

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held on
Wednesday, 10 February 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor John Batchelor – Chair

Councillors:	Dr. Claire Daunton (substitute)	Anna Bradnam
	Dr. Martin Cahn	Peter Fane
	Dr. Tumi Hawkins	Brian Milnes (substitute)
	Deborah Roberts	Heather Williams
	Dr. Richard Williams	Nick Wright

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Christopher Carter (Delivery Manager - Strategic Sites), Aaron Coe (Senior Planning Officer), Alistair Funge (Planning Enforcement Officer), Tom Gray (Planning Officer), Stephen Reid (Senior Planning Lawyer), Ian Senior (Democratic Services Officer), Michael Sexton (Senior Planning Officer) and Luke Waddington (Senior Planner)

1. Chair's announcements

For the benefit of members of the public viewing the live webcast of the meeting, the Chair introduced Committee members and officers in attendance.

He explained that this meeting of the Planning Committee was being held virtually and asked for patience bearing in mind the challenges posed by the technology in use and by the new meeting skills required.

The Chair confirmed that the Planning Committee would continue with the practice of recording votes unless a resolution could be reached by affirmation. He explained the process he would follow in a virtual meetings environment.

He confirmed that the meeting was quorate but informed members of the public that, if a Committee member was absent for any part of the presentation of or debate about an agenda item then that member would not be allowed to vote on that item.

2. Apologies

Councillors Pippa Heylings and Judith Rippeth sent Apologies for Absence. Councillors Dr. Claire Daunton and Brian Milnes were present as substitutes.

In Councillor Heylings' absence, and by affirmation, the Committee that Councillor Anna Bradnam be appointed Vice-Chair of the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor John Batchelor declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 5 (S/3921/19/FL - Little Abington (Bancroft Farm, Church Lane)). As one of the local Members, Councillor

John Batchelor had been present at Parish Council meetings where this application had been discussed. However, he had not taken part in those discussions and would be considering the matter afresh.

Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 6 (20/02833/FUL - Fulbourn (6 Pierce Lane)). Having taken legal advice, Councillor Daunton would withdraw from the Committee for the duration of this item, take no part in the debate and would not vote. The agenda report contained her reasons as a local Member for asking that the application be determined by committee and made it clear that she objected to the proposal.

However, she had been granted dispensation to address the meeting as a local Member.

Councillor Deborah Roberts declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 9 (20/04223/HFUL - Fowlmere (20A Pipers Close)) as a member of Fowlmere Parish Council. Councillor Roberts would be considering the matter afresh.

Councillor Heather Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 7 (20/04710/HFUL - Steeple Morden (8 Craft Way)) because the proposal would have a visual impact on her father's home. Councillor Williams would not take part in the debate or vote but had asked Councillor Nick Wright to address any issues that she herself would have addressed as the local Member.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

By affirmation, those present at the meeting on 13 January 2021 authorised the Chair to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of that meeting subject to the following:

Minute 7 (S/3215/19/DC - Longstanton (The Retreat, Fews Lane))

Councillor Heather Williams was in fact present but did not feel she had enough information on which to vote. Therefore, the word 'not' should be deleted and the text in brackets at the end of the minute reworded to read:

“(Councillors Henry Batchelor, Bradnam, Cahn, Fane, Hawkins, Heylings, Richard Williams, Wilson and Wright voted to discharge the Conditions. Councillor Heather Williams was present but felt she did not have enough information upon which to vote so did not vote. Councillor Roberts was not present during part of the consideration of this application and did not vote.)”

(Councillors John Batchelor and Brian Milnes had not been present on 13 January 2021 and were not part of the affirmation.)

Referring to Minute 11 (Enforcement Report), Councillor Nick Wright noted that, although his request for an update relating to Smithy Fen, Cottenham had been minuted, no such update had been included as part of the agenda for the current meeting. The Delivery Manager (Strategic Sites) assured Councillor Wright that a verbal update would be given later on in the meeting.

