

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 2 June 2021 at 6.00 pm in AFC Telford United, New Bucks Stadium, Watling Street, Wellington, Telford, TF1 2TU

Present: Councillors G H Cook, N A Dugmore, I T W Fletcher, J Loveridge (Vice-Chair), R Mehta, K Middleton, G L Offland (as substitute for J Jones), P J Scott and C F Smith (Chair)

In Attendance: I Ross (Legal Advisor), A Gittins (Area Team Planning Manager – West), M Bailey (Planning Officer), A Howells (Planning Officer) and J Clarke (Democracy Officer)

Apologies: Councillor J Jones

PC164 Declarations of Interest

None.

PC165 Deferred/Withdrawn Applications

None.

PC166 Site Visits

None.

PC167 Planning Applications for Determination

Members had received a schedule of planning applications to be determined by the Committee and fully considered each report.

PC168 TWC/2020/1076 - Land opposite, 15-22 Woodside, Coalbrookdale, Telford, Shropshire

This was an application for the erection of 1 no. dwelling and shed following the demolition of the existing summerhouse and shed with associated landscaping and tree works on land opposite 15-22 Woodside, Coalbrookdale, Telford, Shropshire.

This application was before Committee due to the number and nature of representations from the public against the officer recommendation and in the opinion of the Development Management Service Delivery Manager that this was sufficient to require that the application should be determined by the Planning Committee.

A site visit had taken place on the afternoon prior to the meeting.

The Planning Officer informed Members that this application was located within the Severn Gorge conservation area and within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and that listed buildings were in close proximity. The site have been previously subject to an application for a more traditional style of building on a higher point of the site. The previous application was withdrawn. The current application had been refined and nestled into the site which reduced the impact and, with reference to paragraph 196 of National Planning Policy Framework, Officers considered that the proposal would result in a less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. The benefits were its sustainable location, the contribution to the local economy during and after the construction phase and the contribution to the housing land requirement. It will also have environmental benefits through its construction methods including the collection of grey and rain water, sedum and moss roof, air pumps and solar gain – the rain water would be collected in tanks and recycled and there would be electric car charging points on site. It was considered that after undertaking the necessary planning balance, with due weight given to the statutory presumption in favour of preservation that the benefits outweighed the harm. It was requested that additional conditions be added to the recommendation being that the permitted development rights be removed; the submission and approval of samples of mortar and brick bond and that the development be undertaken in accordance with the recommendation of the Stability Report.

Mr Proudfoot spoke against the application on behalf of the local residents who felt that the garden land at the centre of the community was unsuitable for development, it was steep sloping and there would be loss of flora, fauna and wildlife. This was a green space and the development could result in land slippage, increased traffic, drainage issues and it was against policy. Applications for a hardstanding at a nearby properties had been refused as it was believed it would cause significant harm and detract from the conservation area. This proposal would cause more harm and it was necessary to control infill development. It would affect the universal value, topographical and long range views which was legally deemed a material consideration. The benefits did not outweigh the harm as there were not benefits to residents from the plot and was a detriment to privacy and they would be overlooked. It was currently only occupied for a few hours and this would change. It had been garden land since the 1800s and it would affect the intrinsic value and biodiversity and would contribute to a cumulative change to the World Heritage Site and would harm the special character of the location and the spirit of the community that was currently enjoyed.

Mr Wiggins, the Applicant, spoke in favour of the application. This was a complicated site on various levels which Members would have seen from their site visit. The proposal before Members achieved the most appropriate and respectful development. He had lived there for 20 years and have owned the site for 15 years and understood the site and its location and understood the issues that would face the people who lived opposite. It was intended to

make the construction period as painless as possible and would ensure the contractors behaved appropriately. The development threaded through the site and protected trees, flora and fauna and they had taken care to protect and enhance the net gain of biodiversity from the eco house. The original design was hidden and it had been amended to further hide the development within the ground and it had a sedum and moss roof with wildflowers and would make the most of the topography of the site. Previous development plans has put a house on top of the land. The Applicant said that he would respect the neighbours' privacy and would go above and beyond what the local authority required in order to prevent being able to see in through neighbouring windows. He asked Members to approve the forward thinking, progressive and environmentally designed development.

