
PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber at Three Rivers House, Northway, Rickmansworth, on Thursday 20 October 2022 from 7.30pm to 7.54pm.

Councillors present:

Steve Drury (Chair)
Sara Bedford
Ruth Clark
Phillip Hearn
Lisa Hudson

Raj Khiroya
Stephen King
Stephen Giles-Medhurst (for Cllr
Chris Lloyd)
David Raw
Phil Williams (for Cllr Stephanie
Singer)

Also in attendance: Parish Councillor Jon Bishop, Chorleywood Parish Council

Officers: Claire Westwood, Sarah Haythorpe

COUNCILLOR STEVE DRURY IN THE CHAIR

PC 5422 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Lloyd and Stephanie Singer with the named substitutes being Councillors Stephen Giles-Medhurst and Phil Williams. A further apology was received from Councillor Matthew Bedford.

PC 55/22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 22 September 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

PC 56/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

None received.

PC 57/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair read out the following statement to the Committee:

“All Members are reminded that they should come to meetings with an open mind and be able to demonstrate that they are open minded. You should only

come to your decision after due consideration of all the information provided, whether by planning officers in the introduction, by applicants/agents, by objectors or by fellow Councillor's. The Committee Report in itself is not the sole piece of information to be considered. Prepared speeches to be read out are not a good idea. They might suggest that you have already firmly made up your mind about an application before hearing any additional information provided on the night and they will not take account information provided at Committee. You must always avoid giving the impression of having firmly made up your mind in advance no matter that you might be pre-disposed to any particular view."

PC 58/22 22/0948/FUL – Demolition of existing dwelling and construction of detached dwelling with basement level, accommodation within the roof served by dormers to front and rear, alterations to land levels to front and rear, additional hardstanding and insertion of front boundary wall and gates at 80 VALLEY ROAD, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORSHIRE, WD3 4BJ

The Planning Officer reported that there was no officer update.

Chorleywood Parish Councillor Jon Bishop said when the Parish Council calls in an application they ask if the plans change could they be advised so that they can see if they wish to revise their comments which could mean no longer wishing to call in the application. This had not happened. They would speak trying to anticipate what the comments may have been on the new plans. The original plans were now no longer on the planning portal so it was not possible to compare them with the new plans. Looking at the new plans there appeared to be some inconsistencies between the plans provided. Whilst the block plans and location plans show the boundaries as being straight the plans which show the 45 degree splay lines actually show it curving which changes the outcome of the 45 degree splay line, which although subtle, made a difference. The Committee were asked to consider deferring the application to allow for the original plans to be put back on the portal and for any inconsistencies to be checked and corrected if necessary and for the Parish to review and if necessary provide revised comments. If the Committee does wish to determine the application tonight we ask that you refuse the application. We are pleased that the gates at the front of the building have been moved back to the required distance from the highway and there is now an arboricultural report but the sheer mass and bulk of this building is still a real concern particularly with regard to its highly elevated position over Valley Road. In the streetscene it shows how big this property would be compared with the building next door. The ridge height would be increased by nearly 2 metres and whereas the two houses either side go to a point the ridge height would be the whole width of the house therefore increasing the scale and bulk. The 45 degree splay line due to the three storeys would have a more imposing feel.

The Planning Officer apologised if the Parish were not notified about the amended plans which would be raised with officers. In terms of the original plans not being available on the portal it was not possible to check at this time but the plans being considered are on the portal and the Planning Officer did not believe there was any procedural reason why the Committee could not consider the application before them. Looking at the comments made by the Parish Council on the original plans they could provide comments on whether

or not there had been any changes to the plan which may or may have affected those comments although officers are not suggesting what the Parish may or may not have said. Concerns were raised regarding the bulk and mass of the development and the ridge height. Members were shown the illustrative streetscene and some photographs which showed pictures of one of the neighbouring properties. There was quite a lot of variation in Valley Road and particularly in this part of the road and for the reasons set out in the report officers consider that the proposal is acceptable and that the ridge height, although being raised, would not be out of character. The Planning Officer noted that there was 1.5 metre spacing to both boundaries. Given the variation it would not be significantly higher than one of the neighbours who had a very deep ridge which would not be out of character. Concerns were raised regarding the 45 degree line but one of the amendments was that the first floor would be reduced in depth in order to not breach the 45 degree line. The 45 degree line is taken from a point on the boundary and it would not intrude when taken from the boundary. Officers had considered the spacing and do not feel it would be harmful to neighbours. There was concerns regarding impact on trees but an arboricultural report had been submitted which the Landscape Officer had reviewed and raised no objections subject to conditions. There was some initial concerns regarding the location of the entrance gates but they had been set back now and Highways had confirmed this was acceptable. Concerns were raised regarding the principle of development and sustainability but the Council do not have a policy that restricts demolition and ultimately the replacement building would be of a much higher energy efficiency. This could not be a reason for refusal of planning permission.

