



Strategic Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee held at The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester, NN12 6AD on Tuesday 23 January 2024 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Phil Bignell (Chair)
Councillor Kevin Parker (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Ann Addison
Councillor Alan Chantler
Councillor André González De Savage
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor David James
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Bob Purser

Also Present:

Penny German, Objector
Councillor Laura Cook, Tiffield Parish Council
Councillor Fiona Baker, Supporter
James Hobson, Agent
Matt Price, Hexa Consulting

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Danielle Stone

Officers:

Rebecca Grant, Major Projects Officer
Katherine Hall, Head of Legal Services - Place
James Rodger, Interim Assistant Director - Planning and Development
Nicky Scaife, Development Management Team Leader
Hayley Usher, Development Management Highways
Diana Davies, Democratic Services Officer

159. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

160. **Minutes**

That, the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee of 21 November 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

That, the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee of 11 December 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

161. **2023/6827/FULL St Johns Centre, St Johns Road, Tiffield, NN12 8AA**

The Committee considered the demolition of the existing buildings and erection of a three storey SEND school building and supporting infrastructure which includes a new access arrangement, car parking area, surface water attenuation basin, landscaping, sports facilities (Tarmac Outdoor Physical Education Area – TOPEA), new substation and renewable energy installations.

The Major Projects Officer outlined the information in the report and the late representations and provided a presentation which included location maps, site plans, site layout, building elevations, highways access and photographs from various viewpoints to provide contextual information.

Councillor Gonzalez de Savage arrived at 14.08, during the officer's presentation, and offered his apologies.

The Development Management Manager provided further clarification to complement the Major Project Officer's presentation:

- Material planning considerations for the application - the St. John, Tiffield site would address the need for SEND provision in the former South Northamptonshire area; reduce journey times for children; reduce the Council's home to school transport costs; and would meet the statutory obligations of the council
- Identified the roads for consideration and distinguished the jurisdiction between the National Highways Agency and West Northamptonshire Council
- Highways impacts and highways safety – the increase of traffic to the development was considered to have no measurable influence on the flow of traffic or the junction of the A43 and St. Johns Road
- The National Highways Agency had initially objected to the application. The applicant had subsequently produced a detailed rebuttal and addressed the National Highways Agency concerns. The highways objection to the application had been withdrawn
- Minibuses would be the primary access for people to the site, they would have a staggered start and finish time which would be varied to the adjacent Gateway school. Access conditions were included in the Travel Plan and the Park Management Strategy

Penny German addressed the Committee and advised that, whilst in principle supported the application for the SEND school, would raise concerns regarding;

- Traffic safety issues on the A43 crossing
- The proposed routing of additional traffic
- Requirement for a safe Travel Plan
- Impact of the number of vehicle movements on local villages and the resulting safety concerns
- Concern regarding the basis of the statics quoted for vehicle movements

- Arrival and Departure times of the new SEND school conflicting with other local schools and the impact of traffic movements on the local highways network.
- Mitigation of the safety risk and impact on village residents not considered during roadworks on the A43
- That the Traffic Plan did not take into account the additional traffic from the proposed employment development sites on the A43 at Bell Plantation

Councillor Laura Cook, Tiffield Parish Council, and advised that, whilst in principle supported the application for the SEND school, would raise concerns regarding;

- Nationally recognised traffic models did not take into consideration local knowledge, daily experience and driver behaviours.
- Accidents and near misses were regularly witnessed by locals on the A43 junction
- Proposed developments along the A43 would increase the volume of traffic and road safety risks. The proposed development for DHL predicted a vehicle passing that Junction on the Northbound A43 every two seconds
- Safety concerns raised that the Traffic Management Plan would enable the additional traffic to use the A43
- The shortness of the deceleration Lane

Councillor Fiona Baker, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education, addressed the Committee in support of the application and its importance;

- National shortage of Education places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- Fulfil the need for St. John's trust need to provide education site for deprived children
- West Northamptonshire County Council had a statutory duty to provide education for the SEND cohort
- Provision of a purpose built, dedicated school within Northamptonshire would; reduce travel time for children; ensure that children and young people with additional needs had access to appropriate education; reduce the pressure placed on mainstream schools; reduce the social isolation and the resulting impact on mental health
- Had addressed highway concerns and mitigating the impact of the increased traffic in the area and associated risks and would anticipate continued consultation
- Occupation of the school would be gradual which would provide an opportunity for review of issues arising.

