

# **Planning Committee**

## **Thursday, 13 December 2018**

**Attendees:** Councillor Vic Flores, Councillor Pauline Hazell, Councillor Theresa Higgins, Councillor Brian Jarvis, Councillor Cyril Liddy, Councillor Derek Loveland, Councillor Jackie Maclean, Councillor Philip Oxford

**Substitutes:** Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell (for Councillor Lyn Barton), Councillor Tim Young (for Councillor Chris Pearson)

**Also Present:**

### **644 Site Visits**

Councillors Hazell, Higgins, Jarvis, Liddy, Loveland and Maclean attended the site visits.

### **645 Planning Committee Minutes 8 November 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

### **646 181309 Land to north of Elmstead Road/East of Swan Close, Wivenhoe, Colchester**

**Councillor Higgins (in respect of her spouse's employment by the University of Essex) declared a non-pecuniary interest pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 9(5).**

The Committee considered an application for the development consisting of 135 bed space Student Accommodation within five terraces of Town Houses and a Studio Block, complete with Car and cycle parking and Bin Store at land to the north of Elmstead Road/East of Swan Close, Wivenhoe, Colchester. The application had been referred to the Committee because it required a Section 106 agreement and because it constituted a major development where objections have been received. The Committee had before it a report and an amendment sheet in which all information was set out. The Committee made a site visit in order to assess the impact of the proposals upon the locality and the suitability of the proposals for the site.

*RESOLVED* (UNANIMOUSLY) that, subject to any amendments, further information, and/or conditions required by Essex County Council in respect of Surface Water Drainage and an agreement with the Agent/Applicant to the pre-commencement conditions under the Town and Country Planning (Pre-commencement Conditions)

Regulations 2018 and delegated authority to make changes to the wording of these conditions as necessary, –

(i) The Assistant Director Policy and Corporate be authorised to approve the planning application subject to the conditions set out in the report and the amendment sheet and subject to the signing of a legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 within six months from the date of the Committee meeting, to provide for the following:

- Membership of the Colchester Travel Plan Club for 10 years;
- The development to be for student residences only;
- A tenancy agreement to control cars being brought to the site and the surrounding area;
- A financial contribution to mitigate any recreational impact in accordance with the forthcoming Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS).

(ii) In the event that the legal agreement is not signed within six months from the date of the Planning Committee, Assistant Director Policy and Corporate be authorised, at their discretion, to refuse the application or otherwise be authorised to complete the agreement.

**647 182217 Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club, Wormingford Airfield, Fordham Road, Wormingford, Colchester**

The Committee considered an application for the use of Touring Motor Gliders (TMG). All other existing uses to remain the same. This application is for permanent consent following temporary consent given on Application Ref 150972 at Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club, Wormingford Airfield, Fordham Road, Wormingford, Colchester. The application had been referred to the Committee because it constituted a major development where objections had been received. The Committee had before it a report and an amendment sheet in which all information was set out. The Committee made a site visit in order to assess the impact of the proposals upon the locality and the suitability of the proposals for the site.

*RESOLVED* (UNANIMOUSLY) that the application be approved subject to the conditions set out in the report and the amendment sheet.

**648 181907 Avon Way House, Avon Way, Colchester**

**Councillor Higgins (in respect of her spouse's employment by the University of Essex) declared a non-pecuniary interest pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 9(5).**

**Councillor T. Young (in respect of his attendance as a ward councillor at meetings**

**with the applicants and, accordingly, his potential pre-determination of the matter) declared an interest pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 9(5) and left the meeting during its consideration and determination immediately after he had made representations as a visiting ward councillor.**

The Committee considered an application for the erection of five new accommodation blocks to provide for an additional 152 student bedrooms, a shared student communal lounge with staff offices and associated facilities, demolition of bungalow, with associated parking, landscaping, and boundary treatment at Avon Way House, Avon Way, Colchester. The application had been referred to the Committee because it was a major application where material planning objections had been received and where a legal agreement was proposed. The Committee had before it a report in which all information was set out. The Committee made a site visit in order to assess the impact of the proposals upon the locality and the suitability of the proposals for the site.

James Ryan, Principal Planning Officer, presented the report and, together with Simon Cairns, Development Manager, assisted the Committee in its deliberations.

