

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 29 MARCH 2023 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors J Silverstone
 C Palmer
 D Bowater
 M Freeman (Chair)
 S Owen
 P Carberry
 R Goodchild

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

Members of the public: 0

391/P APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors A Dodwell and A Gray (substituted by Councillor R Goodchild).

392/P DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, including the nature of those interests, which they had in any of the items under consideration at this meeting. No declarations were made.

393/P QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes)

There were no questions from members of the public.

394/P MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Planning and Transport Committee meeting held on 8 March 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning and Transport Committee meeting held 8 March 2023 be approved as a correct record, and were signed accordingly.

(b) Updates from the previous meeting: The concerns raised in respects of the number of faulty belisha beacons on pedestrian crossings had been raised with Central Bedfordshire Council and will continue to be pursued by town council officers.

395/P PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee considered planning applications received up until 24 March 2023.

The Committee discussed application reference CB/23/00505 (Land Off Eden Way) in respects of the erection of 2 industrial units, one with link to unit 9 Chartmoor Road, associated access, parking, landscaping and works. Given its proposed siting within a designated Main Employment Area, the Committee raised no objections to the principle. However, reference was made to the comments raised by the Ecological Officer (Central Bedfordshire Council) , Tree Officer (Central Bedfordshire Council) and Sustainable Growth Officer (Central Bedfordshire Council). Should the Planning Authority be minded to grant permission, the concerns raised by its officers should be recognised by way of condition and mitigated accordingly.

RESOLVED to recommend to Central Bedfordshire Council that no objection be made to application reference CB/23/00505 (Land Off Eden Way), subject to Central Bedfordshire Officers being satisfied that the issues raised can be satisfactorily addressed by way of condition.

RESOLVED to recommend to Central Bedfordshire Council that no objection be made to application reference CB/23/00630 (125 Drakes Avenue) in respects of the conversion of the garage to a habitable space subject to the highways authority being satisfied that parking standards can be adequately met.

The Committee discussed application reference CB/23/00803 (46 Finch Crescent, Linslade) in respects of a part single and part double rear extension, render to side and rear elevation and construction of an outbuilding. The Committee was concerned that a serviced outbuilding could in theory be used as a stand alone dwelling. When taken with the previous development, the proposal would in the opinion of the Committee result in the overdevelopment of the plot given its modest plot size. In the Committee's opinion, the proposed car parking layout is incongruous and therefore the highways authority would need to be satisfied that it is capable of entertaining the prescribed number of vehicles without compromising highway safety.

RESOLVED to recommend to Central Bedfordshire Council that objection be made to CB/23/00803 46 Finch Crescent, Linslade on the grounds that when taken with the previous extensions, the proposal would represent overdevelopment of what is considered a modest plot by virtue of its depth and width.

Given the incongruous car parking layout, the highways authority would need to be satisfied it is capable of meeting parking standards without compromising highway safety.

Should the planning authority be minded to grant permission, that a

condition be attached to ensure that the outbuilding remains ancillary to the main dwelling house and cannot be used in isolation as a stand alone dwelling.

The Committee discussed application reference 23/00883 (31 Veritas Grove), in respects of a single storey side extension. The highways authority would need to be satisfied that the loss of the garage would not compromise car parking standards and lead to an increase in on-street parking pressures at this location.

Whilst the extension is considered modest, it would intensify uses on what is considered a small plot. In design terms, the link extension by virtue of its lack of relief (window/door apertures) would do little to positively contribute toward the general street scene. Building Control would need to be satisfied that the proposal would not compromise fire safety arrangements for the site.

RESOLVED to recommend to Central Bedfordshire Council that objection be made to CB/23/00883 - 31 Veritas Grove on the grounds that the proposal would represent overdevelopment of what is a modest sized plot. The proposed brick link by virtue of its blank appearance and lack of relief would do little to contribute toward enhancing the general street scene in design terms.

The Committee discussed application CB/00770 (Land to the rear of 7-9 Church Square) for the demolition of the sorting office and industrial sheds and erection of a three-storey hotel (comprising 75 hotel rooms) with associated hard and soft landscaping.

The former postal sorting office site forms part of the wider land parcels collectively known as Land South of the High Street. For the town council, Land South of the High Street is an important opportunity to support Central Bedfordshire Council in visioning, planning and bringing into active use this site which has been underutilised for many years. Currently, the town council is working with a master planner to develop a vision of how appropriate town centre uses might be realised through a comprehensive redevelopment of these vacant or underutilised land parcels.