James Hobson the Agent, attending with Matt Price, Hexa Consulting, addressed the Committee in support of the application and outlined the benefits of the development;

- Would meet the Councils statutory obligation for SEND provision, current and future requirements
- Site was considered to be in the optimum geographical location to serve the needs of the pupils within the catchment area
- Reduction of travel times for children
- Would be delivered within the project delivery time scale – 2025

- Referred to West Northamptonshire Councils development plan policies - supported the growth of schools and their importance role for communities
- Utilisation of a derelict site for the creation of a community education hub
- Had conducted a very robust approach to highway safety and Junction capacity; and taken account of predicted the future level of trip generation and impacts on St. John's Road and the A43 junction
- Anticipated the landscape impact to be in commensurate with existing modern buildings
- The development would achieve a biodiversity net gain exceeding 10% With, the protection of the great crested newts being subject to planning conditions and badgers being protected by the operation of a two-phase construction strategy to ensure sustainability
- Energy Efficiency standards, delivery, where practicable, net zero carbon in operation of building

During the course of the Committee, members gave consideration to:

- National Highways reasons for objection to the application and subsequent response withdrawing the objection
- The length of the deceleration lane into St. Johns Lane and the safety assessments carried out on the junction with the A43
- The reduction in journey times and home-school transport costs
- Safety concerns regarding; pedestrian and cycle access across a 70mph road; and vehicles crossing the junction of A43; inclement weather; poor visibility
- Travel Plan and whether a specified route could be adopted for; accessing the site; and possible alternatives measures to mitigate risk for vehicles transporting children
- Anticipated pupil numbers and percentage using minibus transport, shared taxis and guardian transport vehicles
- Arrival and Departure times and the processes and procedures employed to ensure safety and flow of pupils and associated transport within the site. Concern expressed that the transfer time of pupil from vehicle to building be minimised
- Collision data provided by the Police and the subjective data provided by local residents
- Policy SS2 and the assessment of the buildings compatibility and integration within its surroundings
- September 2025 being the proposed opening date for the school
- Interaction with the existing Gateway School and the proposed sharing of facilities for older pupils
- Catchment area for the pupils, pupils awaiting places and the anticipated demand for SEND places going forward
- Environmental impact of vehicle engines running whilst they wait for pupils to embark/disembark. The applicant would support the inclusion of a bullet point on the travel plan to include measures to stop vehicle idling
- The additional traffic on the highways network and the impact on local villages
- Possible vehicle routing measures to protect Caldecote and Tiffield; the application of a routing condition, and the limitations of which vehicles it could be applied to; the risks of being too prescriptive in the wording – forecasting home locations for future school attendees, home address' of staff

- The applicant's highways assessment and the traffic modelling undertaken
- Speed survey undertaken on St Johns Road and the findings requiring the adjustment of the vision splays

The Development Management Manager summed up members considerations for an additional routing condition: Officers would word the condition in conjunction with highways colleagues and it would be shared with the Chair of Strategic Planning Committee for approval and added to the decision for the planning application.

Councillor Pritchard proposed the application be approved, subject to the inclusion of an additional routing condition to control the movement of West Northamptonshire Council's contracted vehicles, with the wording to be agreed by officers, highways and shared with the Chair. The proposition was seconded by Councillor Purser and on being put to the meeting was declared carried unanimously.

Councillor Gonzalez de Savage did not vote.

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

Resolved: That Permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in the report and subject to the additional condition:

- Prior to the first occupation of the school hereby permitted, a scheme for the routing of the school mini-buses and contracted taxis to and from the site, including measures to restrict the use during peak traffic times of the internal give-way within the central reservation at the junction of St Johns Road / A43 by such vehicles when travelling southbound on the A43 to and from the school site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The school shall operate in accordance with the approved details throughout the life of the development unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

With Delegated Authority being granted to the Assistant Director – Planning and Development to approve any amendments to conditions as deemed necessary.

162. **Urgent Business**

At the Strategic Planning Committee held on 21 November 2023, the Committee had identified an Action Point during their discussions in relation to Application WNN/2022/1391 Dallington Grange, Mill Lane, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, NN5 7PZ:

The Committee would like the delivery of affordable housing within the SUE to be actioned at the earliest opportunity. That the Chair to communicate the panels concerns to the Executive with a view to changing how the residents are being accommodated within West Northamptonshire. And to provide a response to Committee.

The Chair provided information from Stuart Timmis, Executive Director, Place and Economy, that discussions were taking place with Persimmon Homes with a view to

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bringing the development forward and the Committee would be updated when information was available.

The meeting closed at 4.10 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____