

PLANNING COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Thursday 26th March 2015

Time: 10.00 – 11.45am

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Councillors B Ashwood, D Connor (Chairman), W Hunt, S Kindersley, A Lay, M Loynes, M Mason, M Smith (Vice-Chairwoman) and J Whitehead

114. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Jenkins, J Scutt (Councillor Whitehead substituting) and K Reynolds.

There were no declarations of interest.

115. MINUTES – 26TH FEBRUARY 2015

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 26th February 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

116. ERECTION OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY RANGING IN HEIGHT FROM ONE TO TWO STOREYS; SOFT AND HARD PLAY AREAS; SPORTS PITCHES; CAR AND CYCLE PARKING; LANDSCAPING; AND ASSOCIATED WORKS. AT: ALCONBURY AIRFIELD, ERMINE STREET, LITTLE STUKELEY, PE28 4WX FOR: CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL LPA REF: H/5000/15/CC

The Committee considered an application for the construction of a primary school and nursery ranging in height from one to two storeys, soft and hard play areas, sports pitches, car and cycle parking, landscaping and associated works. The outcome of consultations, planning policies, planning history and land use planning considerations were all taken into account. Plans and photos were shown, illustrating the location of the site and various elements of the site, in relation to the planned development, landscape and open space, and the location in relation to the highway network.

It was noted that this was not identified in Huntingdonshire's existing local plan, so was technically classified as a departure from the local plan. However, it was included in the emerging plan which was at pre-submission stage. The drainage scheme was subject to a holding objection from the Environment Agency, who would not approve the drainage scheme for the school before they had approved the drainage scheme for the entire site. However, Members were given an oral update at the meeting to state that the Environment Agency had confirmed to Huntingdonshire District Council that they were content with the site wide scheme submitted as part of the Alconbury Weald planning application, so approval of the site wide drainage scheme to help inform the drainage scheme for this school application should be a step closer. Either way the proposed planning condition for the school's drainage scheme would ensure that this matter would be approved prior to any development taking place.

A number of amendments were tabled to the report, including amendments to the conditions which updated those contained within Paragraph 8.1 of the main report. A full list of the amended planning conditions can be seen in the appendix at the end of this document.

Arising from the report, Members:

- asked who would manage the public realm space which linked the school to the residential development via the green corridor. It was confirmed that Urban & Civic were currently the managers, but ownership may change. However, Urban & Civic had demonstrated that the public realm space was important and there would be strong legacy support;
- commented that the drainage issues were critical, given that Cambridgeshire County Council was the lead flood authority for the county;
- noted that it was envisaged that the majority of children would not be taken to school by car, due to the proximity of the residential housing serving the site, but there was a community car park to the north of the site that could be used by those who did travel by car. A Member commented that inevitably a number of parents would drive their children to the school. Officers confirmed that every effort would be made to encourage parents from the new development to walk, but it was acknowledged that it was not possible to control everyone's behaviour.

Lisa Skinner spoke on behalf of applicant, supported by the architect Alex Russell of AHMM Architects. She explained how they had worked closely with the District Council and developer, particularly on the siting, design, public realm aspects, transport, landscaping and ecology. The community and sports facilities would be included in this phase 1 development of the school. The site presented the unique opportunity of using the heritage of the airfield, with the school at the end of the former runway, and the school taking advantage of different vistas. A modern approach had been taken with the external appearance of the school. The green corridor aimed to encourage safe walking and cycling. There would be a lot of emphasis on avoiding car usage in the new community. There had been an extensive engagement process, including a public exhibition held at the airfield. Local residents were supportive of the proposals.

