



Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Planning Environment & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 26th July at Birchwood Leisure Centre, Longmead, Hatfield AL10 0AN at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Daisy Jerobon – Chair
Councillor Tim Rowse – Vice Chair
Councillor Margaret Eames-Petersen
Councillor Cathy Watson
Councillor Mick Wise

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Gareth Aicken

OFFICERS: Jonah Anthony (Town Clerk)
Jane Anderson (Office Manager)

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Nigel Upson, and for the late arrival of Cllr Eames-Petersen (from agenda item 8b below) and early departure of Cllr Jerobon (from agenda item 11 onwards).

5. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions.

6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday May 24th 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair.

7. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were none.

8. APPLICATIONS

Before Members discussed the planning applications under considerations, they noted that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council had made a number of changes to their constitution. This included clarification and some changes to when parish and town councils could 'call-in' a planning application by raising a major objection. The Town Clerk explained that in practice this would make little change to the Town Council

practices, as major objections were usually kept for major developments. However there have been occasions when the Town Council had raised major objections against individual household planning application as it believed the harm caused by the development was too high. In future the Town Council would not have that option. Members therefore agreed that in such cases, the Committee would write to the relevant Borough Ward Councillors who retained their right to 'call in' any planning application in their ward.

Application Number	Address	Proposal	Comments
6/2023/0456/FULL	5 West View Hatfield Hertfordshire AL10 0PJ	Installation of a front and rear dormer to facilitate the conversion of a loft into six habitable rooms and storage, spiral fire escape to the right of the property and erection of two rear outbuildings	<p>MAJOR OBJECTION</p> <p>The Town Council noted a number of design which, it assess, means the proposal falls foul of Planning Policy D1 and D2 which requires a good standard of design. The proposed top floor extension of the existing building would significantly change the character of the building and setting of the area (which is of dominated by two story buildings, with no commercial properties rising to three storeys).</p> <p>The additional clientele would add to the parking issues already experienced at this site, which has impacted on neighbouring properties. Whilst current planning policy is to show restraint in order to encourage more sustainable transport options, the reality is that guest at this hotel create parking issues for residents. If planning permission is to be granted to allow the hotel to grow, it must be on condition that parking restrictions are put in place, potentially through a residents parking permit scheme, to protect residents.</p> <p>The top floor extension, as designed, have windows looking directly into the neighbouring properties, significantly reducing their privacy. The Town Council assess this to be contrary to the principles set out in Planning Policy D1.</p> <p>However the application to build two outbuildings is the most concerning aspect of the planning application. As well as being a clear example of overdevelopment for this site, the Town Council assesses the site as being totally unsuitable for the size of hotel that the developer would like to envisage. As well as adding to the parking issues at this particular site, the envisaged high turnover of guests at this low cost hotel is likely to cause harm to the neighbourhood without adding to the local economy. The development would also create a safety risk as it is not clear whether the emergency services could easily access the rear outbuildings. These rear buildings would also have a detrimental affect on the neighbouring properties. Together this further supports the Town Council's view that this proposal falls foul of Planning Policy D1.</p>

6/2023/1324/FULL	16 Comet Road Hatfield AL10 0SX	Erection of three storey side extension for conversion to 3 flats	<p>OBJECTION</p> <p>The Town Council do not believe this proposal represents good design principles– and breach the principles laid out in planning policy D1. Negative aspects of the design included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient bin provisions (each flat would need two bins each to ensure its residents can recycle – the diagram only shows 5 in total, with no space for food waste) - Lack of communal space for each of the flats, except for a relatively small kitchen - The parking and bike storage provisions for the first and second flats are only accessible by walking around the building, and potentially the entire block depending on how narrow the side path between the property and its neighbour becomes. - The Town Council also assess the closing of the gap between the property and the neighbouring property as a clear example of over development. <p>Of greater concern would be the loss of a family home, and threat to other family homes in the area. Whilst the property may not currently be used as a single family dwelling, it would not be difficult to return it to being a family home. However should the proposal be given planning approval and the property is converted into three flats, a precedent would be set and it may prove impossible to prevent other family sized homes from being converted into flats.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the Town Council’s objection, should planning permission be granted, it must be on the condition that all relevant building standards are met, including any fire safety requirements give that there is only one safe exit for the first and second floor apartments.</p>
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9. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Members received a presentation from the Town Clerk on the community groups that the Town Council may wish to engage with. The presentation highlighted established relationships the Town Clerk had assessed to be strong, those which would need some work to make productive and those which had either never been cultivated, or had been lost (especially post-Covid). Members agreed that the numerous options required the Council to think strategically on where its focus and resources should be directed in order to have the greatest impact and meets its own objectives. The absence of a strong relationship with the University was noted as a particular disappointment. The Town Clerk was asked to circulate the presentation to all Councillors and ask for feedback and suggestions for prioritisation before the next Committee meeting (6 September 2023). Going forward Members noted that it may wish to set up a particular

Task and Finish Group to devise a stakeholder strategy, especially given any budgetary implications and/or cost/benefit calculations.

10. BIRCHALL GARDEN SUBURB MASTER PLAN

Members received an update on the joint Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council /Eat Herts District Council stakeholder exercise regarding the proposed Birchall Garden Suburb Master Plan. It was noted that this was separate from the planning application which had been submitted by the landowner, Tarmac.

Whilst there were a number of differences between the Master Plan and planning application, they both failed to take into account the proximity of parts of the development with Hatfield rail station, town centre and other amenities.

Members instructed the Town Clerk to write to the relevant team to highlight this point, using the material sent in response to the planning application.

Unfortunately Cllr Jerobon was required to give her apologies as she was unable to stay for the remainder of the meeting. Cllr Rowse took the Chair for the remaining agenda items.

11. HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON DRAFT ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY

Members received an update on the Hertfordshire County Council consultation on draft active travel strategy. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the Town Clerk would complete the survey on behalf of the Town Council, emphasising the benefits of promoting the Alban Way as a sustainable walking and cycling route through the town. This policy should concentrate on improving the maintenance, junctions and accessibility of the existing network rather than building a completely separate network alongside the road network. Ideally new cycle routes and walking paths should be installed which links the Alban Way with amenities and residential areas in Hatfield, and also seeks to link the university campuses. This new investment in infrastructure should also be accompanied by an educational/marketing campaign targeted at both cyclists and walkers to ensure they know how best to cohabit on this shared asset.

12. RAIL DELIVERY GROUP CONSULTATION ON TICKET OFFICE CLOSURE

Cllr Rowse informed the Committee that the political group leaders at Hatfield Town Council had agreed a joint letter opposing the proposed closure of ticketing offices across the rail network. The text of the letter was shared and the Committee agreed it was important to send a strong, cross party message to the Government and train operators that the Council and its residents opposed the closure.

13. WHBC:HATFIELD MARKET PLACE REDEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION

The Town Clerk brought Members' attention to a new survey being carried out by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council on how best to utilise the old market place in Hatfield. Members were minded to support the installation of a feature would enhance the space and attract shoppers to the town centre. However it did not believe the market place was the right location for a new skate park/space of young people. Instead it would support the retention of the Link Drive skate park, and the installation of a larger facility

close by. In fact the Town Council would be prepared to host a multi-skill level skate and wheels park in one of its nearby parks, potentially Roe Hill or Millward Parks. This is in recognition that more facilities for young people are desperately needed in Hatfield. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would circulate a link to the survey to all Councillors, with a proposed written response in line with the position the Committee was minded to take.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 6th September 2023.

CLOSED 21.30pm

Chairman _____