

**Minutes of the Planning Committee
18 October 2023**

Present:

Councillor M. Gibson (Chair)
Councillor D. Geraci (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

C. Bateson	R. Chandler	A. Mathur
S.N. Beatty	D. Clarke	L. E. Nichols
M. Beecher	S.A. Dunn	K. Rutherford
M. Buck	K. Howkins	
T. Burrell	M. Lee	

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillor H.R.D. Williams

In Attendance: Councillors H. Boparai, P. Woodward and S. Gyawali.

Councillors who are not members of the Committee, but attended the meeting and spoke on an application in or affecting their ward, are set out below in relation to the relevant application.

Councillor H. Boparai

58/23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 were approved as a correct record.

59/23 Disclosures of Interest

a) Disclosures of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct

There were none.

b) Declarations of interest under the Council's Planning Code

Councillors Bateson, Beatty, Beecher, Buck, Burrell, Chandler, Clarke, Dunn, Lee, Mathur, Rutherford and Gibson reported that they had received

correspondence in relation to application 23/00121/OUT but had maintained an impartial role, had not expressed any views and had kept an open mind.

Councillor Howkins reported that she had received correspondence in relation to application 23/00121/OUT and had previously attended a presentation on this application but had maintained an impartial role, had not expressed any views and had kept an open mind.

Councillor Nichols reported that he had received correspondence in relation to application 23/00121/OUT he also reported that he had received an invitation to meet with the applicant but declined, and had engaged with residents on this application but in all cases had maintained an impartial role, had not expressed any views and had kept an open mind.

60/23 Planning application - 23/00121/OUT - Land East of Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, TW16 7LB

Description:

A Hybrid planning application for an Integrated Retirement Community to consist of:

- a) Full planning application incorporating 38 extra care and 28 close care units (Use Class C2) with an on-site village centre to include a medical facility. Means of access off Vicarage Road, associated infrastructure, landscape buffer and open space.
- b) Outline planning application for a care home (up to 60 beds) and up to 98 extra care units (Use Class C2), landscaping and open space, parking, infrastructure, and internal access roads (all matters reserved).

Additional Information:

Kiran Boparai, Planning officer reported on the following updates:

Sustainable Drainage Scheme:

A revised Drainage Strategy Report was submitted by the applicant to address the objections raised by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) on the Sustainable Drainage Scheme. This revised report was forwarded to the LLFA and they have since responded by removing their objection. They have recommended conditions to be applied if, in the event planning permission were to be granted. Consequently, reason for refusal 4 (drainage) has been deleted from the recommendation section 8 of the Committee report.

Ecology:

A revised Ecological Assessment and Ecology response was submitted by the applicant to address the issues raised by Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the Council's Biodiversity Officer in relation to protected species that needed to be resolved prior to the determination of the planning application.

The revised documents were forwarded onto SWT and the Council's Biodiversity Officer. SWT and the Council's Biodiversity Officer have since

responded by stating that these outstanding issues that needed to be resolved prior to determination have been addressed. Consequently, reason for refusal 3 (ecology) has been deleted from the recommendation section 8 of the Committee report.

Air Quality:

The applicant has submitted additional information on Air Quality to address the issues raised from the Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO). The EHO has since responded and continues to raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions, including the requirement to submit a revised Air Quality Assessment in relation to the Outline planning application.

- A letter has been received from the applicant making various comments following responses from the Council's Housing and Planning Policy Team. The letter also states that applicant considers very special circumstances exist to justify the development in the Green Belt. However, it is for the decision maker to determine whether very special circumstances exist. In this case, Officers do not consider that the benefits clearly outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt.
- Correction to Paragraph 3.20 *"The applicant's planning statement states that 55 car parking spaces would serve 'Phase 1' (the 'full' element), representing a parking ratio of 0.38 0.83 spaces per dwelling"*.
- Correction to Paragraph 5.3 *"115 Neighbour notification letters were sent out to the surrounding properties to notify them of this planning application."*
- Correction to Paragraph 7.69 (affordable housing) *"The viability report has been reviewed on an 'open book' basis by the Council's valuation advisor (BPS Chartered Surveyors). The valuation advisor disagrees with many of the facts and figures provided in the viability report. They consider that the proposed development could produce a provisional surplus of between £2,487,831 to £27,081,420. On this basis, they have calculated that the scheme would be able to make a significant contribution towards affordable housing. They note that their position is not yet finalised pending further cost information from the Applicant, and a sufficient Gross Development Value (GDV) assessment for the Care Home. This additional information was requested, but the Applicant has declined to provide it, thereby preventing the Local Planning Authority from thoroughly Assessing the viability of the proposal. Consequently, the lack of any affordable housing provision on the site is considered unacceptable and the scheme does not accord with the requirements of Policy HO3 of the CS & P DPD"*.

