

# **Minutes**

of a meeting of the

## **Planning Committee**



held on Wednesday, 11 January 2023  
at 6.00 pm in Meeting Room 1, Abbey  
House, Abbey Close, Abingdon,  
OX14 3JE

**Open to the public, including the press**

### **Present in the meeting room:**

Councillors: David Bretherton (Chair), Peter Dragonetti (Vice-Chair), Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Victoria Haval, Elizabeth Gillespie, Lorraine Hillier, Axel Macdonald and Alan Thompson

Officers: Darius Zarazel (Democratic Services Officer), Paula Fox (Planning Manager), Katherine Pearce (Planning Officer), Cathie Scotting (Planning Officer),

### **Remote attendance:**

Officers: Susie Royce (Broadcasting Officer), Caitlin Phillpotts (Planning Officer), Sharon Crawford (Planning Officer), and Marc Pullen (Planning Officer)

### **112 Chair's announcements**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

### **113 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ken Arlett, who was substituted by Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak, Councillor Tim Bearder, and Councillor Ian Snowdon.

### **114 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **115 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.

### **116 Proposals for site visits**

There were no proposals for site visits.

## **117 Public participation**

The list showing members of the public who had registered to speak was tabled at the meeting.

## **118 P19/S4319/FUL - Gillotts School, Gillotts Lane, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1PS**

The committee considered planning application P19/S4319/FUL for the boundary fence to enclose school together with vehicular and pedestrian accesses (as amended and amplified by information received 27 June 2022), on land at Gillotts School, Gillotts Lane, Henley-on-Thames.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that the application was brought to the committee due to the objection of the town council. The planning officer then informed members that the application sought to erect a 2.4 metre mesh green fence along the full boundary of the school site for the purpose of security.

The site itself was bounded by open countryside to the southeast and west, which bordered the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and by Henley-on-Thames public footpath 21 and Henley-on-Thames Bridleway 20 to the north. The planning officer also noted that two woodland spaces on the site were designated as local green spaces in the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan and would be inside the permitter fence.

The proposed fence line would be highly visible from Gillotts Lane, but the planning officer believed that the majority of the fence in that section would be considered in relation to the existing built form of the buildings. Fences to south and west of the site, where the fences met open countryside, were also considered acceptable as officers were satisfied that the mesh material and colour of the proposed fences would not obstruct important views into or out of the site.

However, the northern boundary of the site was bordered a public footpath in which the north side of the footpath was already lined with varying sections of close board fencing. The planning officer did consider that the addition of the proposed fence to the south side of the bridleway would be highly visible.

The planning officer also noted that the school retained permitted development rights for the erection of a 2-metre fence, without the need for planning permission. Officers were satisfied that the additional height would not significantly alter the character of the area from the permitted development option and that the application allowed for the council to secure some amendments to the fence line along the side facing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and other details were secured as part of the application. Overall, the planning officer believed that the proposal was acceptable with conditions, and recommended it be approved.

Councillor Ken Arlett spoke on behalf of Henley-on-Thames Town Council, objecting to the application.

Catherine Darnton, the headteacher at Gillotts School, the applicant, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

The committee had conducted a site visit prior to the discussion of the application. Members asked the planning officer if the school used the north woodland for activities and noted that the officer did not believe that this was the case.

The members of the committee discussed the northern section of the site, the part that ran along the public footpath and bridleway, in detail. Members believed that the bridleway was the connection between the urban and rural area of Henley and that as the northern section of the footpath was already lined with close board fencing, the erection of the fence along the other side would have a large visual impact and be visually intrusive. It was also noted by members that a lack of thought had been put into the use of the land as a wildlife corridor and the impact the fence would have on them.

Members agreed that the proposed fencing line in the north should be amended due to its visual impact, impact on the character of the area, and that it would cut off the popular designated green space as designated in the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan. The committee also expressed its desire to see the applicant engage with the local stakeholders around the bridleway and come up with an acceptable revised plan.

A motion, moved and seconded, to refuse the application was carried on being put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** to refuse planning application P19/S4319/FUL, for the following reasons:

The school grounds are highly visible from the adjoining Henley-on-Thames Footpath 21 and Henley-on-Thames Bridleway 20, which lie immediately north of the site. Due to the height, scale and appearance of the fences proposed the development would form an incongruous and prominent feature along the public rights of way, which would obstruct views into and across the designated Gillotts Wood Area of Protected Open Green Space and detract from the existing green and open character of the footpath and bridle way. The development would result in an unacceptable level of harm to the character of the existing footpath and bridleway and to the wider character of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would be contrary to policies STRAT1, HEN1, DES1, DES2 and ENV1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and policies SCI1, SD3 and ENV4 of the Joint Henley & Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan.

