

THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2020

Minutes of a meeting of the **Development Committee** held remotely via Zoom at 9.30 am when there were present:

Councillors

Mrs P Grove-Jones (Chairman)
Mr P Heinrich (Vice-Chairman)

Mr A Brown
Mr P Fisher
Mrs W Fredericks
Mr N Lloyd
Mr A Varley

Mr C Cushing
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Mr R Kershaw
Mr G Mancini-Boyle
Mr A Yiasimi

Mr V FitzPatrick (substitute for Mr N Pearce)

Mr N Dixon (Hoveton & Tunstead Ward)

Observers:

Mr H Blathwayt
Miss L Shires
Mr J Toyne

Officers

Mr P Rowson, Head of Planning
Mr C Reuben, Senior Planning Officer
Ms F Croxen, Lawyer
Miss L Yarham, Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Regulatory)

25 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DETAILS OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBER(S)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N Pearce. One substitute Member attended the meeting as shown above.

26 MINUTES

The minutes of meetings of the Committee held on 20 August and 17 September 2020 were approved as a correct record.

27 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

29 SMALLBURGH - PF/19/1287 - CONVERSION AND EXTENSION OF TRADITIONAL BARNS TO OFFICES (B1) AND USE OF PORTAL FRAME BARN FOR ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING; CHURCH FARM, CHURCH ROAD,

SMALLBURGH, NR12 9NB FOR WORSTEAD FARMS LTD

The Senior Planning Officer presented the report and referred to the slides that had previously been circulated to the Committee. He recommended the approval of this application as set out in the report.

Public Speaker

Mr Gavin Paterson (supporting)

Councillor N Dixon, a local Member, stated that as the previous Cabinet Member for Economic Development, he fully recognised the importance of regenerating redundant premises to support the local economy. However, it was necessary to take into account the local infrastructure and the environment. In this case, the degree of reliance on the poor local road network and car travel made the location unsustainable for a business centre with conference facilities. He outlined his concerns with regard to road safety in respect of traffic exiting the site close to the A1151/A149 junction. He considered that the site was too remote for the applicant's aspirations with regard to bus transport to be effective and that most travel would be by car. He fully supported the objections raised by the Highway Authority and Parish Council on sustainability grounds, and expressed surprise that the Highway Authority had not objected on highway safety grounds. He was also surprised at the officer recommendation given that sustainability was promoted in the Council's Corporate Plan. He referred to comments made to him by the applicant that other non-agricultural business activities had been established on the site without planning permission, the traffic impacts of which would not have been taken into account by the Highway Authority. He requested that this application be refused as the location was unsustainable and unsafe.

The Head of Planning stated that enforcement and unauthorised uses were not material planning considerations.

Councillor R Kershaw considered that the proposal did not amount to a business centre, but it was office accommodation to support the agricultural sector in East Anglia. He supported small businesses locating to the countryside and considered that the restoration of the Grade II listed barn to be an advantage. He proposed the Officer's recommendation to approve this application.

Councillor N Lloyd commended the thoroughness of the proposal, particularly with regard to biodiversity. He asked what would happen in the event of a European Protected Species Licence not being granted.

The Head of Planning explained that protected species licensing was a separate legal process, but it was necessary to impose standard conditions to require a licence to be granted prior to the commencement of work.

The Lawyer added that the condition to require the licence to be granted prior to commencement was enforceable.

Councillor Lloyd stated that he had used the road many times and it was a quiet lane, with agricultural vehicles being the main problem. He agreed with the comments relating to supporting agriculture in the area, and he was pleased that the applicant had made good provision for renewable energy. He seconded the proposal.

Councillor C Cushing questioned how the proposal met the sustainability criteria in CT5, given the comments of the local Member, Parish Council and the Highway Authority.

The Senior Planning Officer stated that Officers had acknowledged in the report that this was a finely balanced decision. The proposal would generate traffic but there was a possibility of using public transport options, a walking route into Smallburgh and various sustainability measures, including electric vehicle charging points. Taking into account the economic benefits and reuse of the Grade II listed building, which would secure its future, Officers considered that the balance was tipped in favour of approval.

