

## Crawley Borough Council

### Minutes of Planning Committee

Tuesday, 1 October 2024 at 7.30 pm

#### **Councillors Present:**

S Pritchard (Chair)

I Ashraf, T Bidwell, J Charatan, K L Jaggard, Y Khan, A Nawaz and D Patel

#### **Officers Present:**

Siraj Choudhury Head of Governance, People & Performance

Marc Robinson Principal Planning Officer

Clem Smith Head of Economy and Planning

Jess Tamplin Democratic Services Officer

#### **Apologies for Absence:**

Councillors M Mwangale, B J Burgess, S Mullins and S Sivarajah

#### **1. Disclosures of Interest**

No disclosures of interests were made.

#### **2. Lobbying Declarations**

No lobbying declarations were made.

#### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 27 August 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Crawley Borough Council Tree Preservation Order - The Car Park, The Boulevard, Crawley - 05/2024**

The Committee considered report [PES/471](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning which sought to determine whether to confirm the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 05/2024 – The Car Park, The Boulevard, Crawley – with or without modification for continued protection, or not to confirm the TPO.

Councillors Charatan, Jaggard, and Pritchard declared they had visited the site.

The Principal Planning Officer provided a verbal summation of the application, which related to all the trees running along the southern side of The Boulevard. In April 2024 the trees were protected under a six month provisional TPO, which the Committee was now requested to confirm.

Thomas Filby, on behalf of RCP Parking (the occupier of the land), spoke in objection to the application. Matters raised included:

- Since taking ownership of the site, RCP Parking had encountered issues with large tree roots protruding through the tarmac of the car park.
- The uneven surface was a significant safety risk and needed to be addressed. RCP wished to resurface the car park and repair potholes as part of improvements to the site.
- An arboriculturalist had been instructed who had concluded that the making of a TPO was unnecessary and would inhibit plans for the site.

The Committee then considered the application. Clarification was sought regarding the owner of the trees. The Planning Officer confirmed that the trees were situated on West Sussex County Council's Highways department's land, but the application to fell some of the trees had been submitted by a third party, RCP Parking.

Committee members sought further explanation of the reasons for the making of the TPO. It was explained that several trees along The Boulevard had previously been felled and not replaced (it was not known by whom or when this had occurred). A TPO would provide control over the remaining trees, yet would not preclude works from being carried out. If the occupier wished to undertake works on or fell the trees, an application should be made which would be considered on its merits. If it was agreed that the trees were to be felled, the TPO would ensure replacements could be secured.

In response to a query from a Committee member regarding possible surgical removal of problem roots as an alternative to felling, the Planning Officer explained that this was unlikely to be successful as it could cause significant dieback or a loss of stability. It was confirmed that most of the trees were in good condition but as they had not been well maintained, there were some areas where large roots were a concern.

A Committee member sought explanation of comments made within the written objections about the council's administrative processes, to which the Head of Economy & Planning explained that the council had minimal staffing resource in the department so capacity for dealing with tree matters was limited.

The Committee agreed that the trees made a significant contribution to the character and amenity of the area and that it was important to retain the tree-lined effect of The Boulevard. The TPO would aim to preserve the trees and protect the conservation area. It was also noted that ultimately, West Sussex County Council had statutory powers over the trees which superseded any TPO.

The Committee then moved to a vote on the item. The recommendation was moved by Councillor Pritchard as the Chair and seconded by Councillor Jaggard.

## **RESOLVED**

Confirm, without modification.

**Closure of Meeting**

With the business of the Planning Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.06 pm.

**S Pritchard (Chair)**