5. S/3921/19/FL - Little Abington (Bancroft Farm, Church Lane)

The case officer corrected two typographical errors in the agenda report. In paragraph 14 referred to comments from Little Abington Parish Council and not Great Abington Parish Council. In paragraph 154, the trees identified as T3 and T5 as good quality (Category B) rather than moderate to low quality (Category C).

Tony Orgee (objector), Jon Jennings (applicant's agent), Councillor Sheila Bolden (Little Abington Parish Council). And Councillor Henry Batchelor (a local Member) addressed the meeting.

Councillor Nick Wright supported development on former farm sites in principle but was not convinced by this proposal. He would have preferred to have seen a development of 'live / work' units.

Councillor Peter Fane agreed that 'live / work' units would have been better but observed that the current proposal still respected the former farmyard.

The following points were made and discussed:

- The importance of Policy NH/11
- Concerns about car parking notwithstanding its policy compliance
- Effect on the Little Abington Conservation Area
- Perceived harm to the Protected Village Amenity Area (PVAA)
- Concern at the removal of established trees
- Design

Councillor Dr. Martin Cahn suggested that, despite reservation about the loss of trees, the proposal might enhance views from the PVAA and prove itself to be an asset to Little Abington.

Speaking as the other local Member, Councillor John Batchelor invited Members to weigh up the benefits and planning harm. He said that the PVAA, Policies and heritage assets were all important considerations. In his view, the proposal neither preserved nor enhanced the Conservation Area. There was no evidence that the office units would be let, and no community benefit by way of a Legal Agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

By seven votes to four, the Committee **refused** the application contrary to the recommendation in the report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development. Members agreed the reasons for refusal as being:

Reason 1: PVAA Encroachment / Impact

The application site is located adjacent to, and partially within, a Protected Village Amenity Area which provides a significant contribution to the legibility of the village, maintaining an important area of open land at the centre of the village that supports the rural character, amenity and sense of tranquillity of Little Abington.

The proposed development, by virtue of its encroachment into this Protected Village Amenity Area, would undermine the undeveloped nature and rural character at the centre of the village, failing to preserve the local rural character, amenity and sense of tranquillity of the area or provide a place-responsive, and legible form of development. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with Policies S/7, HQ/1 and NH/11 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, particularly paragraphs 127 and 130.

Reason 2: Character / Heritage Impact

The proposed development, by virtue of its siting, scale and massing would significantly

erode the relatively undeveloped nature of the application site and its rural quality, which contributes positively to the existing character of the Conservation Area. The siting of Plots 1 and 6, being located adjacent to the public highway, would represent an overly dominant and prominent form of development which would detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Furthermore, by virtue of their siting, Plots 1 and 6 would be evident in street scene views to the south towards Church of St Mary the Virgin, a Grade II* Listed Building, impacting on its setting. When viewed from the east, along the public right of way, views of the Church would be further eroded due to the inappropriate scale and massing of the proposed development.

The proposal would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of the Church of St Mary the Virgin. It is not considered that the proposal results in public benefits that would outweigh the harm to the significance of the Conservation Area and the Grade II* listed church.

The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies HQ/1 and NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 that require development proposals to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, as appropriate to their significance, the Council's Listed Building and Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Documents and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, chapter 16.

(Councillors Cahn, Fane, Hawkins, and Milnes voted to approve the application. Councillors John Batchelor, Bradnam, Daunton, Roberts, Heather Williams, Richard Williams, and Wright voted to refuse.)

6. **20/02833/FUL - Fulbourn (6 Pierce Lane)**

David Cottee (Fulbourn Forum – objecting), Philip Gilbey (for the applicant company), and Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton (as a local Member and with dispensation) addressed the meeting.

While welcoming the broad aim of protecting South Cambridgeshire's sustainable villages, Councillor Nick Wright regretted that the current application lacked design quality, conflicted with Council policy, and would not prove sustainable. Some other Members agreed with him, and the loss of an employment site, and adverse impact on local character, were also of concern.

