

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Planning Committee



held on Wednesday, 23 August 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), Ken Arlett, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sam James-Lawrie, Katharine Keats-Rohan, Ben Manning, and Ed Sadler

Officers: Darius Zarazel (Democratic Services Officer), Cathie Scotting (Planning Team Leader), Will Sparling (Planning Officer), Kim Gould (Planning Officer), Andy Heron (Planning Officer), Paul Bowers (Planning Officer), Will Darlison (Planning Officer), and Ben Silverthorne (Trainee Democratic and Electoral Services Officer)

Guests: Councillor Ian Snowdon

Remote attendance:

Officers: Bertie Smith (Broadcasting Officer) and Sharon Crawford (Planning Officer)

Guests: Councillor Tim Bearder and Councillor Georgina Heritage

47 Chair's announcements

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

48 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali Gordon-Creed, Axel Macdonald, and Tim Bearder.

49 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign these as such.

50 Declarations of interest

Councillor Ben Manning declared an interest in item 10 on the agenda. As he lived near the application site, and had fettered his discretion on application P22/S4391/FUL, he would speak as a ward member but would not sit on the committee to discuss or vote on the item.

51 Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

52 Public participation

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

53 P21/S3915/FUL - Dodwells Solar Farm, Land north of the A40, near Milton Common

The committee considered planning application P21/S3915/FUL for the installation and operation of a Solar Farm together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure (as amended and amplified by information received 8 July 2022 and 21 December 2022), on land at Dodwells Solar Farm, Land north of the A40 near Milton 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 Great Haseley Parish Council.

The planning officer informed the committee that the solar farm site location was to the north of the A40 London Road and about one kilometre from the Milton Common settlement. He also emphasised that it was outside of the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and that there were no public rights of way through the site.

The site itself was 112 hectares with the solar panels comprising 61 hectares. In addition, there were heritage assets in the vicinity of the site, but it was noted as having no impact on their significance. The placement of the panels was also noted as avoiding most of the fluvial risk zones 2 and 3, with the minor flood risk proposed to be dealt with in the conditions, and that they would also not be put on any Grade 3a land (Best and Most Versatile land). The application also proposed a 37 per cent biodiversity net gain and that the solar panels would avoid being placed on the gas lines through the site and the water courses through a 10m buffer.

The planning officer informed the committee that over the course of the application, the applicant had removed some solar panels to try to mitigate potential landscape harm.

On visual impact, 22 viewpoints were considered, including a key view from the A40 overpass. However, as the distance to the site was 1.5km away from the A40 overpass and the solar panels were barely visible, and the panels could only be glanced at from the other viewpoints, the visual impact was considered acceptable. The objection from the resident at Heath House to the west of the site about the visual impact was also noted. However, the planning officer clarified that, as the house was set back from property boundary and elevated on a hill meaning that the ground floor would not be able to see the extent of the panels, and that further planting would

mitigate any other visual effects of the application, the visual impact was not considered to be grounds for refusal.

On cumulative impact, the planning officer confirmed that, in his opinion, there would be limited cumulative visual effects between the site and other permitted solar farms but that it would be policy compliant.

Overall, the planning officer recommend that, as the application was policy compliant, there were no significant adverse impacts on the landscape, and that the applicant had made significant attempts to mitigate potential harm, it should be approved.

John Gilbert spoke on behalf of Tetsworth Parish Council, objecting to the application. Richie Sheehan spoke on behalf of Great Haseley Parish Council, objecting to the application.

Simon Hale spoke objecting to the application.

Nick Nixey, the landowner, and Alexander Miejimolle, the agent, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Georgina Heritage, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

The committee inquired about potential light pollution caused by the security lighting on the site and the planning officer confirmed that a proposed condition for the design and layout of site could control and mitigate light pollution.

When members asked if there could be a connection for the site closer to the grid, they noted that SSE, the local electricity provider, controlled access to grid and that this was not in the control of the applicant. In addition, the planning officer clarified to members that the cable connection for the site was not a part of the application, and each should be taken on their own merits.

