

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Planning Committee

Tuesday, 29 September 2020 at 7.30 pm

Councillors Present:

J Purdy (Chair)

R Sharma (Vice-Chair)

L M Ascough, A Belben, I T Irvine, K L Jaggard, M Mwangale, M W Pickett, T Rana and P C Smith

Officers Present:

Simon Bagg	Legal Services Manager
Brian Cox	Principal Environmental Health Officer
Stephen Gee	Principal Transport Planner (West Sussex County Council)
Mez Matthews	Democratic Services Officer
Jean McPherson	Group Manager (Development Management)
Paula Slinn	Legal Advisor
Clem Smith	Head of Economy and Planning
Jess Tamplin	Democratic Services Support Officer
Hamish Walke	Principal Planning Officer

Also in Attendance:

Councillors B J Burgess and R G Burgess

1. Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures of interests were made.

2. Lobbying Declarations

The following lobbying declarations were made by Councillors:-

Councillors Ascough, A Belben, Irvine, Jaggard, Mwangale, Purdy, Sharma, and P Smith had been lobbied regarding application CR/2018/0544/OUT.

Councillor Sharma had been lobbied regarding application CR/2020/0014/FUL.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 1 September 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Planning Application CR/2018/0544/OUT - Land East of Tinsley Lane, Three Bridges, Crawley

The Committee considered report [PES/355a](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning which proposed as follows:

Outline application for access (with all other matters reserved) for up to 150 residential units; new site access from Birch Lea with enhanced access from Kenmara Court, demolition of the existing Oakwood Football Club facilities and provision of a new clubhouse, senior and junior pitch; provision of open space and woodland access; and other ancillary works.

Councillors Ascough, A Belben, Irvine, Jaggard, Mwangale, Purdy, Sharma, and P Smith declared they had visited the site.

The Principal Planning Officer provided a verbal summation of the application, which was an outline application which sought planning permission for the principle of the development – with detailed approval sought only for one reserved matter in respect of the proposed access routes at this stage. The Officer updated the Committee that late representations had been received from Tinsley Lane Residents' Association in relation to a road safety review, and from Oakwood Football Club expressing support for the scheme. Paragraph 5.28 of report PES/355a stated that the proposed density of the development was around 50 dwellings per hectare, but this was an error and should be around 36 dwellings per hectare. The Officer also conveyed amendments proposed by Crawley Goods Yard Operators to the conditions.

Following receipt of a communication from a member of the public, the Committee took a brief adjournment to allow the functionality of the public livestream to be checked. It was confirmed that the livestream was operational and the meeting was then reconvened.

In line with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules, seven statements submitted by members of the public in regard to the application were read to the Committee.

Three statements from objectors (Tinsley Lane Residents' Association, Crawley Goods Yard Operators, and Mr John Browning) highlighted the following matters:

- The proposal of 150 dwellings was excessive compared to the 120 proposed in the Local Plan (representing a 25% increase) and would amount to overdevelopment of the site, which was suited to fewer larger family dwellings. Three storey dwellings would not be in-keeping and would not relate sympathetically to the surroundings.
- Future residents of the proposed development should be better protected from noise disturbance from the Crawley Goods Yard. The Goods Yard, a safeguarded site, must not have its operations curtailed. Conditions were suggested to safeguard this.
- Local residents had undertaken a survey evaluating the proposed access route to the site via Birch Lea, which determined that the access was unsuitable due to poor visibility and driver sight lines.

Two statements from supporters (the applicant Homes England, and Oakwood Football Club) highlighted the following matters:

- The proposed scheme would satisfy local housing needs and provide on-site affordable housing of 40% of the total number of dwellings.

- New sports facilities would be created by the scheme for the use of Oakwood Football Club and the local community. The provisions set out in the illustrative masterplan met the club's requirements.

