

THURSDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2021

Minutes of a meeting of the **Development Committee** held in the 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 C Cushing
Mr P Fisher	Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Mrs W Fredericks	Mr R Kershaw
Mr N Lloyd	Mr G Mancini-Boyle
Mr N Pearce	Dr C Stockton
Mr A Varley	Mr A Yiasimi

Mr J Toye - observer

Officers

Mr P Rowson, Assistant Director for Planning
Mr N Doran, Principal Lawyer
Mr G Lyon, Major Projects Manager
Miss L Yarham, Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Regulatory)
Mr M Stembrowicz, Democratic Services and Governance Officer (Scrutiny)

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

None.

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None.

74 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

With the agreement of the Chairman, the Assistant Director of Planning stated that the Committee would be updated on the Vanguard Wind Farm appeal under item 7 of the agenda.

75 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

76 KELLING - PF/20/1056- DEMOLITION OF FORMER CARE HOME BUILDINGS AND ERECTION OF 8NO. DWELLINGS, CAR PARKING, ASSOCIATED ACCESS AND LANDSCAPING; KELLING PARK, HOLGATE HILL, KELLING, HOLT, NR25 7ER

The Assistant Director for Planning presented the report and referred to the presentation that had been circulated to the Committee. He reported that Economic Development had no in principle objection to this application as there would be no

immediate job losses, but considered that there was a lack of evidence to satisfy Policy CT3 in relation to the loss of community facilities. A viability assessment was warranted to determine suitability and evidence of marketing to demonstrate that the use of the building in this location was no longer required, or robust evidence should be provided to confirm that alternative provision of equivalent or better quality was available in the area or would be provided and made available prior to the commencement of the redevelopment of the site.

The Assistant Director for Planning recommended refusal of this application as indicated in the report.

Public Speaker

Geoff Armstrong (supporting)

The comments of the local Member, Councillor Ms K Ward, were read to the Committee. Councillor Ms Ward supported the application as it was a brownfield site with a building that was not fit for purpose or suitable for economic renovation, the proposal would not create more traffic movements than the existing use, the proposed dwellings would not be intrusive, and the development would provide investment in the local community and employment for local trades. She disagreed with Officer comments regarding the Kelling Estate master plan, and with the planning policy assessment. She had referred to the support from the Parish Council and requested that the Committee approve this application.

Councillor J Toye stated that he had been dealing with Councillor Ward's work during her illness. The Chairman stated that she would allow him to speak as an exception but requested that he did not indicate whether or not he supported the application as he was neither a Committee Member nor attending as a substitute.

Councillor Toye commented that this was not an empty site in the middle of the AONB. There was an ugly, poor quality building on the site which would spill light and noise into the surrounding area if occupied. He referred to the comments of the Norfolk Coast Partnership that the site was well screened and could only be glimpsed from the access road and garden centre or the North Norfolk Railway, with the existing garden centre and car park being more visible. He considered that the proposed development would be less noticeable than the current building. In his opinion, the description of the area as a wild, remote and tranquil landscape did not apply to this site, given its previous use and the adjacent garden centre with its associated traffic. He referred to the comments of the Conservation & Design Officer with regard to the design of the proposed dwellings, and to the concerns that had been raised by the applicants regarding the length of time taken to process this application. He drew attention to paragraphs in the Core Strategy and NPPF relating to housing needs and demand, economic impact and development in the AONB.

Councillor P Heinrich considered that the applicant had put forward a good case for replacing the current building with new housing. However, the Assistant Director for Planning had highlighted many issues that had been raised regarding this application. He referred to the previous uses of the site as a hotel and latterly a care home, and considered that the market housing proposed would change the character of this rural site. He considered that given the Committee's recent refusal of an application for new housing development on a brownfield site on the edge of North Walsham, an exception could not be made for this proposal for a larger and more intrusive development in this location. He stated that this application did not

comply with Policies SS1 and SS2, there were no transport links or pedestrian/cycle access to Holt, except along narrow roads, there were no facilities other than the garden centre within walking distance and this was therefore an isolated site in policy terms. Although the additional volume of traffic was small in comparison with the garden centre, the Highway Authority had raised an objection. He considered that the design of the proposed dwellings bore no relation to the local vernacular and would be out of character, with potential for significant light pollution due to the extent of glazing, and did not meet local housing need. He referred to the ecological impacts that had been highlighted, particularly with regard to bats. He suggested that a different view might be taken if the proposal were for reuse or remodelling of the existing building, but he considered that the proposed development was not appropriate for the site. He proposed the Officer's recommendation to refuse this application.