Committee Members asked Ms Skinner and Mr Russell the following questions:

- noting the report made mention of photovoltaic cells on the roof of the school, asked what proportion of the roof would be covered by the panels, and what other sustainable energy measures were incorporated into the proposals e.g. ground source heat? It was confirmed that the proposal included approximately 100m² of photovoltaic (PV) cells on the roof, exceeding the standards for primary schools. It had been concluded that PV cells were the most cost effective renewable energy measure that could be used on the site, and the issues with other measures such as biomass, CHC, windpower were outlined. The PV cells covered approximately a third of the first floor roof, and it was confirmed that there would be no further PV cells for later phases of the school;
- observed that the cycle sheds were a long way from the main entrance. Ms Skinner confirmed that the front door was mainly for school visitors – children would go directly to their classrooms, and would not ordinarily use the main entrance. The site for the cycle sheds was the most appropriate, secure location;

- sought clarification on storage facilities for community use. The speakers outlined the storage facilities that had been incorporated into the building for school and community use;
- queried the relationship of the school relative to Key Phase 1, the Alconbury Weald development as a whole, and the neighbouring villages. The Member noted the query from The Stukeleys Parish Council on whether children from that village would be able to attend the Primary School. He also highlighted the negative experience at Orchard Park resulting from locating the school at one end of the development. Ms Skinner confirmed that the school was to serve Alconbury Weald, and was being built in two phases, so that it grew as the development grew. Further primary schools were planned as the development expanded. Whilst the school's catchment area would be restricted to that part of Alconbury Weald, parents from outside the area would be able to apply if there were vacancies. The location had been carefully chosen so that it was not easy to drive to and so that it was not "behind a fence" but part of the wider community;
- queried the proposed tree planting, specifically the maintenance of the trees after the initial planting and the removal of existing low quality trees, commenting that the existing species were usually those most suited to the location. It was confirmed that the arboricultural report was available for inspection, and officers showed plans illustrating the locations and species planned for the site, and Ms Skinner advised that the existing trees were poor quality and would be removed. Members noted the biodiversity proposals for the site, including bird and bat boxes. It was confirmed that there was no evidence of bats on site, but there was on the wider development. Amended Condition 6 (previously 7 in the main report) protected breeding birds during the construction phase, and biodiversity and ecological plans were included in amended Condition 9 (previously 12 in the main report);
- asked about the neutral external colour of the school, and suggested a brighter colour would be more appropriate for a primary school. The architect outlined the proposals and reasoning for the elevational treatments, and explained how bright colours would be used extensively in the interior. It was also noted that the exterior colour and design of the school aimed to keep the site sympathetic with its surroundings and heritage. A sample of the external material was also shown to Members at this point, as the colouring of the material and its ability to reflect the light and weather the elements was not easily demonstrated by the plans being presented by officers;
- queried the use of communal toilets, commenting that most children and parents preferred separate toilets for boys and girls. It was noted that the preferences for the early stages of primary school was for unisex facilities, becoming segregated later in the primary phase.

In discussion, Members:

- welcomed the proposals but expressed disappointment that the opportunity had not been taken to make the school fully sustainable in terms of energy requirements, and also expressed disappointment about the proposals for the public realm space, which took some matters out of the school's hands e.g. security;
- expressed some concerns about the likely level of traffic in the streets adjacent to the school. Officers reassured Members that the nearby streets would serve a relatively modest number of properties, and that the commercial zone had its own access;

- queried the provision of scooter parking, suggesting that scooters may just be a passing fad. Officers advised that scooters had been popular with young children for 10-15 years, and having secure scooter parking at school had been welcomed by both pupils and parents at other schools;
- stressed the experience at other developments of badly installed drainage systems, and commented that there was a possible issue with different phases coming forward. Officers advised that they were aware of those implications, which was why Alconbury Weald had a site wide strategy to ensure consistency across the whole development, which was also the reason for the Environment Agency's holding objection, as they wanted to see the site wide strategy. Every effort was made to ensure that when management companies were proposed, that they were financially viable. If that posed a problem, the County Council would take on the SuDS responsibilities, funded by commuted sums. Every effort was being made through S106 agreements to ensure that drainage would be comprehensively covered, and no development would commence until the drainage position had been appropriately aligned;
- stressed that the remaining condition in relation to security at the school site (amended Condition 8 for CCTV equipment) should involve liaison with the relevant police consultee prior to approval. It was confirmed that this would be the case.

It was resolved unanimously:

that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions (as amended) set out in the appendix.

