

MINUTES

of the

PLANNING COMMITTEE

held on 9 July 2019 at 7:00 pm

Present:

Councillor J A Sosin (Chair)

Councillors L Ashley, H Ayres, S Dobson, P V Hughes, R J Hyland, R Lee,
G H J Pooley, R J Poulter, T E Roper, C Shaw, R J Shepherd,
M Springett and I Wright

Also present: Councillors K Bentley and J Lager

Apologies for absence: Councillor L Mascot

1. **Chair's Announcements**

For the benefit of the public, the Chair explained how the arrangements for the meeting and the basis on which the Committee would be making decisions on the applications before it.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. **Public Question Time**

Members of the public attended to ask questions and make statements on items 6 and 8 on the agenda. Details are recorded under the relevant minute numbers below.

4. **Declarations of Interests**

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) or other registerable interests where appropriate in any of the items of business on the meeting's agenda. Those declared are referred to in the relevant minute numbers below.

5. **Appointment of Vice Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor Ian Wright be appointed as the Vice Chair of the Committee for 2019/20.

6. **45-47 New Writtle Street, Chelmsford – 19/00481/FUL**

The Committee considered an application for the demolition of the existing church building on the site of 45-47 New Writtle Street, Chelmsford and the erection of eight single occupancy one-bedroom apartments. A Green Sheet of amendments and alterations was circulated which referred to the receipt of amended plans for the application.

Two members of the public and a local ward councillor attended to speak against the application. Their opposition centred on the following:

- The three-storey element of the development exceeded the height of the adjacent building at 44 New Writtle Street and in its scale and density was not appropriate to the area. It was contrary to Policies DC 37 and 45 and set a precedent for other developments on street corners.
- The design of the scheme and whether it had been assessed by an expert on design was questioned.
- The change of use of the church building represented the loss of a community facility.
- The development would add to pressure on parking in the area.
- There would be disturbance to neighbours from the use of the bin and bike storage areas.

A representative of the applicant said that the application was in a good location for such a development and was sustainable in that it was close to the city centre and transport links. The design was of a good quality and appropriate to its surroundings and there would be no adverse impact on the amenity of residents of nearby properties.

In response to the points made by those who had spoken, the officers told the Committee that:

- The scheme had been seen by a design expert, whose comments were displayed at the meeting. The development would not, in the officers' opinion, be harmful to the area.
- There were examples of other developments in Chelmsford involving adjacent two- and three-storey buildings that worked successfully.
- In relation to the three-storey element being overbearing, the planned building was not significantly larger than the existing structure.
- The site of the church had been marketed in 2017 and expressions of interest invited to continue that use. It had attracted no firm interest, however, mainly because of the lack of parking and the cost of renovating the existing building. The tests in existing policy relating to the loss of community facilities had been met in this case.
- The site was near the city centre and close to bus and rail services as well as shops. Residents of the development would not be eligible for parking permits.

During their discussion of the report, members' concerns and questions focused on the loss of a community facility, the adequacy of the amenity space in the new development; the relationship between the three-storey element and the two-storey buildings nearby; and the lack of parking.

The officers explained that the cost of renovating the present church was a factor in the lack of interest in preserving that use. The amenity area would be for the private use of the residents of the new develop and those living in the three-storey element would access it via the passageway between it and 44 New Writtle Street. The shape and location of it was dictated by the size, shape and location of the site. The one-storey element of the proposed scheme enabled the preservation of adequate light to the properties on New Writtle Street. Although residents of the development would not have parking permits, visitors' permits would be available. Developments of this type without parking had been successful elsewhere in the city.

Despite the reservations of some members about certain aspects of the scheme, the Committee felt that it had no sound policy grounds on which to refuse it.

RESOLVED that application 19/00481/FUL in respect of 45-47 New Writtle Street, Chelmsford be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting.

(7.06pm to 7.55pm)

7. **Land North of Car Park, Compass Gardens, Creekview Road, South Woodham Ferrers- 19/00279FUL**

Councillor P V Hughes declared a non-pecuniary interest in this application and withdrew from the meeting during its consideration.

An application had been submitted for the construction of a clubhouse and changing rooms on land near Compass Gardens, Creekview Road, South Woodham Ferrers currently used for recreational purposes.

In response to questions from members, officers informed the Committee that Creekview Road and Woodham Ferrers Road were already used for overspill parking when matches were taking place. It was likely that this development would create greater demand for parking. It was not known when future development in South Woodham Ferrers would be taking place and to what extent it would include facilities for sport. Whilst always seeking to be supportive of new recreational provision, the local planning authority required that it be in the correct location, which in this case it was not.

The Committee agreed that the proposal was in the wrong place but said that it could be considered again if a more suitable location was found.

RESOLVED that application 19/00279/FUL in respect of land north of the car park in Compass Gardens, Creekview Road, South Woodham Ferrers be refused for the reasons set out in the report to the meeting.

(7.55pm to 8.15pm)

8. **Ramsden Hall School, Heath Road, Ramsden Heath, Billericay – 19/00633/FUL**

The Committee had before it an application for the extension of the existing teaching block at Ramsden Hall School to provide new replacement and additional teaching facilities; the erection of a new replacement residential accommodation block; and associated soft and hard landscaping and replacement parking. A Green Sheet of amendments and alterations was circulated, which included an amendment to Condition 6 should the application be approved. The applicant's agent attended the meeting to speak in support of the application.

The Committee accepted the very special circumstances detailed in the report and outlined at the meeting for departing in this case from the policy of not granting permission for development that would be harmful to the Green Belt. It expressed the hope that the Victorian building on the site would continue to be used and preserved as a heritage asset.

RESOLVED that:

1. the Committee, being minded not to refuse application 19/00633/FUL in respect of Ramsden Hall School, Ramsden Heath, Billericay, refers it for consultation to the Secretary of State as required by Articles 9 and 10 (as development covered by Article 4) of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009; and
2. upon expiry of the 21 day period in which the Secretary of State has to respond from the date on which they confirm receipt of the material required under Article 10, or upon notification that the Secretary of State does not intend to intervene (if received sooner than the 21 day period), the Director of Sustainable Communities be authorised to grant the application, subject to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting, as amended by the Green Sheet.

(8.15pm to 8.41pm)

9. **Planning Appeals**

RESOLVED that the information on appeal decisions between 28 February and 28 June 2019 be noted.

(8.41pm to 8.43pm)

10. **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business brought before the Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.43pm.

Chairman