Councillor N Lloyd considered that the proposed dwellings would provide a sustainable, eco-friendly living space, which developers should be encouraged to build given the Council's declaration of a climate emergency. He was disappointed that there was no mitigation for bats and if approved, he requested a condition to require a full ecological report to be submitted. He considered that weight should be given to the brownfield nature of this site. The principle of development had been set by previous buildings on the site, which were rambling and aesthetically poor, and he considered that the proposed new build would enhance the landscape. He was disappointed that there was no mitigation payment or measures to encourage walking and cycling. He did not consider that this proposal would be detrimental to the Countryside given that this was a brownfield site, subject to the imposition of conditions to include those he had requested.

Councillor Mrs A Fitch-Tillett stated that she was Vice-Chairman of the Norfolk Coast Partnership. She referred to the Council's duty to protect and enhance the AONB. She referred to the Norfolk Coast Partnership's comments, which stated that very tight conditions should be imposed, particularly with regard to light pollution. Whilst she had sympathy with the design concerns expressed by Councillor Heinrich, she also had sympathy with Councillor Lloyd's comments regarding the need for sustainable buildings. However, on balance she considered that the protection and enhancement of the AONB was the main consideration and if approved, she considered that visitor mitigation contributions were vital.

Councillor R Kershaw expressed concern that there was little detail regarding bats. He considered that the amount of traffic would be less than the care home use, and referred to the adjacent garden centre in terms of traffic and light pollution. He considered that the existing building was not fit for conversion and was an eyesore, and the proposed buildings would be greener and be an improvement in the AONB. He stated that the proposal would generate local employment and provide funds to allow the Kelling Estate to diversify.

Councillor A Yiasimi referred to the balance in this application. Whilst he was aware of the policy issues, bat protection and the need to consider the AONB, the proposal represented everything the Council was striving for in terms of its green credentials.

Councillor N Pearce stated that this application contravened many of the Council's policies and referred to the issues in the report regarding protected species, highways, brownfield land and landscape impact. He agreed with the Officer's assessment of this application.

Councillor A Brown referred to the policy issues in this case, some of which he

considered could possibly be overcome if the proposal were amended. He was concerned that there was a lack of detail with regard to viability in respect of Policy CT3, and the impact of the proposed development on the nearby dark skies area. He acknowledged that the applicant's representatives had withdrawn their comments with regard to the Council's five year land supply, which had consistently been upheld at planning appeals. He stated that there would be no wider public realm benefits from the proposal, no affordable homes provision and he had concerns regarding the design of the dwellings. He took on board the comments made by Councillor Mrs Fitch-Tillett regarding protection of the area, and whilst he understood what the applicant was trying to achieve, he could not support the application as it stood. He seconded the proposal to refuse this application.

Councillor G Mancini-Boyle supported Councillor Brown's comments, but applauded the applicants for their design and inclusion of green technology.

The Chairman stated that everyone appreciated that this was a difficult application, but reminded the Committee that the current Local Plan policies stood until its replacement came into force.

On being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED by 10 votes to 4

That this application be refused in accordance with the recommendation of the Assistant Director for Planning.

77 VANGUARD WIND FARM APPEAL

The Major Projects Manager reported that the High Court had quashed the Planning Inspector's decision regarding the Vanguard wind farm and there was currently no decision on this application. The matter would now be referred back to the Secretary of State for reconsideration. There was a strong likelihood that the examination would be reopened for this application and the Boreas application as they would use the same route and landfall at Happisburgh, with connection to the grid at Necton, and the proposals therefore affected each other. If the examination were reopened, it would involve more time commitment for himself and colleagues. Members would be kept informed on this matter.