**117. SUBMISSION OF DETAILS PURSUANT TO CONDITION 8 OF PLANNING PERMISSION REFERENCE S/0461/14/CW: LAND ADJACENT TO ROYSTON SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS, A505, MELBOURN, ROYSTON SG8 5JT
APPLICANT: WINTERS HAULAGE LIMITED
LPA REF: S/0461/14/CW/C1**

The Committee received a report on a condition relating to the access to a site where planning permission had been granted, with the requirement to submit details of the proposed site access improvements. Members were reminded that they had considered the original application in July 2014, but at that time had expressed concerns about the vehicular access to the site. Although the site was in Cambridgeshire, the access road led directly on to the A505 north of Royston, which was in Hertfordshire. Details had subsequently been submitted by the applicant, including details of the upgrading of the deceleration lane off the A505, which was being widened slightly and increased in length to 70 metres.

The applicant had discussed the possibility of an acceleration lane with Hertfordshire County Councils (HCC) Highways team, and the proposed junction improvements had been subject to a Road Safety Audit (RSA) by that authority. HCC had concluded that an acceleration lane would have a higher risk profile than the current practice of allowing vehicles egressing from the site and joining the A505 to wait for a suitable gap in the traffic. The possibility of vehicles being stranded on an acceleration lane which was too short was seen as a greater risk than the current arrangements. There were also physical impediments to constructing such an acceleration lane, specifically a ditch running alongside the main carriageway. In response to Member questions, it was clarified that the deceleration lane totalled 70 metres in length, and that there were approximately 40 HCV movements per day (both laden and unladen).

Councillor Kindersley was very disappointed with the assertion by HCC that the current junction was preferable to an acceleration lane, and the lack of supporting evidence to back up this statement. He felt that the reasoning was counterintuitive, and added that his experience of the junction, and that of local residents as recorded in the local press, was that this solution would result in a nasty accident. He acknowledged that the topography was difficult, but added that these difficulties were not insurmountable. All Committee Members expressed their support for Councillor Kindersley's views. One Member asked if the HCC Highways team had considered alternatives, e.g. identifying the nearside lane of the A505 at this location for access/egress to the site. Officers commented that as part of the RSA, it was likely that alternatives would have been explored. However, Officers were unable to comment on behalf of HCC. Whilst noting that the HCC Highways officer had declined to attend, and that they appeared to have had little notice, Members expressed strong disappointment that the officer had not attended to justify and explain their position. The Committee was reminded that it could not compel officers from another authority who had given a view to attend the meeting.

In terms of process, officers advised that if the application was turned down on these grounds and went to appeal, this issue would have to be assessed by consultants. It was very unlikely that consultants would go against the formal response of an authority's professional highway team. It was further noted that the relevant Highways Authority who had responsibility for that highway had made their position clear and subsequently revisited the decision and held that position. It was also noted that the applicant could appeal on the grounds of non-determination after eight weeks, or upon the date of any agreed extension, which is a risk, although Members considered that it could not be seen as unreasonable or reckless for the Committee to request further information.

It was agreed that the decision would be deferred on the basis of further information being sought from HCC on alternatives they have considered before coming to any conclusion that the acceleration lane was unnecessary and unsafe. The HCC officers would also be invited to attend to explain their reasoning, including the detail behind the Road Safety Audit. Members' attention was drawn to the wording of the last sentence of Condition 8, which stated that "*The submitted scheme shall consider the need for an improved deceleration lane and provision of an acceleration lane at the junction*", and it was reiterated that the HCC officers had considered this option but it was not seen as a suitable solution. Officers also reiterated that they cannot compel officers to attend from another authority, although an invitation would be sent out following this meeting to provide the date of the next planning committee in order to provide as much notice as possible.

It was resolved unanimously:

to defer the decision on the basis of further information being sought from Hertfordshire County Council.

118. SUMMARY OF DECISIONS MADE UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

The Committee received a report on decisions made under delegated powers between 18th February 2015 and 18th March.

The Committee resolved to note the report.

119. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY 23rd APRIL 2015

APPENDIX

1. It is recommended that the following amendments be made to the listed conditions:

1. Expiry Date of Permission

The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Approved Plans

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following documents and drawings received 08 January 2015:

- Planning and Heritage Statement January 2015
- Design and Access Statement December 2014
- Site Location Plan 002
- Site Plan 000
- Proposed Block Plan 003
- Access and Circulation Plan 1430/LL/103 rev B
- Security Strategy 1430/LL/102 rev B
- General Arrangement Ground Floor Plan 100 rev 03
- First Floor Plan 101 rev 03
- Forecourt Elevation 201 rev 03
- South facing Elevations 202 rev 03
- North Facing Elevations 203 rev 03
- Gable End Elevations 204 rev 03
- Central Hall Elevations 205
- Section A-A 301 rev 02
- Section B-B 302 rev 02
- Section C-C 303 rev 02
- Landscape Design Proposals November 2014
- Ecological Management Plan November 2014
- Ecological Assessment Report November 2014
- Soft Landscape and Maintenance Programmes November 2014
- Landscape Layout Plan 1430/LL/101 rev E
- Planting Plan – South 1430/LP/301 rev C
- Planting Plan – North 1430/LP/302 rev C
- Energy and Sustainability Report rev B November 2014
- Transport Statement March 2015 rev C
- External Lighting Layout EDC-E-27-00-01 rev P2
- Luminaire Schedule-External Lighting

Reason: To define the site and protect the character and appearance of the locality in accordance with policy En25 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) and policy LP15 of the Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Stage 3 (2013).

3. Boundary Wall

No development shall take place until an elevation drawing of the “garden wall” boundary shown on Security Strategy 1430/LL/102 has been submitted and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority in consultation with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer. The revised design shall include amendments to the “portholes” to ensure that this is a safe and secure boundary.

Reason: In the interests of safety and security and in accordance with CS1 of the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (2009).

4. Drainage Scheme

No development shall take place until a revised drainage scheme has been approved in writing by the County Planning Authority in consultation with Environment Agency.

Reason: in the interests of reducing flood risk and creating a sustainable development and in accordance with CS1 of the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (2009).

5. Construction Hours

No construction work or deliveries shall be carried out other than between 0800 hours and 1800 hours Monday to Friday, 0800 hours and 1300 hours on Saturday and at no time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in accordance with policy En25 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) and policy LP15 of the Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Stage 3 (2013).

6. Protection of Breeding Birds During Construction

No removal of hedgerows or trees shall take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation for active birds’ nests immediately before the vegetation is cleared and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. Any such written confirmation shall be submitted to the County Planning Authority prior to the removal of any vegetation.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity enhancement and protection and in accordance with policy En18 of Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) and policy LP29 of the Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Stage 3 (2013).

7. Ground Contamination

No development shall take place until a verification report has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the County Planning Authority in consultation with Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Protection in accordance with the following:

- Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental Ground Investigation – Final Factual Report November 2014
- Ground Investigation Interpretative Report (Geoenvironmental) November 2014
- Remedial Strategy and Implementation Plan for the School Site October 2014

Reason: To ensure that contaminated land has been properly dealt with and in accordance with CS1 of the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (2009).

8. Recorded CCTV

No occupation of the development shall take place until a scheme for Recorded CCTV has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in full and maintained in perpetuity.

Reason: In the interests of safety and well-being of pupils, staff and visitors and to assist in prevention of crime and antisocial behaviour in accordance with CS1 of the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (2009).

9. Landscaping and biodiversity enhancement and maintenance

If within a period of 5 years from the date of planting of any tree, that tree, or any tree planted in replacement for it, is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, or, in the opinion of the County Planning Authority, becomes seriously damaged or defective, another tree of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted in the same place during the next available planting season, unless the County Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: In the interest of landscape character and nature conservation in accordance with policy LP29 of the Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Stage 3 (2013).

10. Travel Plan

Within 12 months of the occupation of the development a revised school Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented in full.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and sustainable travel in accordance with policy LP17 of the Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Stage 3 (2013).

11. BREEAM certificate

Within 12 months of the first occupation of the development a certificate following a post-construction review shall be issued to the County Planning Authority by an approved BREEAM Assessor indicating that a BREEAM rating of Very Good or better has been met. In the event that such a rating is replaced by a comparable national measure of sustainability for building design, the equivalent level of measure shall be applicable to the proposed development.

Reason: In the interests of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and promoting the principles of sustainable construction and efficient use of buildings in accordance with LP14 of the Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Stage 3 (2013).