Two statements from ward Councillors for Three Bridges (Councillors Bob Burgess and Brenda Burgess), both in objection, highlighted the following matters:

- The number of dwellings had increased, and concerns were raised regarding the reasons for this. The development was too high density for the area and the massing, density, and scale of the housing would be negatively impacted by the greater number of units.
- The potential for an increase in traffic, pollution, and noise for future residents and the residents of Birch Lea. The safety of the proposed access route via Birch Lea was queried due to poor visibility and it was suggested that due consideration had not been given to the residents' road safety review.

The Committee then considered the application. A detailed discussion took place as part of which the Committee considered a wide range of matters in relation to the application, including the following:

- Clarification was sought regarding the proposed number of dwellings. It was confirmed by the Planning Officer that the Local Plan Inspector had recommended that the number of dwellings be reduced from 138 to 120 due to concerns that parking for the sports facilities may require some of the central land parcel. It was noted that the Tinsley Lane Development Brief confirms that the numbers in the Local Plan allocation are indicative. The applicant had since provided an illustrative masterplan which proposed up to 150 dwellings. It was noted that a mention of 160 dwellings in report PES/355a included the 10 existing dwellings on Birch Lea.
- In response to a query regarding how and who would take a decision on a reserved matters application, officers confirmed that as a major application, it would be considered by the Planning Committee.
- Committee members expressed doubts over the sustainability and suitability of the proposed number of dwellings, which was felt to be too great and of too high a density. It was felt that the scheme should place more of a focus on houses; with fewer flats.
- The level of car parking provision for both the dwellings and the sports facilities was queried. The Planning Officer confirmed that the applicant had provided evidence that the layout could meet the adopted parking standards for the dwellings, and that the sports facilities' car park was in excess of standards.
- The suitability of the access route via Birch Lea was queried. It was felt that an increase in traffic and pollution could be disruptive for existing residents and impact their quality of life, and that visibility for drivers and emergency services may be unsafe. It was deemed that report PES/355a was unclear regarding the suggestion of a 20mph speed limit but the Committee considered this suitable. Officers confirmed that West Sussex County Council as the highways authority had deemed the proposed access safe and acceptable and that there would be a financial contribution towards traffic calming measures on Tinsley Lane. Committee members felt that alternative accesses, such as from Forge Wood or Crawley Avenue, may be preferable.
- Officers confirmed that the 83 vehicle movements via Birch Lea estimated by traffic modelling related to movements in the morning peak hour (8-9am).
- A query was raised about whether Birch Lea had been considered by the Planning Inspector as the likely access for the allocation. Officers were unable to address this question during the discussion but confirmed that the

Development Brief mentioned possible accesses using Birch Lea and Kenmara Court.

- Following queries from the Committee about the access link between the sports facilities and the dwellings, officers confirmed that the layout was in two parts, with sports facilities being accessed only from Kenmara Court and dwellings from Birch Lea. The scheme would provide pedestrian, cyclist, and emergency vehicle access between the two.
- Clarification was sought as to whether any of the proposed dwellings' windows would be sealed shut in order to meet application conditions regarding noise. Officers explained that windows would not be sealed shut, but that habitable rooms would not have windows facing the Crawley Goods Yard due to possible noise disturbance.
- In response to a concern regarding car parking provision at Summersvere Wood, it was confirmed that the number of spaces at the sports facilities exceeded requirements and that these spaces should be available for any visitors to the woodland.
- Concerns were expressed that nearby facilities (shops, public transport) may not be equipped to provide for the number of new residents generated by the proposed development.
- Committee members questioned whether there was a mechanism in place to secure open space. The Planning Officer confirmed that the provision and management would be secured via the Section 106 agreement.

The Committee also discussed the suitability of parking for the proposed dwellings, the provision of a play area through the Section 106 agreement, drainage at the sports facilities' car park, emergency vehicle access to the site, and a plan to undertake ecological evaluations if the application were to be permitted.

