

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 7 October 2020

Time: 6.30pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Councillors: Simon Speller (Chair) (Chair), Maureen McKay (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Doug Bainbridge, Sandra Barr, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Michelle Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Lizzy Kelly, Graham Lawrence, John Lloyd, Graham Snell and Tom Wren

Start / End Start Time: 6.30pm
Time: End Time: 9.10pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 11 AUGUST 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Development Committee held on 11 August 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 20/00405/FPM - UNIT 11 THE FORUM

The Committee considered an application for the Change of Use from 'Retail' (Use Class A1) to Wholesale Market (Sui Generis).

The application was before the Committee for determination as it was a Major application.

The Senior Planning Officer gave an introduction to the Committee. She advised that the main issues for consideration in the determination of the application were its acceptability in land use policy terms, impact on neighbouring amenities, parking provision and highway implications.

It was noted that although the site was not part of the Town Centre primary frontage, it was designated as falling within the Town Centre. The application property had also been vacant for 16 months despite marketing which had also been a material consideration in the appraisal of the application. The application would bring a large vacant unit back into use, encourage footfall to the site and the Town Centre and would create 15 new jobs.

In relation to the impact upon Neighbouring Amenity, there were no residential dwellings in close proximity to the site at present, this combined with the fact that the

proposed use of the premises as a wholesale market with a focus on customer deliveries, rather than collections meant the use was unlikely to raise any amenity issues with the current neighbouring retail occupiers or any future residential properties within the vicinity of the site.

In terms of parking, officers advised that the existing customer car park provided 65 designated spaces which were sufficient for the unit given that the business model was more focussed towards deliveries than customer collection. In response to a question regarding employees, a number of spaces would be available for them to park and there was also an opportunity for employees to cycle to work as secure cycle parking would be provided.

Officers reported comments from Herts County Council as Highway Authority in relation to vehicle access, highway safety and highway impact. The County Council advised that there would be no new or altered vehicle access proposed to the existing vehicle accesses to or from the public highway to the property; the vehicle to vehicle inter-visibility was acceptable and that the traffic generated by the new development would not have a significant impact on the town centre or adjacent public highway.

Members expressed concern regarding the pedestrian access into the building which could cause an issue with safety as there was no clear signage or lighting in the area. Officers advised that there were no changes to the current pedestrian access into the building proposed but as the business model focussed on delivery rather than collection and there would be limited pedestrians entering the building, this was not felt to be a major issue.

In response to concerns expressed by Members regarding the waste and recycling arrangements, officers agreed to add an additional condition to ensure the waste and recycling arrangements were adequate.

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:-

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
Site Location Plan; P01; P02; P03
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
- 3 The building works required to implement this permission shall be carried out only between the following times:
0730 to 1800 Mondays to Fridays
0830 to 1300 Saturdays
And not at all on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The hours specified relate to activities which are audible at the site boundary.

4. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the use of the premises for the purposes hereby permitted shall operate only between the hours of 06:00; and 17:00; Mondays to Saturdays and 10:00; to 16:00; on Sundays, Public or Bank Holidays.
5. Stock replenishment deliveries shall not take place other than between the hours of 07:00; hours and 17:00; hours Mondays to Saturdays nor at any time on Sundays, Public or Bank Holidays.
6. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of secure cycle parking provision shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The secure cycle parking facility shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
7. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, the details of the siting, type and specification (minimum fast charging) of the EVCPs, the energy sources and the strategy/management plan for supply and maintenance of the EVCPs shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All EVCPs shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of each of the units and permanently maintained and retained.
8. Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted a general waste and recycling waste management strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The general waste and recycling waste management strategy shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Informative

1. Community Infrastructure Levy

Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 27 January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020.

This application may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Team for clarification with regard to this. If your development is CIL liable, even if you are granted an exemption from the levy, please be advised that it is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) that CIL Form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Stevenage Borough Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you risk losing the right to payment by instalments and a surcharge will be imposed. NB, please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and further details of CIL can be found on the Council's webpages at www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL or by

contacting the Council's CIL Team at CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk.

4 **19/00647/FPM - FORMER BHS STORE, 7 THE FORUM**

The Committee considered an application for the partial demolition and redevelopment of existing former BHS store to create 11 storey building comprising of 1no ground floor commercial unit, 129no. 1 bed, 120no. 2 bed and 1no. studio apartments with associated infrastructure including amenity space, car parking, bicycle storage, refuse storage and plant rooms.

The application was before the Committee for determination as it was classed as a major development.

The Principal Planning Officer gave an introduction to the Committee. She advised that the main issues for consideration were the acceptability in land use policy terms, affordable housing and S106, design and layout, impact on the character and visual amenity of the area, impact on neighbour amenity, impact on amenity of occupiers, highways implications, parking provision, and other matters including waste, drainage and climate change.

