposal would result in the loss of a public house a community asset and existing social infrastructure. This would be contrary to Policies CS05, CS07 and CS10 of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014) and paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023). Recommendation was therefore for refusal.

The Chair asked for clarification as to how a property becomes a Asset of Community Value and who determined this. The Head of Planning gave a brief explanation, advising that an Asset of Community value was based on legislation introduced by Government in 2011 following a loss of public houses and other assets at the time. Local communities were given the opportunity to apply to have certain assets listed as a Community Asset. This meant that if the asset were to be marketed for sale, the local community would have the right to submit bids as part of the process plus the opportunity to purchase at a fair market value.

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

- Members queried the viability of the public house and whether promotional measures had been taken with entertainment and food offerings to entice the public. The speaker explained that in the past there had been a number of teams associated with the pub such as darts and quiz teams. He added that the teams stopped frequenting the premises, which impacted the viability of the public house. The speaker advised Members that the pub had not been viable for a considerable period of time due to various factors and did not provide an adequate income.
- Following comment from the speaker, that the report was misleading in regard to viability, Members sought clarification. The Team Leader assured Members that the report had not been misleading and was fully transparent. He also noted that the case officer had informed the applicant some time ago that the best course of action was to market the premises for sale.
- The chair noted that the speaker had verbally explained why he believed the pub was no longer financially viable but was reluctant to market the site to ascertain if alternative operators were interested in the public house.

The Committee heard to views of three registered speakers against the application.

The Committee were invited to make further comments:

- Members could understand the applicants position and sympathised with the situation but also recognised that for the community the pub was a valued community asset.
- The Committee agreed that the fact the property was an Asset of Community Value, was an consideration in determining the application.
- Members noted that as the site was in a remote location, the loss of such an asset would greatly impact the community. It was also acknowledged, if lost, the nearest public house would be in Trosley or Meopham.

**RESOLVED** that the application be REFUSED due to the revised reason for refusal as set out at Planning Committee.

Note: Michael Whitehouse (Applicant) spoke in favour of the application. Sherry Warrick, Justin Barrett and Trevor Jones (local residents) spoke against the application.

## **7. 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 8:21pm