A recorded vote was then taken on the recommendation in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the Councillors voting for and against the recommendation to permit, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the recommendation to permit:

None.

Against the recommendation to permit:

Councillors Ascough, A Belben, Irvine, Jaggard, Mwagale, Pickett, Purdy, Rana, Sharma and P Smith (10).

Abstentions:

None.

The Officer recommendation was therefore overturned.

Following further consideration by the Committee, it was concluded that, while the area was an allocated housing site, the main concern was the impact of the access via Birch Lea. This was considered harmful to the quality of life of Birch Lea residents. It was agreed that the access route needed to be reconsidered and an alternative sought, or that traffic levels could be reduced by a smaller development. Discussion also took place regarding a reduction in the density of the development in itself. The Committee considered the quantity of housing too high, noting that it was in excess of the Local Plan figure. The density was also not in keeping with the surrounding area. There was concern that the level of development was harmful to the existing residents of Birch Lea and to future residents.

It was moved by Councillor Purdy (seconded by Councillor Sharma) that the application be refused due to the level of housing proposed and the use of Birch Lea as an access route to the proposed development, neither of which would provide a good level of residential amenity for existing and future residents nor protect the character of the area.

The Committee took a brief adjournment to enable the wording of the proposed reasons for refusal to be devised. The meeting was then reconvened.

A recorded vote was then taken on the proposal to refuse planning permission in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the Councillors voting for and against the proposal, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the proposal to refuse:

Councillors Ascough, A Belben, Irvine, Jaggard, Mwangale, Pickett, Purdy, Rana, Sharma, and P Smith. (10)

Against the proposal to refuse:

None.

Abstentions:

None.

RESOLVED

Refuse for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposed density of the development is out of character with the existing local housing in the area and the Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the level of housing proposed would result in a good standard of residential amenity for future residents, contrary to policies CH3 and CH5 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan and the Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document.
- 2) The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed intensification in use of Birch Lea to serve up to an additional 150 dwellings would cause unacceptable harm to the residential amenity enjoyed by existing residents of the cul-de-sac contrary to policy CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan.

5. Planning Application CR/2020/0014/FUL - St Margarets Church of England Church, Ifield Street, Ifield, Crawley

The Committee considered report [PES/355b](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning which proposed as follows:

Demolition of existing single storey annexe and erection of a two storey extension to church hall.

Councillors A Belben, Irvine, Jaggard, Mwangale, Purdy, Sharma, and P Smith declared they had visited the site and Councillor Ascough declared he was familiar with the site.

Councillor Rana left the meeting and was not present for the discussion or vote on the item.

The Principal Planning Officer provided a verbal summation of the application. The Committee heard that the proposed extension to the Grade I listed building would replace the current extension which was no longer fit for purpose. The proposed extension would provide a church hall, a kitchen, and other ancillary space.

In line with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules, a statement submitted by members of the public in regard to the application was read to the Committee.

The statement, from the Parochial Church Council of St Margaret's Church, highlighted the following matters:

- The existing extension no longer meets the needs of the community and requires maintenance and repair.
- The Church Council had regard to Planning Officers' views in developing the plans, the design of which was sympathetic to the style of the Church.

The Committee then considered the application. In response to queries raised by Committee members, the Planning Officer confirmed that 12 known graves would be relocated as part of the works, and that an excavation would be required to detect any archaeological material (such as parts of an earlier church structure) underground at the site. The Committee also heard that the style of the windowpanes of the proposed extension would be subject to a condition.

A recorded vote was then taken on the recommendation in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the Councillors voting for and against the recommendation, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the recommendation to permit:

Councillors A Belben, Irvine, Jaggard, Mwagale, Pickett, Purdy, Sharma and P Smith (8).

Against the recommendation to permit:

Councillor Ascough (1).

Abstentions:

None.

RESOLVED

Permit subject to conditions set out in report PES/355b.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Planning Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 10.54 pm

J Purdy (Chair)