The Planning Officer confirmed that the development was proposed in Stability Zone 2 which imposed limited constraints on the development. The Applicant had produced a site investigation report which confirmed that there was no negative impact which could not be mitigated through foundation design. Car parking had been increased to 3 spaces from 2 on site and that this exceeded the local plan parking requirement. A layby would temporarily be installed off School Road for construction vehicles and a construction management plan would be put in place. There was a comprehensive landscaping proposal which the owners would be required to retain in perpetuity. The impact on the outlook from neighbouring properties was noted, although the proposals met the policy testing for overlooking with no significant loss of privacy. Landscaping would mitigate the visual impact and landscaping could be added without permission. With regard to the test relating to harm to the designated Heritage Assets, the conservation area, World Heritage Site and listed buildings, the level of harm was considered to be less than substantial rather than substantial. Substantial harm was more likely to arise when the proposal concerned something like the demolition of a heritage asset such as a listed building. Within the range of "less than substantial harm" there was a sliding scale and it was determined that, as the proposal was designed to nestle into the landscape, it was at the lower end of the scale, but it was up to Members to come to their own view on this. The benefits of the scheme included environmental and economic benefits. As part of undertaking the balance of consideration the presumption in favour of preservation of the heritage asset applied and officers have had to determine whether the scheme was acceptable by looking at issues such as impact on amenity, parking spaces, stability and these were all taken into account.

During the debate some Members raised issues including what had been done to rectify any land slippage and how would this be mitigated against, why the hardstanding had been refused previously on virtually the same site, was this the right structure for this site?, would a smaller proposal be more acceptable? Concerns were raised regarding whether the innovative and sustainable technologies outweighed the impact on character and appearance, the steep slope and why UPVC windows had been refused previously and yet this dwelling was recommended for approval. It was also suggested that the application went against policy, the objection from the Conservation Officer was mentioned who stated it would cause harm to the

Gorge and its unique characteristics. Some Members also asked if the other planning refusal set a precedent and whether the two applications were comparable. Other Members felt that the site was currently in an awful condition and it was an innovative design, with electric charging points, no highway issues or extra traffic concerns. The new roof would hide the building which would also be hidden by trees in the summer although it may be seen in winter. From the southern aspect it would be picturesque and on balance it was acceptable. Some reassurance was sought on stability and it was asked whether the layby made for construction purposes could become a permanent feature.

The Planning Officer confirmed that the proposed development would be in stability zone 2 and the report itself mentioned soils had medium potential volume change. It was steeply sloping and the foundations would be deepened with piles to a suitable depth. A further walk over investigation would be undertaken once the vegetation had been cleared. The floor slab would be suspended on a raft foundation and any stability issues could be mitigated through foundation design.. With regard to the previous application for a hardstanding, this was part of a wider development including an extension and was further towards the junction of Woodside and School Road with the differences being the low hedge on Woodside and the visibility splays that would have produced an unacceptable open area of hardstanding – the proposal before you does not have any changes to the access which is existing and the boundaries are maintained. The environmental credentials of the application do not have an impact on visual amenity but provide a benefit which is balanced against any harm to visual amenity. The public benefits are that the development was sustainably located with no reliance on a motor vehicle as it was close to essential services. The development did not need to be in keeping with the existing style but the visual impact is assessed and was considered acceptable, it was not a prominent structure and it was supported as it was nestled into the landscape with reduced prominence. With regard to UPVC windows, this was a different test as windows have no public benefit and there was an alternative to UPVC ie wood. Regarding the issues with regard to stability, there is not much more the applicant could have done as they have had a full test and designed foundations to cope with the site conditions. Comments from the Conservation Officer have been balanced against the public benefits do not have to be considered and the planner can form a different view regarding the application as a whole. Every application is judged on its own merits and they can produce different harms and benefits and no planning decision would set a precedent.

On being put to the vote it was, by a majority:

RESOLVED – that in respect of planning application TWC/2020/1076 that delegated authority be granted to the Development Management Service Delivery Manager to grant full planning permission subject to the conditions and informatives set out in the report, together with three further conditions covering removal of permitted development rights, the submission and approval of samples of brick, mortar and bond and requiring the development to be undertaken in accordance with the

recommendations of the Stability Report (with authority to finalise conditions and reasons for approval to be delegated to Development Management Service Delivery Manager).

The meeting ended at 6.44 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday, 30 June 2021