Simon Talbot addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Planning Committee Procedure Rule 8 in support of the application. He explained that the application was not a speculative development but had been submitted by a local business which intended to operate the site. The application was part of a ten year strategy for the site which had been built in the 1970s by the University of Essex. The whole of the site would be upgraded, bringing blended forms of accommodation, creating more of a student village which would improve the manageability of the site in what was already recognised as a quiet place to study. It would bring the number of students to 406 with 4.5k sq. ft. of facilities. Their philosophy was to engage with students and young adults and the intention was to address mental health issues which was an important factor for the business and the members of staff.

Councillor T. Young attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He supported the application and confirmed that the applicants had been in discussion with the ward councillors over a number of aspects with the scheme as a result of which a number of suggestions had been taken on board by the applicants. These included security of the site in the form of lockable gates. He welcomed the introduction of the Hub within the development which he considered would be an attractive feature at an affordable cost. He considered the proposed parking provision to be adequate, including space for community vehicles. He confirmed that the site had not benefitted from investment in the past and improvements to the buildings were welcomed as well as the provision for Pickford Walk to not be overlooked and for the bungalow to be demolished as part of the proposals. He was of the view that the applicants had agreed to include sprinklers in the scheme and queried why this had been omitted from the report, given this important fire safety issue. He referred to Block E and was aware that the applicants had endeavoured to include all the requirements of

the urban designer and he welcomed the green wall solution as an improvement to the dated appearance of the Block. He acknowledged the applicant's intention to deliver a community environment and the responsibility they held towards the student residents. He also confirmed that the ward councillors had received no direct complaints about parking associated with the site from neighbouring local residents. He encouraged the Committee members to support the recommendation contained in the officer's report.

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed, in terms of access to the site, that there was reasonable permeability for the students around the site. He considered that this that this could be accommodated by means of an amendment to the proposed boundary treatment condition. He also acknowledged that the applicants had confirmed that sprinklers would be provided within the development and that this could be dealt with by means of an additional condition.

Members of the Committee welcomed the investment in the site and the improvements to the accommodation. Reference was made to the potential for more vibrant colours to be used when redecoration of the doors was planned, as well as the provision of electric charging points for cycles and mobility scooters for residents with disabilities in order to encourage a greater take up of alternative methods of transport. Support was expressed for the inclusion of sprinklers within the development whilst clarification was sought in relation to recycling provision on site and whether there was any evidence of supply and demand to support the number of applications for student accommodation recently considered by the Committee.

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that the provision of electric cycle and mobility scooter parking and charging points could be accommodated by means of the amendment of proposed condition 13 which referred to covered cycle parking provision and the scheme would include the provision of new recycling facilities and he considered that it would be appropriate to accommodate more vibrant colours during the process of redecoration by means of the addition of an informative.

The Development Manager confirmed that the University of Essex was planning very significant growth whilst it currently guaranteed accommodation for first year students only. He confirmed that there was potential for growth in student numbers at the University and at other tertiary education facilities such that there would be adequate capacity to absorb the student bed spaces proposed. He was also aware that the University itself was planning an expansion of accommodation provision on campus which illustrated a demonstrable demand for further bed spaces. He was of the view that this was likely to lead to the freeing up of accommodation currently used by students for availability on the open market. He also considered purpose built accommodation for students was more suitable for students and better managed than private rental properties in established residential areas.

**RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY)** that, subject to an agreement with the Agent/Applicant to

the pre-commencement conditions under the Town and Country Planning (Pre-commencement Conditions) Regulations 2018 and delegated authority to make changes to the wording of these conditions as necessary, as well as an amendment to proposed condition 13 to provide for electric bike charging points and the provision for mobility scooters; an amendment to the proposed boundary treatment condition to secure the provision of gates at two new access points at Salary Brook; an additional condition to secure the provision of sprinklers and an additional informative seeking redecoration to include a more vibrant colour palette –

(i) The Assistant Director Policy and Corporate be authorised to approve the planning application subject to the conditions set out in the report and the amendment sheet and subject to the signing of a legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 within six months from the date of the Committee meeting, to provide for the following:

- £10,000 Travel Plan contribution;
- £23,000 NHS Contribution;
- £3750 Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation contribution;
- The donation of a strip of land adjacent to Pickford Walk to the Council to facilitate improvements to the access from Avon Way to the Salary Brook Trail.

(ii) In the event that the legal agreement is not signed within six months from the date of the Planning Committee, Assistant Director Policy and Corporate be authorised, at their discretion, to refuse the application or otherwise be authorised to complete the agreement.