

NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JULY 2015 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM.

Present:

Cllr Tony Trotman (Chairman), Cllr Peter Hutton (Vice Chairman), Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Mark Packard, Cllr Sheila Parker, Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cllr Chuck Berry and Cllr Howard Greenman

65 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mollie Groom and Howard Marshall.

66 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a true and correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015.

67 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

68 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

69 **Public Participation and Councillors' Questions**

The Committee noted the rules on public participation.

70 **Planning Applications**

71 **14/12070/FUL - The Park, High Street, Sutton Benger, Wiltshire, SN15 4RQ**

The Planning Officer introduced the report which recommended that authority to grant planning permission be delegated to the Area Development Manager subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement to address on site affordable housing provision and subject to conditions. The application was for a residential development comprising 13 dwellings with associated gardens, parking, drainage, and landscaping. It was noted that the site was previously developed land and located within framework boundary of the village.

The proposal was considered to be of high quality design with good boundary treatments and was well received by local residents. The Planning Officer highlighted that a stream was situated to the north of the site. It was explained and there had been previous issues with flooding but that the proposal and previous phase of development had improved drainage in the locality; the Drainage Officer had no objections to the current proposal.

There were some initial concerns from internal consultees regarding the design and character of the original proposal and it was noted that the applicant had made revisions in response to these. The Planning Officer drew attention to late items which demonstrated that the Trees Officer and Urban Design Officer had no objections to the revised proposal.

It was explained that the Affordable Housing Team had sought and received plans to meet the local demand for affordable housing. The current proposal would provide 40% affordable housing which was considered to meet local need by the Affordable Housing Team; it was highlighted that this was a relevant material consideration under government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Planning Officer commented that marketing had been required to safeguard existing business uses under the North Wiltshire Local Plan policy BD 2 to establish whether there was continued demand for employment use. The marketing of this site had been undertaken for a period of 18 months and all forms of commercial operation had been advertised. It was clarified that one relevant expression of interest had been received but that it had been dismissed by the site owner as below market value. It was also highlighted that marketing for such a change of use was no longer required under the Wiltshire Core Strategy policy, which was adopted on 20 January 2015. The key dispute between the applicant and officers was the valuation placed on the land. Officer went on to identify that there were a range of material circumstances and considerations in favour of the development proposal that must be weighed in the balance against the harm identified. On balance officer considered that at the current time the benefits outweighed the harm and justified a departure from the development plan.

The Committee then had the opportunity to ask technical questions and it was confirmed that the marketing carried out by the applicant had been reviewed in detail by Estates and Economic Development and was considered to be sufficient.

The Committee questioned if similar employment land and buildings nearby were available or had been sold and it was confirmed that there were such buildings in the locality and that these had not been sold but had been vacant for quite some time.

The Committee enquired how market value was established. It was explained that market value was calculated by local estate agents with experience and knowledge of the market value of properties of the area and in reference to the value of comparable sites that had recently been sold. It was noted that there was only one relevant comparable site in this instance that officers could identify.

It was clarified that the site had been marketed as a single site with no explicit consideration of multiple smaller sites or units of accommodation in varied uses. However, it was highlighted that the site had been marketed for all commercial uses.

The Planning Officer explained that the North Wiltshire Local Plan, which required the marketing procedure in this application under BD2 (safeguarding existing business uses), had now been replaced by the newly adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy. It was highlighted that under Core Policy 35 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, there was no requirement to market this land for employment purposes. However, it was advised that the Core Strategy was currently under review.

The local member, Cllr Howard Greenman, explained that Sutton Benger was a first tier sustainable community and was identified as a large village in the Wiltshire Core Strategy. It was explained that many local residents had understood that the commercial use site would eventually house a shop for the village. It was hoped that this would help to accommodate the residences that had already been built in the area.

The local member also drew attention to the fact that Sutton Benger was to have its first Neighbourhood Plan meeting on 15 July 2015 and urged the Committee to take account of local demand in considering this application.

In the debate that followed, the Committee noted that the marketing exercise for employment land was no longer required under the Wiltshire Core Strategy. However, it was suggested that the creation of jobs in all large villages was vital to ensure sustainable communities and that the market for smaller start up units had been overlooked, notably as superfast broadband was being rolled out in the area.

The Committee considered a proposal that there was insufficient evidence regarding whether or not there was suitable employment land for other smaller units in the area.

Resolved:

To DEFER to receive further information in respect of the currently available employment space in the locality and details in respect of the marketing of the site undertaken to date with particular reference to small employment units providing flexible workspace for new small businesses. To receive from the applicant clarification of how the site was marketed and whether or not the exercise included provision for such flexible workspace and what response was received in that respect.

Members clarified that no time limit as to a further report to Committee was identified; members confirmed that additional marketing was not being required.

72 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 3.00 - 3.55 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Fiona Rae, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 712681, e-mail fiona.rae@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115