

## MINUTES

of the

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

held on 13 April 2021 at 6:00pm

Present:

Councillor J A Sosin (Chair)

Councillors L Ashley, S Dobson, J Frasca, P Hughes, R Hyland, J Lardge, R Lee, G H J Pooley, R J Poulter, T E Roper, E Sampson, C Shaw and I Wright

Also present: Councillor N Chambers

### 1. Chair's Announcements

The Chair referred to the recent death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The Committee was also informed of the passing of Councillor Malcolm Watson. Councillor Wright paid tribute to Councillor Watson for his service to the Council and the people of Chelmsford.

The Committee observed two minutes' silence in memory of both.

### 2. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor H Ayres, who had appointed Councillor J Lardge as her substitute.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded that they must disclose any interests they knew they had in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. If the interest was a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting. Any declarations are recorded in the relevant minute below.

#### 4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### 5. Public Question Time

Questions and statements were made by members of the public, Parish Councils and ward councillors on several of the applications. Details are recorded under the relevant minute numbers below.

#### 6. 2A Coval Avenue, Chelmsford – 21/00121/FUL

Councillors Hyland, Pooley, Poulter and Shaw informed the Committee that they had sought the advice of the Monitoring Officer on whether their involvement with homelessness issues as part of their membership of the Housing Working Group and Chelmsford Policy Board precluded their consideration of this item. They had been advised that it did not and, none being predetermined, they would participate in the decision on it. Councillor Lardge said that she would be speaking as a ward councillor on the application and would not participate in its consideration as a member of the Committee.

The Committee considered an application for the change of use of 2A Coval Avenue, Chelmsford from a mother and baby unit to a hostel for single homeless persons and internal alterations to facilitate the proposed use. A Green Sheet of additions and alterations to the information in the report was distributed.

Questions and statements on the application from six members of the public, the applicants and a ward councillor were made at the meeting. The concerns of the public largely centred on a return of the anti-social behaviour associated with the previous uses of the property and the effect this would have on the health and wellbeing of existing residents and new residents of the hostel. Those who objected to the application also pointed to the lack of consultation with local residents, the absence of a detailed plan for the management of the facility, the fact that work on the building had started before the application had been determined, and that, in their opinion, this was not an appropriate site for the proposed use.

Representatives of Moat and CHESS spoke at the meeting and referred to the need for this type of accommodation in Chelmsford, their extensive experience in managing such facilities, and the close support that would be provided to those who would be occupying it.

Replying to the issues raised by those who had spoken against the application, the officers said that:

- It was recognised that some local residents had not yet been directly contacted by Moat and CHESS to discuss the proposed facility but it may be that the organisations had not been sure whether it was appropriate to do so before the application had been determined. However, it was clear that they did intend to engage with local residents if the application was approved.
- The property had previously been operated by different organisations for a different clientele and it was recognised that it had not been well run, resulting in disturbance to local residents. The homeless persons to be accommodated in the facility would have participated previously in the CHESS assessment process, would sign up to a code of conduct, be allocated a support worker and closely supervised, and would be occupying the property under a licence. Such arrangements and a detailed plan for the management of the property would reduce the possibility of a repeat of the anti-social behaviour associated with the previous uses of the premises.
- The work that had been carried out to the building were internal alterations that did not require planning permission.

Officers also noted that this was the only scheme of its type in Chelmsford that had received government funding for its provision.

The Committee was mindful of the balance that needed to be struck between meeting the need for this type of accommodation in Chelmsford and the duty it owed to residents to ensure that developments did not adversely affect their quality of life or result in a fear of crime. Members had sympathy for residents' experiences with previous uses of the premises but appreciated that properties managed by CHESS tended to be well run. They felt that residents' concerns would be alleviated if a condition was included in any permission that a management plan be submitted and approved prior to the occupation of the property and adhered to thereafter. Accepting officers' advice that adherence to the management plan would be difficult to enforce from a purely planning point of view, members nevertheless believed that this would reassure residents that Moat and CHESS were sincere in their intentions to ensure the proper management of the premises and behaviour of its residents.

RESOLVED that application 21/00121/FUL in respect of 2A Coval Avenue, Chelmsford be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting, as amended by the Green Sheet of additions and alterations, and the addition of a condition, to be drafted by the officers, that a management plan for the property be submitted and approved before its occupation and adhered to thereafter.

