

Western Area Planning Committee

MINUTES OF THE WESTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2023 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Christopher Newbury (Chairman), Cllr Bill Parks (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Trevor Carbin, Cllr Ernie Clark, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Stewart Palmen, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr David Vigar and Cllr Suzanne Wickham.

Also Present:

Cllr Jane Davies.

1 **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Edward Kirk.

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2022 were presented, and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations from members of the Committee.

During the meeting Councillor Jane Davies, speaking in respect of application PL-2021-10237, declared her role as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND, and Inclusion.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman gave details of the exits to be used in the event of an emergency.

5 **Public Participation**

The procedure for public participation and consideration of applications was detailed.

6 **Planning Appeals and Updates**

Kenny Green, Development Management Area Team Leader, presented an update on planning appeals as detailed in the agenda papers.

It was then,

Resolved:

To note the Planning Appeals Update Report.

7 **Planning Applications**

The Committee considered the following application.

7a PL-2021-10237 - The Old Vicarage and Staverton House, 51a New Terrace, Staverton, BA14 6NX

Public Participation

Alan Finn spoke in objection to the application.
Eric Anderson spoke in objection to the application.
Ashley Jones spoke in support of the application.
Claire Turner spoke in support of the application.
Rob Gillespie spoke in support of the application.

David Cox, Senior Planning/Conservation Officer, presented a report recommending that permission be granted for the demolition of the old Vicarage former care home (whilst retaining Staverton House care home) and approve the erection of a replacement building that would provide (alongside the existing Staverton House accommodation) up to 52 bedrooms for people requiring dementia care. The case officer informed members of several typographical errors set out within the published report and advised that following its publication, three additional representations has been received, but nothing new had been raised.

Prior to the committee meeting, a member site visit had taken place earlier in the afternoon which allowed the case officer to walk committee members around the site and point out site specifics and neighbouring properties.

Key issues for the determination of the application included the principle of development, the scale and design of the proposal, the loss of the Victorian former Vicarage building (which officers consider merited non designated heritage asset status) and its impact on the streetscene and neighbouring amenity.

The case officer also pointed to the growing demand for care home placements, and in particular, for those with dementia. The limitations of the Old Vicarage building were also noted in terms of satisfying modern care home standards and operational needs; and the report referenced its closure for these reasons.

Measures proposed to mitigate the impacts of the replacement building were explained, which included negotiated aspects secured through revised plans to reuse some of the old stonework, window and surrounds and introduce bay windows into what would be a new road facing elevation.

Members were informed that the reported and recommended conditions required some amendment to condition 10 to reference No.52 alongside No.50b, and to impose a no dig restriction around all the retained trees on the site as an additional planning condition.

Members of the Committee then had the opportunity to ask technical questions of the officer. An explanation and details were sought on the recommended imposition of obscure glazing on the eastern side elevation of what would be the three-storey central link building, and further clarity was sought on the consequential impacts on the amenity of neighbouring residents as well as the implications for future residents of the care home.

Questions were asked about the re-use of the existing stone of the Old Vicarage and on how the number of proposed parking places to be included on the site had been calculated.

Members of the Public then had the opportunity to address the Committee with their views and concerns as detailed above.

Councillor Jane Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, then spoke regarding the application, noting the shortage of specialised dementia care in Wiltshire and the rising demand. The committee also heard about the inability to retrofit some existing care homes to meet modern requirements which had in this case, led to the old Vicarage no longer being used for nursing care, resulting in the loss of 20 bedrooms.

A point was raised about the Cabinet Member addressing the Committee on the application. Officers advised that there was no issue regarding the Cabinet Member providing their view of the factors relevant to the application, and it remained for the Committee to assess it on its planning merits.

The Local Member, Councillor Trevor Carbin, then spoke in objection to the application, noting the history of the site and the construction of the old Vicarage that had come about following community action in 1860 and although the building has been extended with conservatories and other modern interventions, its essential architectural form contributing positively within the streetscene and local character, and the officer view of it meriting non designated heritage asset status, was supported.

It was also acknowledged, as set out in the committee report, that planning judgement was required in terms of weighing up the loss of the non-designated heritage asset of the Old Vicarage, and the planning merits and impacts of the new building. Councillor Carbin set out his concerns about the cumulative impacts on surrounding properties, and whilst accepting there was a growing need for providing more care home accommodation, the role of the committee

centred on evaluating the planning merits and assess the application against the relevant planning policies set out in the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy and the NPPF.

Councillor Carbin proposed that the application should be refused on neighbouring amenity impact and design grounds by virtue of its bulk (especially the three-storey element) and its relationships with neighbouring properties – citing a policy conflict with CP57 and NPPF paragraph 130; and, in addition, the application would result in the loss of an important non-designated heritage asset that would not result in a new building of higher quality or conserve local distinctiveness and character. The demolition aspect was not supported citing CP57, CP58 and NPPF paragraph 203. The motion to refuse was seconded by Councillor Ernie Clark.

The Committee then debated the application. The existing use of the site and its impact on amenity was discussed, along with the amenities for future occupants of the care home. Additional potential reasons for refusal were discussed, along with the acknowledging the growing need for care home provision, but it was concluded that this application must be determined on planning grounds.

At the conclusion of debate, it was then,

Resolved:

To REFUSE planning permission for the following reasons:

The proposed development by virtue of its bulk and design and relationship with the site's immediate neighbours, is considered unacceptable and in conflict with adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 57 and NPPF paragraph 130. The proposal would not result in a high quality of development or be complementary to the locality. The proposal would result in a material loss of amenity to neighbouring properties through overbearing and overlooking and the proposed demolition of the Old Vicarage building would result in the unacceptable loss of a non-designated heritage asset that contributes positively to the character of the village contrary to WCS Core Policy 57, 58 and NPPF paragraph 203.

8 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 3.00 - 4.45 pm)

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