



Strategic Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee held at Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester on Monday 20 March 2023 at 2.20 pm.

Present:

Councillor Phil Bignell (Chair)
Councillor Ann Addison (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jonathan Harris
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Councillor David James
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Jake Roberts
Councillor John Shephard

Also Present:

Henry Scalon
Tiffany Gullan
David Laight
Paul Carvey
Mark Higgs
James Blackburn
5 Members of the Public

The commencement of the meeting was delayed due to a public disturbance.

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor James Hill
Councillor Cathrine Russell

Officers:

Neil Weeks, Planning Solicitor
Diana Davies, Democratic Services Officer
Rebecca Grant, Major Projects Officer
Andrew Longbottom, Principal Planning Officer
Chuong Phillips, Principal Planning Officer
James Rodger, Development Management Manager
Adam Walker, Principal Planning Officer

113. Minutes

That the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee of 20 February 2023 would be brought to the next meeting.

114. **Chair's Announcements**

In response to Strategic Planning Committee members requests, a meeting had been arranged on 4 April 2023 to brief members on the Application number: DA/2020/0100.

115. **WND/2022/0243 Land off Rugby Road, Kilsby**

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the information in the report, provided a presentation which included maps and photographs from various vantage points of the proposed site and illustrative view to give context and advised that:

- The Oxford Canal walk was the nearest rural right of way to the site, it followed the canal and Conservation Area
- Solar panels would be laid out in long rows across the fields positioned to face south, set at a 25 degree angle, with the highest point of the panels being up to 2.7m metres above ground level and the lower part of the panel at 0.7 metres
- 2.0 metre high stock-proof fence, with perimeter CCTV on 3 metre high poles
- Would help to maximise the generation of energy needs from renewable sources, would continue use as agricultural land for sheep grazing. The site would be fully restored to agricultural use after 35 years
- Proposed enhancement of the local landscape character has been set out within the Landscape Strategy and Landscape and Ecology Management Plan; infill planting of hedgerow with local native species and implementation of and management of existing hedgerows as well as grasslands beneath the proposed panels
- Would utilise the existing access routes
- Publicly accessible views from the area surrounding the site had been assessed and would be visible but considered to have minor impact.
- A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan had been submitted to support and secure the recommended measures and long-term monitoring and management of the proposals.
- Any potential flooding risks had been satisfactorily addressed by the application
- Highway had no objection to the application and had recommended conditions be applied to ensure the site access was suitable for construction vehicles
- Conditions had been applied to protect the biodiversity of the site with the recommendation that works would be subject to consultation with ecological advisors
- The connection to the grid would be via underground cables.

Henri Scanlon read out a statement, on behalf of Peter and Anne Bain, in support of the application and indicated that the Country required carbon free electrical supply and the low-lying land was, currently, of limited arable value.

Tiffany Gullan, the applicant, addressed the committee in support of the application and indicated that the site would provide clean renewal energy and provide a

significant contribution towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and would have an ecological and financial benefit to the community.

In response to members questions the applicant responded:

- Business rates payable on the solar farm, would be in the region of £2,000 per annum
- The capability of electricity generated on the site had been designed in line with Western Powers capacity. Assurances had been received
- The inverter would be located at the centre of the site to minimise the noise, a constant low hum of 25db and would not run through the night.

During the course of the discussion Members considered:

- Impact on the local amenity
- Effects on the landscape
- Location of the site
- Ecology and biodiversity
- Decommissioning of the site and reversion to agricultural land.

In reaching its decision, the Committee considered the officer's report, presentation, and representations.

Councillor Harris proposed the application be approved, the proposition was seconded by Councillor Pritchard and on being put to the meeting was declared carried unanimously.

Resolved:

That the delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director for Planning and Development to Grant Permission, subject to the conditions and any amendments to those conditions as deemed necessary.