A letter dated 12th October has been sent to each member of the planning committee from the applicant (Inspired Villages).

Public Speaking:

In accordance with the Council's procedure for speaking at meetings, Ian Beardsmore spoke against the proposed development raising the following key points:

- The application site had two previous submitted planning applications which were refused during two separate Local Plans with lower standards for acceptable circumstances
- The proposed site boundary was false and should be regarded as a single contiguous site
- This land ticked all five purposes of the Green Belt
- This site offered no community benefits
- This proposal offered no social housing
- The housing on site could be sold to buyers outside of the borough

In accordance with the Council's procedure for speaking at meetings, Lorraine Fuller spoke **against** the proposed development raising the following key points:

- This land was a beautiful natural open space which encouraged wild flowers and animals
- The wild flowers that grew in this land helped maintain populations of bees which were declining across the country
- There was no requirement for a retirement village on this plot of Green Belt land
- There were already over 17 care homes within a three mile radius of TW16 which served more than 722 places for the elderly
- A retirement village with in excess of 224 over 65's would increase the pressure on already underperforming services which would place all local people at severe risk
- Queues at local superstores were already long and this retirement village would exacerbate this
- This development would increase traffic on Vicarage Road and increase the risk of more accidents
- It was in our best interest to preserve the 12% of green belt left

- The land fulfilled all five purposes of the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF
- This application went against Spelthorne's Climate Change strategy points and Surrey County Councils own Greener Future Statement
- There was no evidence to suggest this application would make a positive impact
- This application did not meet any exceptional circumstances to consider building on Green Belt

In accordance with the Council's procedure for speaking at meetings, Stuart Garnett spoke **for** the proposed development raising the following key points:

- Spelthorne's current and emerging Local Plans had no allocations for specialist housing for older people
- Inspired Villages delivered high quality integrated retirement communities across the country
- The proposal offered a combination of specialist purpose built housing for older people including publicly accessible communal space with care and communal facilities
- Retirement facilities helped older people to continue living independently and reduced the need to utilise overstretched services in social care and hospitals
- Most people who moved into retirement communities were already local or had family and friends in the locality
- The development would offer net zero carbon
- The Spelthorne borough had an increasing ageing population which would sharply increase over the next decade
- The land was previously used for mineral extraction and subsequently used as landfill
- This development provided a remediation strategy and a landscape buffer to mitigate visual effects to the wider Green Belt
- There was no comparable integrated retirement community in the Borough

In accordance with the Council's procedure for speaking at meetings, Suraj Gyawali spoke as Ward Councillor on the proposed development raising the following key points:

- This greenbelt land stood as a crucial defence against urban sprawl from London which safeguarded wildlife, biodiversity and vital green space
- Encroachment on this land would set precedence for further exploitation on other green belt
- This lands prior use as a landfill rendered it unsuitable for development
- this project would exacerbate the strain on local roads particularly around the entry point for the M3
- Residents raised concern that this development would lead to loss of character in the area, overcrowding, pressure on sewage and drainage, poor air quality and high pressure on pipelines
- There was no affordable housing as part of this proposal
- There would be increased risks of flooding in Beechwood Avenue and Kenyngton Drive
- Consultation outcomes from the County Archaeological Officer, County Highway Authority, Environmental Health, Local Flood Authority and Surrey Wildlife Trust reflected the ill preparation of plans from developers
- Over 100 local residents and 1500 households had not voiced support for this application
- The best interests for the residents of Sunbury Common should be prioritised.

Debate:

During the debate the following key issues were raised:

- Concern was raised regarding the previous use of the site as a landfill which contained contaminated waste
- Green Belt land should be left undisturbed
- The healthcare facilities on the site were not sufficient for the number of elderly people
- There was no affordable housing

- Ward Councillors could not find support for this application in the local community
- This proposal failed to make a positive contribution to the street scene and disturbed the rural character of the area
- The Green Belt was in place for good reason to stop urban sprawl
- There was not sufficient parking provision for visitors and staff on site
- This site was not suitable for people with restricted mobility
- There was not enough open green space on site
- Local residents would be unable to afford this facility
- This project provided a better environment for older people however was in the wrong location

The Committee voted on the motion to refuse the application as follows:

For: 15

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Decision: The application was **refused**.

61/23 Planning Appeals Report

The Chairman informed the Committee that if any Member had any detailed queries regarding the report on Appeals lodged and decisions received since the last meeting, they should contact the Planning Development Manager.

Resolved that the report of the Planning Development Manager be received and noted.

62/23 Major Planning Applications

The Planning Development Manager submitted a report outlining major applications that may be brought before the Planning Committee for determination.

Resolved that the report of the Planning Development Manager be received and noted.