Whilst a comprehensive scheme by way of a single outline application is preferred (to include all land parcels identified as part of Land South of the High Street) this is not the case here and, on this basis, the merits of this standalone application were considered by the Committee and its comments are set out below:

The Committee supports the principle of a town centre hotel and the financial commitment a development of this nature would bring to the local economy. It is anticipated that a 75-bedroom hotel would contribute circa £2.2m per annum to the local economy and create 16 jobs which is welcomed.

However, whilst offering in principle support, the Committee would need to be satisfied that by developing this land parcel in isolation would not

compromise the future ability to bring forward the remaining land parcels known as Land South of the High Street. Unfettered west to east access via Church Square is necessary to safeguard future development opportunity and this should be borne in mind in the determination of this application.

Given its location within the town centre Conservation Area, the development by virtue of its height, massing, scale and use of materials should complement its Church Square setting.

Whilst the design attempts to replicate the wider High Street massing, more could be done to provide relief to what is considered large spans of blank brickwork. Stone or brick corbelling could be introduced to provide relief for example. Moreover, the Conservation Officer should be satisfied that the massing at this location is acceptable and would not represent an overbearing form of development to the detriment of this part of the Conservation Area.

Whilst the Committee recognises that town centre parking standards are often relaxed on town centre accessibility grounds, the proposed level of car parking provision is considered inadequate given the proposed use as a hotel. Leighton Buzzard cannot be considered as an end destination with those arriving to stay at the hotel not needing a car. To provide a total of 18 parking spaces (to include staff parking) would only work should there be alternative car parking thereabouts that is not subject to existing car parking pressures. The most accessible public car park is located within Duncombe Drive. The statutory consultation that Central Bedfordshire Council is currently conducting on the future of car parking within Duncombe Drive is recommending a reduction in car parking spaces on perceived lack of need grounds. Notwithstanding this application, the town council can demonstrate that the December car park needs survey that was undertaken (by Central Bedfordshire Council) does not recognise the peak summer period when demand for car parking spaces is greatest. For this reason, the town council would challenge the car park study and the conclusions it arrives at.

With supply unlikely to meet demand within the Duncombe Drive car park, it is inevitable that hotel guests will look elsewhere for cheap accessible car parking provision. As the operator of twice weekly market, the propensity to find cars parked within the High Street on market stall pitches is high. This is already causing huge frustration to which this application will only add to unless alternative arrangements can be made either on-site or elsewhere. Whilst a handful of spaces can be found within Church Square, these are readily used by the congregation of All Saints Church, which also hosts a range of community uses throughout the week. As public spaces, no single individual should have a right to public parking spaces. However, the removal of readily available spaces is likely to impact on the church. It should be noted that Church Square is occasionally closed to traffic and parking for events such as The Remembrance Sunday Service and Christmas Festival and a management plan agreed between the Highways Authority and the hotel operator to mitigate against the closure of Church Square on event days.

As a town centre location, the site is flanked by two successful public houses where live music and entertainment are daily features. Hotel accommodation and noise generating uses such as pub gardens and live entertainment has the potential to lead to conflict on noise and general disturbance grounds. To properly understand the potential impact on the proposed hotel use, the noise survey ought to have been undertaken during the summer months when use of their outside spaces is greatest. To mitigate against likely noise disturbance, Public Protection Officers would need to be satisfied that the building detail (to include sound insulation) meets recognised standards for busy town centre locations.

RESOLVED to recommend to Central Bedfordshire Council that the following comments be made to planning application CB/00770 (Land to the rear of 7-9 Church Square):

As a principle, the town council welcomes a town centre hotel and the confidence shown in wanting to invest within Leighton Buzzard.

Objection on Car Parking Grounds: The current level of car parking provision is wholly inadequate within the proposal and for this reason, the town council would wish to object on this ground. It is understood that hotel guests would be encouraged to use the public car park at Duncombe Drive given its proximity to the proposal. The West Street multi-storey car park is not considered as part of the solution given its overnight closure.

During peak periods (particularly summer months when Parsons Park is in full operation), the chronic lack of readily accessible public car parking within Duncombe Drive would be made worse by hotel guests seeking to park their vehicles there. In the absence of public car parking spaces within Duncombe Drive, there is every likelihood that hotel guests will park within the High Street where parking restrictions apply on market days and event days. Overnight parking on market days and event days will result in a parking fine for the guest and an inability to erect market/event stalls on those pitches where illegal overnight car parking is to be found. This is already a huge frustration for which a parking fine is not the answer given that the nuisance remains until the car is moved.