116. **WND.2023/0027 Overstone Leys, Overstone Lane, Overstone**

The Major Projects Officer outlined the information in the report, provided a presentation which included maps, aerial photographs and photographs from various vantage points of the site to give context and advised that:

- The existing belt of woodland to the south of the Overstone Leys SUE, was sited primarily to the north of Pine Ridge and Crabb Tree Drive
- The trees were considered at end of life and required significant management
- Replanting would secure the future of the area providing an attractive outlook and would improve access for residents
- The woodland had not been designated as public open space in the outline application. It was situated between two sites and would provide public access
- Future maintenance of the site was the subject of discussion with the Parish Council. The option to transfer a management company was possible
- Landscape services had worked closely with the developers to agree a 25 year management scheme. Future protection of the site by applying a Tree Preservation Order, could be subject to discussions

- Information signage to identify tree species would be a matter of discussion with the overseer of the maintenance of the woodland
- The landscape officer would be responsible to manage and monitor the works and ensure that the conditions of the application were being applied
- Councillor Shepherd, Ward Councillor addressed the committee and indicated that the conditions being applied to the application would provide an attractive opportunity to improve the site.

During the course of the discussion Members considered:

- Ecological impact on the site
- Loss of a significant number of trees
- Improved public access through the woodland
- Loss of the landscape buffer for residents
- Importance of engagement with residents. Effectively communicate the scale and effect of the work taking place.

The Development Management Manager advised that the Committee could delegate the authority to draw up a bespoke Construction Management Condition, to ensure communication with residents was carried out.

In reaching its decision, the Committee considered the officer's report and presentation.

Councillor Shepherd proposed the application be approved, subject to the inclusion of a Public Communication Strategy being included in a Construction Management Plan. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Manners and on being put to the meeting was declared carried unanimously.

Resolved:

That the delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director of Planning and Development to grant permission subject to conditions and:

Prior to the commencement of development, a Construction Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The Construction Management Plan must include the following detail:-

- i. Public Communication Strategy

117. WNN/2022/0996 Dallington Grange, Mill Lane, Kingsthorpe, Northampton

Further to legal advice, it was proposed by Councillor Bignell that the application be deferred to a future meeting and the proposal was seconded by Councillor Pritchard, on being put to the meeting was declared carried unanimously.

Resolved:

That the application be Deferred to a future meeting.

118. WNN/2022/0806 Land South of Rowtree Road and West of Windingbrook Lane, Northampton

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the information in the reports, provided a presentation which included a proposed site layout plan, maps, street scenes and views from various vantage points of the proposed site to give context and, advised that:

- Approval was sought for the layout, scale, appearance and landscaping for the erection of 425 dwellings, the second phase of the development
- Access had been approved in the Outline Application
- residential development was arranged around a tree lined spine road and would link to Phase 1 and eventually connect to Rowtree Road to the north
- proposal involves the land that immediately surrounds the area where the new primary school and local centre are to be located
- Drainage issues associated with the proposal have already been considered as part of application WNN/2022/0370, the overall drainage strategy for Phases 2 and 3 had been approved
- Green corridor on the route adjacent to the school and play area Phase 3 would contain a green corridor on the western side of the site
- Inclusion of a footpath and cycleway
- Noise assessment had been carried out and noise attenuation considered; fencing, additional landscaping and a 3 metre bund would provide an acoustic barrier and acceptable indoor noise levels could be achieved on the site with a package of mitigation measures including acoustically rated glazing and ventilators
- Different materials had been utilised across the site in an arbitrary fashion consistent with the approach adopted on Phase 1
- habitat edge to the east
- A 5m high bund between the sports pitches and the motorway would provide a noise buffer

In response to members enquiries the Principal Planning Officer advised:

- Masterplan showed the pitches alongside the M1, as set out in the masterplan, design code with a green buffer between the M1 and the housing. Environmental Health had not indicated that any particular air quality mitigation was required. The School development would require an air quality impact study to be carried out.
- National Highways had been consulted and had not raised concerns in relations to emissions
- Air quality had been considered at outline stage, subject to a public enquiry and a masterplan had since been approved and was compliant with policy
- The requirement for each application to provide subsequent air quality impact studies could be considered
- The Government's Nationally Described Space Standard was a guide document, it was a guide not an adopted policy. The application had been assessed against that guide and had identified a small number of houses where the floor space falls below that standard
- The education authority would require an air quality impact study, should they decline the use of the land, the land use would have to be reconsidered.

