

MINUTES
of the
PLANNING COMMITTEE
held on 22 June 2021 at 7:00pm

Present:

Councillor J A Sosin (Chair)

Councillors L Ashley, K Bentley, S Dobson, J Lardge, R Lee,
G H J Pooley, R J Poulter, T E Roper, E Sampson, C Shaw and I Wright

Also present: Councillors M Steel and R Whitehead

1. Chair's Announcements

For the benefit of the public, the Chair explained the arrangements for the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors P Hughes and R J Hyland. The latter had appointed Councillor K Bentley as his 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 4 May 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

4A. Appointment of Vice Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor I Wright be appointed as Vice Chair of the Committee for 2021-22.

5. Public Question Time

Questions were asked and statements made on Items 6 and 7. Details are recorded under the relevant minute number below.

6. Fox and Hounds Public House, Church Road, Ramsden Heath, Billericay – 21/00482/FUL

The Committee considered a retrospective application for the erection of two marquees, a timber storage area/occasional stage and timber toilet structures comprising a male urinal enclosure and 13 unisex cubicles and hand wash facilities at the Fox and Hounds, Church Road, Ramsden Heath.

Members were advised that the structures were permitted to remain in place under temporary legislation introduced by the government in April 2020 to support public houses through the pandemic. That legislation granted temporary consent for moveable structures, such as marquees, until the end of January 2022. Given the important role of the structures in helping the pub to function and survive through the pandemic it was considered that in this case the buildings amounted to very special circumstances that would outweigh the harm that they would cause to the openness of the Green Belt. However, it would not be appropriate for the structures to be retained in the long term and it was therefore proposed that approval be granted on a temporary basis of one year.

A member of the public and a ward councillor attended the meeting to speak against the application. They referred to the disturbance to neighbours caused by live music events in the marquees which had resulted in complaints to Public Health and Protection, problems and safety concerns associated with vehicles parking in the vicinity of the pub, and the size of the structure, which it was felt was inappropriate for a public house in a quiet rural location. The Committee was urged not to grant the application, although it was recognised that the structures could be used until January 2022 without further permission.

Members were informed that the noise issues were a licensing rather than planning matter and could be enforced under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The car park of the public house could accommodate 26 vehicles and there were no parking restrictions on the roads in the vicinity of the premises. The adverse impact on the Green Belt was recognised but officers were recommending a temporary one year permission to allow for any extension of the government's temporary relaxation of planning restrictions on such structures.

The Committee was of the view that as the structures had been built without planning permission and were inappropriate development in the Green Belt formal permission for their continued use should not be granted. Members accepted, however, that they could remain in place until January 2022 under the present legislation. It was noted that as a detailed reason for refusal had been given at the meeting it would not be necessary on this occasion to defer the application for the consideration of detailed reasons.

RESOLVED that application 21/00482/FUL in respect of the Fox and Hounds, Church Road, Ramsden Heath, Billericay be refused on the grounds that it would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

(7.09pm to 7.40pm)

7. Land North-West of Montpelier Villa, Blasford Hill, Little Waltham – 20/01907/OUT

An outline application had been received for the construction of 10 dwellings with associated access on land to the north-west of Montpelier Villa, Blasford Hill, Little Waltham. Approval was specifically sought on access, appearance, layout and scale.

A local resident, a representative of Little Waltham Parish Council and a ward councillor attended the meeting to speak against the application. They had various reasons for opposing it, including that it was another in a series of piece-meal developments in the village and should not be considered in isolation from the adjacent development area (Strategic Growth Site Policy 8) allocated in the Local Plan; that this application and the development of the adjacent area would be an inappropriately large addition to a small parish; that it mainly comprised large houses and did not provide much needed smaller units of accommodation; that it would add to the congestion already being experienced on adjacent roads and gave rise to concerns over the safety of the access to the site; and that the design and density of the development proposed in the application would not be in keeping with the rest of Blasford Hill.

Responding to those points, officers said that the development would be a mix of three-, four- and five-bed units, all of which, it had been demonstrated, were required in Chelmsford and were typical of a rural location. The strip of land around the site separated it from the allocation site and meant that they could not be developed together and each required separate access. However, this development respected and complemented the masterplan for strategic growth site 8 and whilst the mix of housing was slightly different, it was not radically so. There was also no standard mix of house types and sizes in Blasford Hill. The proposed boundary treatment would reduce the impact of noise from the adjacent site currently used as a scaffolding business, although a member expressed concern at the proposed use of mechanical ventilation systems to reduce noise further in some of the properties.

During members' discussion of the application the view was expressed that the proposed density of the development at 25 units per hectare was insufficient and that it did not provide a sufficient number of much needed smaller units. Officers said that following government advice the previous lower limit of 30 units per hectare had been removed from local planning policies and that in the case of this site the density was appropriate when the space required for turning heads, landscaping etc was taken into account.

The Committee concluded that it had no reasonable grounds for refusing the application.

RESOLVED that the Director of Sustainable Communities be authorised to approve application 20/01907/OUT in respect of land to the north-west of Montpelier Villa, Blasford Hill, Little Waltham, subject to a Section 106 Agreement being entered into and to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting.

(7.40pm to 8.36pm)

8. Chelmer Waterside Access, Wharf Road, Chelmsford – 21/00024/FUL

The Committee considered an application for a single carriageway road, bridge and associated works from Wharf Road to Badow Road to provide access to the emerging Chelmer Waterside neighbourhood.

The Committee was told that measures would be taken to reduce the possibility of the new road being used as a rat-run and that the use of the road would be kept under review and that the height of the bridge would be sufficient for the majority of waterborne traffic to pass under it. The cycle and pedestrian route would be segregated and connect to other routes, and surface materials would be in keeping with those intended for such routes in the rest of the city centre. The number of parking spaces for the Waterside development would be kept to a minimum.

RESOLVED that application 21/00024/FUL in respect of the access road to Chelmer Waterside from Wharf Road to Baddow Road be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the report to the meeting.

(8.36pm to 8.58pm)

9. No. 117 Lady Lane, Chelmsford – 21/00316/FUL

The Committee considered a retrospective application for a loft conversion with the raising of roof, rear dormer, front skylights, side window and front porch in respect of 117 Lady, Lane, Chelmsford.

RESOLVED that application 21/00316/FUL in respect of 117 Lady Lane, Chelmsford be approved, subject to the condition detailed in the report to the meeting.

(8.58pm to 9.11pm)

10. Planning Appeals

RESOLVED that the information on appeal decisions between 21 April and 7 June 2021 be noted.

(9.11pm to 9.12pm)

The meeting closed at 9.12pm

Chair