The committee inquired into the potential cumulative impact issue and the planning officer noted that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was submitted. This assessment looked at intervening features, topography, and key views, and the landscape officer assessed it as having a very minor and moderate impact which was not considered to be significant or adverse and included the potential cumulative effect of the site.

When asked about what would happen at the end of the 40-year permission period and who would be responsible for the removal of solar farm, the planning officer confirmed that a condition for delivery and removal of the equipment would be the responsibility of the applicant and landowner. Therefore, ultimately, the resting responsibility would be with the landowner and at the time and the council could enforce the condition if needed.

Members inquired into the gas pipeline crossing the site and if it would be protected and the planning officer confirmed that National Gas had no objection subject to conditions, such as maintenance access, a buffer, and technical requirements about

where the cables can run. He noted that these were secured by condition, and this satisfied the committee.

Members thought that the solar farm would be a significant step towards addressing the climate emergency whilst restoring the land for farm use after the 40-year permission period ended, due to the fact that sheep would be grazing on the site throughout that time. In addition, members believed that impact of the glare on neighbours could be mitigated with planting secured through condition and would be minimal.

Overall, as members were satisfied with the response to their questions from the planning officer, and due to its lack of impact on the landscape, that it was policy compliant, and that there was a need for supporting renewable energy, they agreed that the application should 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 P21/S3915/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

Time limits and approved plans:

1. Commencement of development within 3 years
2. Development in accordance with approved plans
3. Temporary permission for a period of 40 years

Pre-commencement conditions:

4. Submission of final details of layout, design, and scale of equipment
5. Protection of gas transmission pipeline measures
6. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation
7. Programme of archaeological mitigation
8. Sustainable drainage scheme details
9. Construction traffic management plan
10. Landscaping scheme and implementation
11. Landscape and biodiversity management plan
12. Tree protection measures
13. Biodiversity enhancement plan
14. Construction environment management plan for biodiversity
15. Ecology district licence compliance certificate

Compliance conditions:

16. Compliance with ecology district licence
17. Vision splay implementation and protection
18. Construction traffic access implementation
19. Lighting restriction
20. Removal of solar panels in the event not used for 6 months

End of development condition:

21. Decommissioning Method Statement and restoration of the land plans. Works to be submitted prior to 6 months of the expiry of the 40 year permission and returned to agricultural use within 18 months.

Informative:
District licence requirements.

54 P22/S2220/FUL - Dodwells Solar Farm, Land north of the A40, near Milton Common

The committee considered planning application P22/S2220/FUL for the underground cable route to connect Dodwells solar farm to Cowley substation (as amplified by additional information received 21 December 2022), on land at Dodwells Solar Farm, Land north of the A40 near Milton 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 for engineering work to install the cabling needed to take the energy from the solar farm permitted in application P21/S3915/FUL at Dodwells Solar Farm to near the Cowley substation. This route would pass through various villages, single track carriageways, and three bridges.

The planning officer informed the committee that the cable would be installed via a trench in the road, described in the officer report and that when crossing bridges, the intention was to drill under the water course to avoid impacting the river.

It was also noted that SSE, the local electricity provider, controlled the place where the cable site connection would be and that this was outside of the control of the applicant. In addition, he also confirmed that, if application were not approved, SSE would likely have permitted development rights to conduct the work themselves. Therefore, the planning officer emphasised to the committee that the application was an opportunity for the council to put further conditions on a scheme that may make the scheme more acceptable.

Overall, as the proposal would not cause permanent visual changes, and only cause temporary impacts via road closures, and that the application was policy compliant, the planning officer recommended the application be approved.

Simon Hale spoke objecting to the application.

Nick Nixey, the landowner, and Alexander Miejimolle, the agent, spoke in support of the application.

The committee discussed the permitted development rights for SSE and if they could do the work themselves if the application was refused. In response, the planning officer clarified that it was his view that it would be likely that SSE would meet the requirements to do the work under permitted development.

Members asked about the Local Plan and if there were policies about this type of work for cable engineering. In response, the planning officer informed members there was no specific policy on cable engineering but that he used other policies to inform it and that it had met those policies.