Councillor V FitzPatrick stated that he was in favour of the application as it supported economic development in a rural location and protected for the future a semi-redundant heritage asset. He considered that traffic to and from the site would mostly be from local car drivers using roads they were familiar with, rather than HGVs or agricultural vehicles, and suggested a site inspection to look at any potential traffic issues.

The Chairman considered that a site inspection would not be necessary as the information supplied to Members explained the situation.

Councillor A Yiasimi stated that every application had to be considered on its merits, and he supported this application bearing in mind the positive aspects of the proposal.

Councillor G Mancini-Boyle stated that whilst he applauded the proposed development, he had concerns regarding the highway situation.

Councillor A Varley considered that the application was very finely balanced but the positive aspects had to be taken into account. He considered that the Authority should encourage this proposal as it was economic development, allowing the company to grow and thrive and reusing a disused building.

Councillor Mrs A Fitch-Tillett requested clarification as to whether the staff that would be accommodated were already working on the site.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Paterson explained that of the 32 work stations, 6 would be occupied by existing staff with the remainder being let to a third party.

Councillor Mrs Fitch-Tillett stated that there would be an increase in the number of people on the site, but she was familiar with the area and could not recall any particular issues on the A149. She considered that the benefits outweighed any identified highway issues.

The Chairman stated that she knew the area extremely well, and whilst the proposal was contrary to policy to a certain extent, matters of the sustainability of the countryside and economic development had to be considered. This was a contained development which did not appear to imply problems with a vast amount of traffic.

The Head of Planning summarised the relevant issues in this case and advised the Committee with regard to balance, which was a matter for Members' judgement.

RESOLVED by 11 votes to 2

That this application be approved in accordance with the Head of Planning.

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APPEALS SECTION

(a) NEW APPEALS

The Committee noted item 8(a) of the agenda.

(b) INQUIRIES AND HEARINGS - PROGRESS

The Committee noted item 8(b) of the agenda.

The Head of Planning reported that the Council's submission for the public inquiry in respect of Holt PO/18/1857 was due to be made by the end of the day. A significant issue had arisen in that the County Council had now committed to significant levels of funding to deliver the school. Members would be updated at the next meeting on this matter. In response to Members' questions, he confirmed that the inquiry would be held remotely and he would request that all Committee Members and substitutes were given an opportunity to watch the proceedings. It was an important case as it would influence the Council's 5 year housing land supply and method of calculating housing need in the District.

The Head of Planning informed the Committee that submissions had been made to the Planning Inspector in respect of ENF/18/0164 and a date for the inquiry was awaited. It was not known at this stage whether it would be conducted remotely or in person. Officers were continuing to liaise with the local community of Cley and it was hoped to arrange a mediation meeting with the contravener.

The Planning Inspector had asked if the appeal in respect of ENF/16/0131 could be downscaled to a written representations appeal. Local Members had been consulted and a response would be sent to the Inspector with the considered opinion from Ward Members and the Leader of the Council.

(c) WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS APPEALS - IN HAND

The Committee noted item 8(c) of the agenda.

Councillor N Lloyd asked if a date had been set for the appeal in respect of North Walsham ENF/18/0339. The Head of Planning replied that a date had not yet been set, but it was likely that the appellant would submit a planning application to seek to regularise the situation, which may overcome the need to pursue the appeal.

Councillor J Toye stated that the appeal in respect of Erpingham PO/20/0100 had been dismissed.

(d) APPEAL DECISIONS

The Committee noted item 8(d) of the agenda.

(e) COURT CASES – PROGRESS AND RESULTS

The Committee noted item 8(e) of the agenda.

The Head of Planning stated that a report would be prepared for a future meeting in respect of the court case relating to Peacock Lane, Holt.

The meeting closed at 10.30 am.

CHAIRMAN
Thursday, 15 October 2020