## **119 P22/S1410/FUL - Land in the North East Corner of Culham Science Centre near Clifton Hampden, OX14 3DB**

The committee considered planning application P22/S1410/FUL for the erection of a Fusion Demonstration Plant with ancillary office space, parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure, including plant and machinery, on land at Land in the North East Corner of Culham Science Centre near Clifton Hampden.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that, since the report was published, two further neighbour consultation letters had been received taking the total to eight, and the Environment Agency had checked the environmental constraints and stated that the only environmental risks pertained to ground water contamination. The planning officer confirmed that the contaminated land officer had reviewed the submitted contained risk and remediation strategy and was satisfied that this addressed the phase 2 risk assessment and phase 3 remediation strategy. Therefore, the planning officer confirmed that condition 19 of the officer's report was no longer required and condition 20 should refer only to a validation report.

The planning officer informed members that the application was brought to committee due to its scale and potential national and international importance and that the site was used by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Agency to develop nuclear technology. The site itself was 3.8 hectares, located in the north-eastern side of the science centre, and was scheduled to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The majority of the science centre was built upon, but the proposed building would be a new development.

The planning officer also confirmed that the building was for a fusion demonstration plant to test the technology with a view to improve and refine the technology prior to commercialisation and was not for commercial use. The building would be just over 10,000 square metres in area, 7,000 square metres for process spaces and 3,000 square metres for offices and support. The demonstration hall was 38 metres in height with a diameter of 50 metres and clad in a translucent plastic material, whereas the support offices were clad in metal. The site would also have 47 car parking spaces, and a covered space for 30 cycles.

Members noted that there were no objections raised from technical specialists apart from the landscaping and conservation officers due to the landscape impact, particularly for long distance views, and its impact on the registered park and garden. However, the planning officer informed members that as the harm was considered to be indirect and exclusively to the setting, the impact was considered less than substantial in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan. A further point was made that the existing Joint European Torus (JET) building was wider and would likely have more of an impact than the proposed development in the application.

The planning officer then clarified the point about lighting and confirmed that only the bottom of the demonstration hall would be lit, although a curfew could be agreed through conditions.

The planning officer also informed the committee that the site was taken out of the Green Belt through the Local Plan to support the intensification of the science centre and that the land to the west was also released from the Green Belt to allow for the creation of homes, which would be used in order to create a more sustainable community. The planning officer believed that the application represented a significant investment which would support many jobs, direct and indirect, and the results of which could have clear international benefits. In addition, the site was also cited by central government in its fusion strategy for its potential in fusion technology and the

planning officer informed members that planning weight should be given to the site for this potential.

Finally, the planning officer believed that any harm to landscape and the garden was outweighed by the other factors described above and therefore recommended that the application be approval, subject to conditions.

Steven Sensecall and Katherine Jones, the agents for the application, Mathew Wilkinson, the architect, Matthew Bloodworth, from General Fusion, and Ian Wallace and Steven Clews, from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Agency, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

The committee had conducted a site visit prior to the discussion of the application. Members asked the planning officer about the size of the proposed building and noted that, although it was taller than the JET building on the site, the JET building was much wider.

A question was also raised as to how much significance central government had put on the application and whether government would step in through a planning appeal if the application was refused. Although not confirming if the government would step in during a potential appeal, the planning officer did cite the United Kingdom's fusion strategy which cited the application at the science centre as a sign of the governments very clear interest.

The committee expressed some concerns around the level and colour of lighting, specifically in the symbolic/feature lighting of the demonstration building. However, members were satisfied that through conditions, the lighting could be controlled and that a review period could be placed on the symbolic lighting.

Overall, members agreed that the site was of significant importance both nationally and internationally and that the impact on the surrounding park was considered less than substantial. For these reasons, members agreed to approve the application with the provision of more detail about lighting and an implementation of a review period for the symbolic lighting.

A motion, moved and seconded, to authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the chair of the Planning Committee, to approve the planning application, was carried on being put to the vote, with the additional conditions for more detail about the lighting and for a three year review period for the symbolic lighting.