Although members noted the potential disruption that would be caused by the application, overall, the committee noted that SSE would likely have permitted development rights for the works and that if it was done through a planning application, they could control certain elements of the scheme. In addition, they noted that once completed, the cables would be invisible.

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

RESOLVED: to approve planning application P22/S2220/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement of development only if main arrays permitted
2. Commencement of development within 3 years
3. Development in accordance with approved plans
4. Tree protection measures and implementation
5. All development, operations and construction within the metalled road surface
6. Construction method, structural strategy and construction details for development at river/stream crossings, bridges and watercourses
7. Construction Environment Management Plan for biodiversity
8. Construction Management Plan for traffic, working hours, noise and dust control, and flood risk mitigation during construction
9. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation
10. Programme of archaeological evaluation

55 P23/S1522/FUL - 60 Haydon Road, Didcot, OX11 7JR

The committee considered planning application P23/S1522/FUL for the extension and conversion of a dwellinghouse (class C3) to a 7-person House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis), on land at 60 Haydon Road, 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 due to the objection of Didcot Town Council.

The Planning Officer informed the committee that work on the previously approved extension had commenced since the report and was published and that point 6.5 in the report should also include reference to the General Permitted Development Order. Under this Order, planning permission is not required for the change of use of a dwelling to an HMO for up to 6 people.

The town council objection about overdevelopment and the lack of parking was discussed by the planning officer. On parking, she noted that there were two off street parking spaces provided, whereas similar applications would expect three spaces. However, the planning officer noted that there were mitigating factors for the application as the site was opposite Didcot Parkway Train Station and within walking

distance of Didcot town centre, and that there were several car parks nearby. For these reasons, highways had no objection to the application.

On overdevelopment, the planning officer assessed the amount of parking provision and amenity space provided. As there were no objections from highways and as the amenity space exceeded the recommendations in the Design Guide, and as the level of accommodation proposed was not unusual in that location, she did not consider the application to be overdevelopment.

The planning officer also informed members of the two recent appeal decisions that were allowed for HMOs, including one on Haydon Road.

Overall, for these reasons, and due to the lack of objections from technical consultees, the planning officer recommended that application be approved.

Jonathan McDermott, the agent representing the applicant, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Ian Snowdon, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

The committee asked if the application would be able to provide the proposed parking spaces, bin storage, and cycle parking at the front of the dwelling. In response, the planning officer confirmed the plans detailed these points and that she had discussed it with highways who also agreed that cycle parking, bins, and two required parking spaces could be provided.

On a question about the provision of two shower rooms for two bedrooms, the planning officer confirmed that applicant would need to apply for a license for the HMO and at that time the licensing team would assess the facilities and decide if more facilities would be needed.

Some members expressed concerns about the number of parking spaces provided for the future occupants, and that residents might try to park on the street. However, it was agreed that the location of the application being so close to the town centre and the train station would mean that this amount of parking would be sufficient. In response to a point about the road being turned into residents-only parking, the planning team leader noted that parking permits were separate to the planning regime.

Overall, as members considered there to be a need for HMO housing, and as they could see no material planning reasons for refusal, they agreed to approve the application 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 P23/S1522/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

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

3. Materials as on plan
4. Provide parking in accordance with plan prior to occupation.
5. Provide details of cycle parking and implement prior to occupation
6. Submit Green Travel Plan for approval and implement
7. Provide a bird box prior to occupation

56 P22/S4391/FUL - 36 Greenmere, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, OX10 0QQ

Councillor Ben Manning declared an interest in item and left the meeting room during consideration of this application.

The committee considered planning application P22/S4391/FUL for a new three bedroom house with associated parking (amended plan to reduce the height of the dwelling, alter car parking and drainage layout and show surrounding street scene elevations received 25 May 2023 and 27 June 2023), on land at 36 Greenmere, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell.

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 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council. The parish council's objection was principally about the precedent it would set for building in back gardens as well as over the concerns around access.

The planning officer informed the committee that the site was in the built-up area of the village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell for a three-bed dwelling which, in his opinion, would represent infill as it was closely surrounded by other dwellings and would fit in with the local character.