(6.12pm to 7.11pm)

### 7. 37 Goodwin Close, Great Baddow, Chelmsford – 21/00185/FUL

An application had been received in respect of 37 Goodwin Close, Great Baddow, Chelmsford for a part garage conversion and a first floor extension to the side and rear with dormer windows added. The application also involved a loft conversion with a flat roof rear dormer and addition of roof windows to the front.

RESOLVED that application 21/00185/FUL in respect of 37 Goodwin Close, Great Baddow, Chelmsford be approved, subject to the conditions set out in the report to the meeting.

(7.11pm to 7.15pm)

### 8. 214 Beeches Road, Chelmsford – 21/00149/FUL

The Committee had before it an application for the construction of a single storey granny annexe for ancillary use to the main dwelling at 214 Beeches Road, Chelmsford.

Whilst the development could result in some overshadowing of the allotment plot in the garden of the adjacent property, members felt on balance that the application was acceptable.

RESOLVED that application 21/00149/FUL in respect of 214 Beeches Road, Chelmsford be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting.

(7.15pm to 7.24pm)

### 9. Land South of Brewers Arms, Main Road, Bicknacre, Chelmsford – 20/01507/FUL

The Committee considered an application for a development of 42 residential dwellings with associated access, parking, landscaping and amenity space on land to the south of the Brewers Arms, Main Road, Bicknacre, Chelmsford. A Green Sheet of additions and alterations to the information in the report was distributed.

The agent for the applicant attended the meeting to speak in support of the application. Whilst not objecting to the proposed development, a member of the public asked that the drainage ditch from Thrift Wood to the site be kept clear to prevent flooding.

Officers informed the Committee that an increase in the number of properties on the site from the 35 referred to in the Local Plan to the 42 in the application had been possible as a result of additional land being provided by the Council on which to relocate the slow worms on the site. This had enabled a larger development that was acceptable in terms of density, layout, amenity and design. The affordable house element would be interspersed throughout the site with the private-owned properties and be of the same design.

From the point of view of biodiversity, officers explained how a net gain would be achieved by compensating for the loss of grassland, providing new and thickening up existing hedges to make up for the loss of some hedges, additional tree planting, improvements to Thrift Wood and providing a new habitat for slow worms.

Access for fire service vehicles was satisfactory and whilst open space would not be provided on the site, it was adjacent to an existing area of open space, which was being improved. A SUDS would ensure the adequate drainage of the site and no additional water would be discharged into the drainage ditch between Thrift Wood and the development site.

RESOLVED that application 20/01507/FUL in respect of land to the south of the Brewers Arms, Main Road, Bicknacre, Chelmsford be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting and the additional condition on the Green Sheet relating to the adaptation of one of the affordable homes.

(7.24pm to 7.53pm)

## 10. Pipers Farm, Mill Road, Good Easter, Chelmsford – 20/01900/FUL

The Committee considered a retrospective application for the change of use of land at Pipers Farm, Mill Road, Good Easter, Chelmsford from agricultural to storage and distribution (use class B8) and the addition of and extension to existing walls to form a covered structure with a roof incorporating a portacabin.

A representative of Good Easter Parish Council and the ward councillor attended the meeting to speak against the application. Their objections were that the infrastructure in the village was unsuitable for the increased traffic the scheme would generate; that, if approved, the initial change to scaffold yard activities could set a precedent and result in the use of Pipers Farm for a variety of industrial activities, creating further significant lorry traffic movements within the village and surrounding narrow lanes; that the proposed change of use conflicted with the rural nature of surrounding areas and was not in keeping with the residential nature of other properties in the vicinity; and that the proposed use was better located on a site designed for industrial use.

In response to those concerns, officers said that:

- It was not possible or appropriate to pre-empt the future possible uses of the site but if similar applications came forward an assessment would be made of their cumulative impact before deciding whether permission should be granted.
- In terms of the present application, the use of the site for a scaffolding business was appropriate in planning terms.
- The vehicles operated by the scaffolding business would be lighter and smaller than those previously associated with the farm use and would result in 15-20 movements a day, beginning with employees' vehicles arriving at 6am and the first lorries leaving

at 7am, which it was considered would not result in undue disturbance to local residents. There were many examples of similar operations in rural areas accessed by single roads and there were several passing places on the roads leading to the site.

Whilst not unanimous in its view, the Committee believed that the proposed use would be appropriate and the application should be approved.

RESOLVED that application 20/01900/FUL in respect of Pipers Farm, Mill Road, Good Easter, Chelmsford be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting.

(7.53pm to 8.29pm)

## 11. Planning Appeals Annual Report

RESOLVED that the information on appeal decisions between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 be noted.

(8.29pm to 8.30pm)

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Chair