That legal safeguards be included within any permission to ensure unfettered vehicular and pedestrian access be allowed through the red line site. Highways Officers should be satisfied that any safeguarded route be capable of meeting likely pedestrian and vehicular traffic flows likely to be generated through the future redevelopment of Land South of the High Street. A failure to do so would compromise the comprehensive redevelopment of this town centre site.

Given its historic context, more could be done to improve what are considered blank facades by introducing relief in the form of brick and stone corbelling as well as blank recessed window apertures for

example.

That a condition be attached requiring archaeological investigation prior to any development commencing.

That Public Protection Officers be satisfied that as a town centre location and within close proximity to two vibrant music venues, that the proposed building detail (to include sound insulation) meets recognised standards thereby avoiding potential conflict between established town centre uses and the hotel operator.

Should the planning authority be minded to approve the proposal, that meaningful contributions be secured from the development for town centre enhancements. That the town council be engaged in agreeing how anticipated commuted sums are to be used.

That a management plan be agreed between the Highways Authority and the hotel operator to mitigate against the closure of Church Square to traffic and parking on event days including Remembrance Sunday and Christmas Festival Weekend that will require hotel guests to park elsewhere when access and egress to and from the hotel car park will be denied by way of a traffic order.

RESOLVED to recommend to Central Bedfordshire Council that no objection be made to the following applications:

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| 1. | CB/23/00675 | 5 VALERIAN WAY |
| 2. | CB/23/00722 | 4 ROBINSWOOD CLOSE |
| 3. | CB/23/00767 | 6 ROBINSWOOD CLOSE |
| 4. | CB/23/00759 | 11 REGENT STREET |
| 5. | CB/23/00829 | 6 POPLAR CLOSE |
| 6. | CB/23/00785 | 8 CHAMBERLAINS GARDENS |
| 7. | CB/23/00858 | 5 BROOK STREET |
| 8. | CB/23/00687 | EUREKA, HILLSIDE ROAD |
| 9. | CB/23/00907 | 69 CLIPSTONE CRESCENT |
| 10. | CB/23/00904 | 15 THEEDWAY |
| 11. | CB/23/00518 | 24-30 LEIGHTON ROAD |
| 12. | CB/23/00614 | 48 ORION WAY |

VOC

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| 1. | CB/23/00833 | 44 ROSEBERY AVENUE |
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TDM

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| 1. | CB/23/00763/TDM | HOMEBASE, VIMY ROAD |
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RM

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| 1. | CB/23/00741/RM | CHAMBERLAINS BARN QUARRY |
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396/P TRANSPORT MATTERS

The Committee was made aware of the recently issued Central Bedfordshire press releases regarding the creation of an electric vehicle car club as well as a new free bus service (6 months). It was agreed that the town council would do what it reasonably can to promote the free bus service which is due to begin on 8th May 2023 and to run for 6 months as a free service.

In response to email correspondence, Central Bedfordshire Highways had confirmed that a review is currently being undertaken into highway safety along the A505 and A4146 routes. It is anticipated that design works will be undertaken during 2023/24 and as part of this work, the speed limit of the routes will also be considered. A current 40mph speed limit applies to stretches of the route along what are considered the most hazardous sections. It is anticipated that a review of signage will be undertaken also during this period.

A number of other concerns were raised, to be passed on by officers to the highways authority.

397/P INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee received two pieces of correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council advising that the Planning Inspectorate had granted on appeal permission for the erection of telecommunication masts at Billington Road, Clarence Road and Grovebury Road.

Councillor Owen gave a verbal update on an informal meeting held with a portfolio holder and director at Central Bedfordshire Council the previous week, at which the lack of any specific plans or visions for towns and parishes within the area had been discussed. Neighbourhood plans were mentioned as one mechanism by which such vision might be clarified.

Councillor Palmer gave a verbal update on a Government consultation in respect of reform of the infrastructure levy, whereby planning authorities would be required to develop "infrastructure delivery strategies" to support local community priorities. The closing date for this consultation was 9 June 2023 so it was suggested it could be discussed at a committee meeting on 17 May 2023 or 7 June 2023 and that a request be made of Central Bedfordshire Council to give input on this matter.

The meeting closed at 9.02 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 29 MARCH 2023.

Chair

19 APRIL 2023