Councillor Raj Khiroya said as the Ward Councillor and a Parish Councillor for Chorleywood, they had been to the site, viewed the neighbouring properties, read the officers report and listened to the officer verification given this evening. They sought clarification on the consultation and wondered if there had been any objections as they did not feel there were any here.

The Planning Officer advised there was the objection from the Parish Council but they had not been notified of the amendments. There had been no neighbour comments either in support or objections.

Councillor David Raw noticed that they were going to have a basement and wondered if this would mean some major digging out and wondered if there would be any problems either side to the land/properties.

The Planning Officer advised that the granting of planning permission did not overcome the requirement to comply with other legislation including Building Regulations. It would not be a true basement because of the land level changes and would appear three storey from the front with the garage proposed within the basement. The photos helped in outlining which elements were staying and where excavation would take place.

Councillor Sara Bedford said this application was within Chorleywood North and Sarratt and not within the ward identified in the report. They were struggling looking at the streetscene and the depth of the house to see anything that was particularly an issue and was struggling to find a reason not to go with the recommendation.

The Planning Officer noted the details on the application being listed in the wrong ward.

Councillor Philip Hearn referred to the boundary lines with one being a straight line but the other with the 45 degree line having a slight kink. If you took the boundary treatment along the red line there would be a slight increased ingress into the second/third floor although minor. On the CO2 emissions of demolishing the house and rebuilding it they believed that it took on average 34 years for the increased energy efficiency from a new house to counterbalance the huge amounts of CO2 emissions from demolishing the house but accepted this was not a rationale for refusing the application. On the planning conditions there was a requirement for submission of building materials but when you read the NPPF there is no requirement on which conditions are required to be discharged before development commences. The Member wondered if this should be avoided unless there is a clear justification and wondered why there was a need for a condition on building materials in an area which is not within a Conservation Area.

The Planning Officer noted the point made on demolition and regarding the 45 degree line but it was important to note that it was not the case that if something protruded the 45 degree line then it should be refused it was a guidance figure. You also have to look at land level changes and spacing but did not feel there would be an unacceptable impact on the neighbouring properties. On the condition, it was not a pre commencement condition as such, as it was before building operations above ground levels so would have a slightly different trigger point. Officers felt that whilst there is no objection in principle to the proposed design or materials indicated there are some elements, i.e. the green wall which are different and officers wanted to ensure they are of a high quality to enhance the design and felt that the condition is justified and meets the tests. The application site was not in the Conservation Area but it was not uncommon to require details and felt it was appropriate.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst asked about the impact on the trees, the arboricultural impact assessment and the effect on the ancient woodland and wanted to seek clarification that we now have sufficient information relating to the trees. The arboricultural report by GDH trees what was not clear whether any significant trees or any other trees would be impacted as the report did refer to TROs on the site. Would any trees be removed as part of this application? There were extensive comments on the original comments and verbatim extractions from the Highways Authority in terms of what they originally said about the gates but the only comment in the report is not the full extraction from their formal comments although they now no longer have any objections as their points have been overcome. The Councillor would have expected to have put the original verbatim comments in with the final comments.

The Planning Officer responded that on tree points generally the Tree and Landscape Officer is satisfied that there is now sufficient information in the report which had been submitted to enable them to comment on the application and determine that it is acceptable subject to the conditions they suggested. With regards to the Highways comments their understanding was that written comments were not provided the second time from the Highways officer which was why they were not quoted verbatim. They were sent the amended plan and a discussion with the officer took place which is not uncommon with timeframes. If written comments were received officers would look to include them in the report. Confirmation was provided that there was no proposal to remove any trees.

Councillor Phil Williams said it was a shame the Parish were not given the opportunity to review the revised plans or be consulted on them. Having looked at this and heard the arguments and discussions and the fact that none of the neighbours had complained or voiced any opinion the Councillor wished to move the recommendation that planning permission be granted, seconded by Councillor Raj Khuroya, as set out in the office report.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That Planning Permission be GRANTED in accordance with officer recommendation and in accordance with the conditions and informatives set out in the officer report.

CHAIR