The proposed dwelling would front onto the road to the north and be 1.8 metres below the neighbouring dwellings to the north-west due to the site levels. The planning officer added that the proposal met the required distance between the windows of the dwelling and neighbouring properties as required in the Design Guide.

The planning officer also noted the concern of neighbours about harm to their amenity during the construction phase and clarified that a condition on times of works could be included on an approval of the application.

In addition, as the car parking proposed was policy compliant, highways had no objection subject to car parking compliance condition. A vehicle traffic plan was also provided, which highways considered and found to be acceptable as they believe the application would result in a modest increase in vehicle numbers that would be unlikely to adversely impact the highway.

Overall, as there was no objection from technical consultees, and on balance the benefits of the scheme outweighed the harm, the planning officer recommend that the application be approved.

Councillor James Davys spoke on behalf of Brightwell-Cum-Sotwell Parish Council, objecting to the application.

Kelsey Proctor, the applicant, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Ben Manning, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

The committee asked about the access to the proposed dwelling and about the concerns raised by neighbours. In response, the planning officer clarified that highways assessed the access in the redline application area, and the visibility and car manoeuvring out of the site, and they found it to be acceptable. He also informed the committee that highways noted that it was an existing access that would be used but that the speed cars would be going would be low and the addition of an addition dwelling would have limited impacts.

Overall, as members agreed that the site was an infill development, and as highways had no objection, they could see no material planning reasons for refusal and so agreed to approve the application 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/S4391/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement 3 years - Full Planning Permission
2. Approved plans
3. Surface water drainage
4. Foul water drainage
5. Landscaping Scheme (trees and shrubs only)
6. Parking & Manoeuvring Areas
7. Energy statement compliance
8. Electric Vehicles Charging Point (implementation)
9. Cycle Parking Facilities
10. Materials as on plan
11. Community Infrastructure Levy - informative
12. Brightwell cum Sotwell Neighbourhood Plan - informative
13. S151 informative
14. S137 informative

57 P23/S1067/FUL - Double Tree by Hilton Oxford Belfry, Milton Common, OX9 2JW

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

The committee considered planning application P23/S1067/FUL for a temporary fixed period retention of the existing eight staff accommodation caravans in the same location within the hotel grounds (as amplified by information received 18 May 2023), on land at Delta Tree by Hilton Oxford Belfry, Milton 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 informed the committee that the report should be updated as the location of the site was the 'Double Tree' not 'Delta Tree'.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that the application was brought to the committee due to the objection of Tiddington Parish Council.

The site itself was located to the northwest of the hotel and currently had permission for four dwellings for staff of the hotel. This permission period for the dwellings was granted in 2015 and extended a further two times in which the last permission ended on 16 October 2022. The application sought retention of the caravans for another two years while a permanent solution could be brought forward.

The planning officer also highlighted that since the last permission was granted, the Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan had been adopted which made specific reference to the hotel in the policy to retain and improve commercial business and services.

A pre-application submission was submitted for a permanent housing solution but the planning officer informed members that a full application was not yet submitted to the council. Therefore, for this reason, and as the economic benefit outweighed any potential harm from the caravans continuing to remain on site, the planning officer recommended that the application for a two year extension should be approved.

John Starkey, the applicant, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Tim Bearder and Georgina Heritage, local ward councillors, spoke in support of the application.

The committee asked about where the proposed permanent accommodation for staff would be in the site plan when the application was submitted and the planning officer confirmed it would be where the caravans were currently located, and so the caravans would need to be removed if the permanent accommodation was approved.

Members asked about the reasons the caravans were needed, and if the status of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union was a factor. In response, the planning officer noted that it was a factor as to why the hotel had struggled to attract staff and why housing was needed to encourage workers, but the planning team leader clarified that the reasons behind the hotel's difficulty in recruiting staff was not materially relevant to the application.

Overall, as the committee believed that the two year permission would be sufficient time for the applicant to submit and build a permanent solution for the staff housing, they agreed that the application should 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 P23/S1067/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

1. Temporary use for 2 years
2. Limit number of caravans to 8

58 P23/S1760/FUL - Santannas Place, Watlington Road, Stadhampton, OX44 7UQ

As the meeting time had expired, the application was deferred to another meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.42 pm

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