The Major Projects Manager informed the Committee that Hornsea Project 3 had been granted consent in December 2020. This would make landfall at Weybourne and connect to the Norwich main substation. He was not aware that the decision had been challenged.

The Major Projects Manager stated that there was disquiet locally as to how these offshore windfarms would reach the grid connection points. There had been discussion regarding an offshore ring main, but this would not necessarily resolve all the issues and presented a great deal of challenge in terms of offshore infrastructure, impact on marine conservation zones and other possible impacts. There was a need for the country to generate electricity through non-fossil fuel methods and there were many challenges as to how this could be achieved and how it could be connected to the grid. There would be increasing pressure to supply infrastructure to satisfy demand as gas boilers were phased out.

The Chairman stated that underground cables had been laid through the countryside over the last 30 to 40 years and there was no longer any evidence of their existence

on the ground. She considered that the problem with the current proposals was the sensitive nature of the area they would pass through.

The Major Projects Manager explained that the issues were mainly centred around Necton. The substation required for Vanguard would be much larger than the existing Dudgeon substation. The key issue in this case was that approval of the Vanguard scheme would effectively give permission for Boreas by default. The Judge had ruled that the examining authority and the Secretary of State had not considered the cumulative impact issues of the proposal, it had been assessed in an illogical way and the decision breached the EIA Regulations. It was hoped that the Inspector would follow up this matter and issue a sound decision. The Major Projects Manager stated that in his opinion the project was likely to go ahead as there appeared to be no other alternatives for generating electricity. However, there was a need to ensure that the impacts were properly managed and mitigated, particularly for local people who were already badly affected. People were concerned that these projects were not joined up and the construction process would be extended. He hoped that the Government would recognise this District's efforts in enabling these projects to connect to the grid and provide funding for tree planting or improvements to climate change resilience.

Councillor A Brown reported that Duncan Baker MP had raised a question in Parliament and the Prime Minister had agreed to consider the regulatory framework mechanism required to review how the cabling would be installed. Councillor Brown declared that he was a member of Corpusty and Saxthorpe Parish Council, which had recently held discussions with Mr Baker regarding the cabling issue. The new Energy Minister was aware of the problems that multiple cabling could cause in the area and would consider whether the infrastructure of the wind turbines should be the first stage of the development project rather than the cabling, thus allowing more time to consider alternatives in greater detail. He stated that if the Hornsea project went ahead with AC transmission there would be a substation built close to Edgefield and there would be a very significant amount of disturbance in the area.

Councillor R Kershaw referred to the South North Sea Hydrogen East project which tied in with Vattenfall and the growth of windfarms in the North Sea. These windfarms were essential to provide the power needed to generate the green hydrogen required to protect the climate, and the Climate Change Committee 10 point plan was now putting weight behind these developments. An opportunity had been missed some years ago to develop an offshore ring main that these fields could feed into and it was now not possible given the timeframe for their construction. He emphasised the importance of wind power in turning the economy around, protecting the AONB and saving the planet.

Councillor N Lloyd stated that failing to bring these projects through would lead to the destruction of the AONB and SSSIs through rising sea levels. He referred to the oil and gas industry, which had worked together to share pipelines very successfully over the past 40 years. He had been petitioned strongly at the Environment Forum in 2019 by residents of Reephams, who accepted some disruption in order to lay cables, but objected to multiple excavations which were unnecessary, and he had raised these issues with Vanguard. He considered that the Government needed to sort out the cabling route issue quickly, as projects such as these would save the country from flooding and protect areas such as North Norfolk.

The Major Projects Manager stated that Vanguard had been persuaded to lay ducting for the Boreas scheme at the same time. The issue of grid connectivity was higher up in the process and needed direction from the Government. Whilst it

appeared that this issue was to be considered, he was unsure if it would be early enough for these schemes.

Holt

The Major Projects Manager reported that the decision was still awaited in respect of Beresford Road, Holt and he would let Members know the outcome when it was received.

The meeting closed at 10.54 am.

CHAIRMAN
Thursday, 8 April 2021