Other Members took an opposing view, highlighting potential benefits such as improving highway safety.

By six votes to four, with one member not voting, the Committee **approved** the application subject to the Conditions set out in the report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development.

(Councillors John Batchelor, Bradnam, Cahn, Fane, Milnes, and Roberts voted to approve the application, Councillors Hawkins, Heather Williams, Richard Williams, and Wright voted to refuse. Councillor Daunton did not take part in the debate and did not vote.)

7. **20/04710/HFUL - Steeple Morden (8 Craft Way)**

The Delivery Manager (Strategic Sites) confirmed that outstanding legal points had been

resolved and that Counsel had advised that the Committee could safely determine the application. The case officer summarised the application's history.

Richard Williams (objecting himself and on behalf of the other next-door neighbour) addressed the meeting. Richard Williams was not a District Councillor or Planning Committee member. A written statement from the applicants had been circulated to Members.

During the ensuing debate, the following points were raised and discussed:

- Adherence to the front building line
- Hours of working
- Massing affecting neighbour amenity
- The importance of ensuring that the annexe remained ancillary to the main dwelling

Members' attention was drawn to Conditions 3 and 4 relating to hours of work and the ancillary use of the annexe.

The case officer confirmed that policy H/12 (residential space standards) was not applicable to the proposed ancillary annex as this unit would not be defined as a 'new dwelling'.

Members accepted that there were no material grounds upon which safely to base a refusal and, therefore, by affirmation, the Committee **approved** the application subject to the Conditions set out in the report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development.

(Councillor Heather Williams reiterated her non-pecuniary interest in that the proposal would have a visual impact on her father's home. Councillor Williams took no part in the debate and did not vote.)

8. **20/04089/HFUL - Shudy Camps (14 Main Street)**

Members noted that this application had been presented to Committee because the applicant was an officer at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Following an explanation that the differing ridge lines were intended to highlight the original building and the extension, and by ten votes to nil with one abstention, the Committee **approved** the application subject to the Conditions and Informatives set out in the report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development.

(Councillor Cahn abstained)

9. **20/04223/HFUL - Fowlmere (20A Pipers Close)**

The Delivery Manager (Strategic Sites) informed Members that it had been brought to the attention of officers that the incorrect ownership certificate had been signed because the applicant did not in fact own all of the land to which the application related. Given that circumstance, the applicant would be invited to submit a new ownership certificate, and a new consultation exercise would take place. The application would then be presented to the Planning Committee for determination.

Upon a proposal from Councillor John Batchelor, seconded by Councillor Anna Bradnam, and by affirmation, the Committee **deferred** the application.

10. **Enforcement Report**

The Committee **received and noted** an Update on enforcement action.

The Delivery Manager (Strategic Sites) updated the Committee verbally on the work ongoing to resolve the issues at Smithy Fen, Cottenham. Councillor Nick Wright reminded those present that this matter had been outstanding for a long time and emphasised again that residents needed an assurance that a resolution was actively being sought.

In response to Councillor Heather Williams the Principal Planning Enforcement Officer explained that restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic had had a major adverse impact on the ability to close cases as promptly as otherwise would have been the case.

11. **Appeals against Planning Decisions and Enforcement Action**

The Committee **received and noted** a report on appeals against planning decisions and enforcement action.

The Delivery Manager (Strategic Sites) reported verbally on a recent appeal decision at Bannold Road, Waterbeach where the Inspector had found against South Cambridgeshire District Council and ordered it to pay the appellant's costs.

In Appendix 3 to the report, the Delivery Manager (Strategic Sites) corrected the entry for S/0670/19/FL (Land rear of 24-27 Paynes Meadow, Linton) which should have stated 'refusal' rather than 'non-determination'.

The Meeting ended at 2.55 p.m.