**RESOLVED:** to authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the chair of the Planning Committee, to approve planning application P22/S1410/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

a) The completion of a S106 agreement for infrastructure outlined in in the report towards improvements of the local bus services to Culham Science Centre and monitoring of an approved Travel Plan: and

b) The following conditions:

1. Commencement
2. Approved Plans
3. Schedule of Materials to be submitted
4. BREEAM Standard - Excellent
5. Energy Statement Verification
6. Cycle parking facilities to be submitted
7. Green Travel Plan to be submitted
8. Landscaping (incl hardsurfacing and boundary treatment) to be submitted
9. Landscape Management Plan to be submitted
10. Arboricultural Statement and Tree Protection Plan to be submitted
11. Ecological Impact Assessment – development to be in compliance with
12. Biodiversity Enhancement Plan to be submitted
13. Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme to be entered in to
14. Detailed surface water drainage scheme to be submitted
15. SuDS compliance report to be submitted
16. Foul drainage scheme to be submitted
17. Construction Environment Management Plan to be submitted
18. Hours of construction
19. Contaminated Land validation report to be submitted
20. Contaminated Land unsuspected contamination encountered
21. Noise impact assessment – in compliance with
22. Lighting details to be submitted specifying seasonal curfew, with a review period of three years to allow for adjustments to the lighting strategy, specifically in relation to the Demonstration Hall
23. Details of External Areas to be submitted

## **120 P21/S5308/FUL - 32 Kennylands Road, Sonning Common, RG4 9JT**

The committee considered planning application P21/S5308/FUL for the demolition of the existing bungalow and the construction of one pair of semi-detached houses with associated landscaping & parking. (As amended by plans 2022-03-24 to reduce height of dwellings by 0.5m; reduce depth of dwellings by two metres; moving dwellings further back from the road by 0.5m; loss of one bedroom in each dwelling) (Amended by plans 2022-07-11 to demonstrate three parking spaces for each dwelling) (As amended by plans 2022-08-08 to more accurately represent neighbouring no.30). (As amplified by additional bat information received 20 September 2022), on land at 32 Kennylands Road, Sonning Common.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that the application was brought to the committee due to the objection of the parish council. The application itself was for the demolition of a bungalow and the erection of a pair of semi-detached four-bedroom dwellings in its place.

The planning officer noted that the existing bungalow was one of pair of bungalows of no distinct architectural style or character. The proposed two storey dwellings measured a height of 7.8 metres and would measure a combined width of 13 metres

on the plot. Each property also had a two-storey projection set in from the boundary of their neighbours.

The planning officer also informed members that the application incorporated details responding to the surrounding area, that it would not be incongruous to the wider surrounding street scene, and would not be overbearing or intrusive to the amenity of neighbours. Overall, the planning officer recommended that permission be granted subject to conditions.

Martin Smith and Stan Rust spoke objecting to the application.

The committee asked the planning officer about the gap between the proposed semi-detached buildings and the boundary. This was confirmed to be over a metre on the south boundary and two metres for the north property. Members expressed concern about the size of that gap and also that the erection of two semi-detached houses in the plot was out of character with the surrounding street scene.

Overall, as the committee believed that the scale, design, and spacing of the units did not meet the established appearance and character on that part of the road, they agreed that the application should be refused.

A motion, moved and seconded, to refuse the application was carried on being put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** to refuse planning application P21/S5308/FUL, for the following reasons:

Having regard its scale, massing and density the development it would appear cramped and at odds with the established character and appearance of this part of Kennylands Road. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to Policies DES1 and DES2 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, the Joint Design Guide and Policy H3 and D1 of the adopted Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan 2027 and Policies RD1, RD3, RD4 and RH3 of the emerging Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan.

## **121 P22/S4152/FUL - 5 Lydalls Close, Didcot, OX11 7LD**

During this agenda item, the meeting length had reached almost two and a half hours. In accordance with the council's Constitution, the committee agreed to extend the meeting in order to finish this item.

The committee considered planning application P22/S4152/FUL for the erection of chalet-style dwelling (as clarified by SAP calculations received 8 December 2022), on land at 5 Lydalls Close, Didcot.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that the application was brought to the committee as the applicant was a close relation to a member of the

council, Councillor Jane Murphy. The planning officer highlighted a correction to the officers report as references to Rymans Close in paragraphs 6.4i and 6.4iv should read Rymans Court. The planning officer then informed members that the application was for a five-bedroom detached dwelling. Planning permission was previously granted for a four-bedroom bungalow on the site in June 2022. The siting of the current application was the same as the approved application, with the main changes between the applications being over the elevation. As the principle of development was considered acceptable and as there were no technical objections, the planning officer recommended the application be approved, subject to recommendations.

Overall, the committee were satisfied with the officer's report and agreed that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

A motion, moved and seconded, to approve the application was carried on being put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** to approve planning application P22/S4152/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement 3 years - Full Planning Permission
2. Approved plans

Pre-commencement conditions:

3. Surface Water Drainage
4. Tree Protection

Compliance conditions:

5. Energy statement verification
6. Electric Vehicle Charging Point
7. Provide bird box.
8. Retain hedges (biodiversity)
9. Provide parking as per plan

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm

---