David Laight, the Applicant, addressed the committee in support of the application and indicated that the development with would provide 425 homes with energy

efficient and ecological enhancements and would be built to compliment earlier and later phases.

Paul Carvey, the Applicant, was available to answer members queries.

In response to members queries, the Applicants advised:

- Whilst the Nationally prescribed space standards were not an adopted policy the homes were 95% compliant
- Landscape would consider reinforcing the bund associated with the M1
- Data was not available to provide members with a financial assessment of the impact on the development, for achieving 100% of homes meeting the Nationally prescribed space standards
- A viability study had been carried out and identified a minimum affordable housing provision of 15% for each phase

The Development Management Manager clarified:

- the percentages of dwelling sizes that did not comply to the standards to provide context
- Of 15.5% of total units, one third of the 3 beds have a shortfall. 3.5% had a larger shortfall than 1.5%

The Principal Planning Officer informed members that:

- the nationally described space standards had been one of the documents included in the Local Plan part 2 however, the National Secretary of State had removed it, the emerging plan will not have that included
- The number of houses that did not comply to the standard was approximately 15% of the total housing provision
- affordable housing provision for Phase 1 was a minimum of 15% and maximum of 34%. A viability appraisal would identify the minimum provision on Phase 2

During the course of the discussion Members considered:

- Quality of the bund for noise mitigation
- Improvement of planting on the bund to increase carbon absorption
- Emissions from the M1. Air quality for the playing fields and the school
- Ongoing analysing/monitoring of emissions from the M1
- Minimum Internal Floor Space Standards, standards guide, policies and the possible impact of delays

The Principal Planning Officer further added that Officers would enter into discussions with the developer with a view to meeting the Minimum Internal Floor Space Standards. There was not an adopted policy although future occupiers requirements could be a material consideration.

Councillor Purser proposed the application be approved with the additional recommendation that all houses meet the Minimum Internal Floor Space Standards and Councillor Manners seconded the proposal.

Concern was expressed that the additional recommendation would only apply to the current application.

The Development Management Manager explained the Committee would have the option to address the Minimum Internal Floor Space Standards if they determined the application by approving or deferring.

The Legal Advisor advised that the Committee could approve or defer the application to allow the opportunity to resolve the question relating to Minimum Internal Floor Space Standards.

Councillor Purser withdrew his proposal and further proposed that the application be deferred for additional consideration of the application and for the officers to determine better standards and the Proposal was seconded by Councillor Manners.

The Development Management Manager advised that the term minimum standards may also include reduced cupboard space and wardrobes. All factors, officers would have to be re-negotiated and advised that it may not be possible to meet the expectation of members.

During the course of further discussion Members gave consideration to:

- Minimum standards were not currently policy and therefore not enforceable
- Approval of Phase 2 and the options to optimising minimum space requirements for future applications
- The need to take a pragmatic approach
- Future aim for people to afford their homes
- Higher standards expected from developers in future
- Addressing the issue of the inspector removing the standard from the emerging Local Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer added that the inspectors, across the country did not appear to be taking a consistent approach regarding the inclusion of the Local Plan minimum standards document.

The Development Management Manager informed the Committee that they could add an informative, expressing their expectations for the future phases to achieve the highest minimum standards in future phases and could consider delegating the authority to officers.

Cllr Purser withdrew his Proposal.

In reaching its decision, the Committee considered the officer's report, updates, presentation and representations.

Councillor Pritchard proposed the application be approved, with the delegation to the officer to include an informative that the highest Minimum Internal Floor Space Standards be provided in future phases, the proposition was seconded by Councillor Harris and on being put to the meeting was declared carried with 9 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

Resolved:

Grant permission subject to conditions as set out in the report with delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Planning and Development to approve any amendments to those conditions deemed necessary. That an informative be included that the highest Minimum Internal Floor Space Standards be provided in future phases.

The meeting closed at 4.10 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____