In relation to land use, the land was considered to be previously developed and an underused site. Furthermore, the proposal did not see the loss of public amenity space, and was in a good sustainable location being in close proximity to the bus station, proposed new bus interchange, train station and cycle network.

The Committee was informed that although for major developments involving the provision for housing, planning decisions should expect at least 10% of the homes to be made available for affordable home ownership, this application did not propose to provide any affordable housing. This was supported by the submission of a Viability Report. The Viability Report stated that the scheme would be 'borderline unviable' as a fully private development. Officers advised that the payment of the CIL requirement had been considered as part of the viability and as a result the LPA negotiated that the £2.6 million surplus be used to cover the Town Centre Primary School requirement, Travel Plan monitoring cost, and then a financial contribution for affordable housing (AH) to the remaining value of the surplus monies. This would equate to approximately 34 units of affordable housing.

In relation to the design and layout of the scheme, Members were advised that a condition would be imposed seeking full details / samples of the proposed materials to ensure they were compatible with the requirements of Building Regulations, in particular in respect of fire resistance.

In terms of the impact on the character and appearance of the area, Officers advised that the provision of high rise development in this area was acceptable in principle. The design and scale was considered acceptable in comparison to the current and neighbouring concrete buildings, and new developments on Queensway and at Park

Place' its addition in to the landscape would not harm the character and appearance of the area.

It was noted that the Local Highways Authority had undertaken extensive negotiations with the applicant and their consultants to reach an acceptable proposal in terms of access arrangements, deliveries, turning points and parking provision, including cycles. No changes were proposed to the vehicular access from Fairlands Way, which was provided via a ramp and shared with nearby uses. There was also a private service yard/road that would be used to service the building.

The proposal included 15no. car parking spaces, 6no. motorcycle parking spaces, 2no. delivery vehicle bays and 274 cycle spaces, and 6 larger non-standard cycle spaces. On balance therefore, officers considered the proposed parking provision was acceptable in this case. A condition relating to Electric Vehicle charging points would be included. Objections had been raised about the lack of parking and the impact on neighbouring roads, however, given the sustainable location of the site and access to non-car modes of transport being more readily available and that the application had been supported by a Travel Plan which has been assessed and agreed with Herts County Council Highways it was considered to be acceptable.

Members raised a number of concerns including:

- disappointment with the lack of response from NHS England and the East and North Herts NHS CCG to the application;
- the uncertainty regarding the contribution towards affordable housing from the development;
- concern regarding the application in relation to compliance with fire regulations, in particular appliances being able to reach the balconies which were recessed;
- whether there was potential for a contribution towards local sporting facilities such as an improvement to King George V Playing fields and pavilion;
- the disappointing design of the building.

Following further consideration of the application, it was **RESOLVED** that determination of the application be deferred for the following reasons:

1. Further discussions with the applicant regarding the aesthetics of the proposed development which is a key site in the Town Centre;
2. Further consideration regarding the use of the CIL for sport and leisure provision in the area;
3. Clearer proposals about affordable and social housing;
4. Clear ideas about the provision of community health services;
5. Concerns regarding the ability for fire engines to reach the upper floors of the buildings with the recessed Juliette balconies.

5 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Committee was presented with the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) which had been agreed by the Executive at its meeting on 16 September 2020.

The Committee was advised that the Council had a statutory duty to maintain an up to date LDS, which outlined the production of Development Plan Documents.

In response to a suggestion from Members, officers agreed to consider the layout of the timetable prior to its publication.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) be noted.

6 **FINAL PARKING PROVISION SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)**

The Committee was presented with the draft Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which had been approved at the Executive on 16 September 2020. The Executive had instructed that the Planning and Development Committee should be consulted prior to publication of the final SPD document.

The following issues were raised during the debate:

- The Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) explained that the reason for a reduced car parking requirement in the four accessibility zones was on sustainability grounds, due to the proximity of these zones to facilities and amenities, such as the Stevenage Railway Station;
- In relation to electric vehicle spaces, it would be down to the management company for each individual development to police and monitor the use of these spaces;
- Officers advised they were working closely with the County Council on the delivery of a number of transport projects;
- Officers confirmed that the figures for the number of spaces for new developments was based on census data for new residential developments and a combination of county wide data in the Local Transport Plan for non-residential developments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be noted

7 **INFORMATION REPORT - DELEGATED DECISIONS**

Noted.

8 **INFORMATION REPORT - APPEALS/CALLED IN APPLICATIONS**

Noted.

9 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

The Chair reminded Members that there would be a briefing on the current Government consultation - 'Planning for the future' reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process where there would be the

opportunity for questions and answers on Monday 19th October at 7:30pm.

Members also requested officers to investigate the poor sound quality of the speakers and microphone used at the meeting which had caused difficulties for some members to hear the presentation by officers.

10 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required.

11 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR