

PLANNING COMMITTEE 5 JANUARY 2012

Present :- Councillor Ray Gamble (Chairman)
Councillors Christopher Arnold, Peter Chillingworth,
John Elliott, Stephen Ford, Peter Higgins,
Theresa Higgins, Sonia Lewis, Jon Manning,
Philip Oxford and Laura Sykes

Substitute Member :- Councillor Ann Quarrie for Councillor Jackie Maclean

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Nick Barlow
Councillor Julie Young

(No site visits were undertaken for this meeting.)

102. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 December 2011 and 15 December 2011 were confirmed as a correct record.

103. 111927 Land to west of Boundary Road, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ

The Committee considered an application for student flats comprising of 420 en-suite student bedrooms in three separate blocks between four and seven storeys in height, and 228 student bedrooms in two blocks of four storey terraced town houses. A two story 'Pavilion' building containing a small retail unit, laundrette and student common room, and an ancillary amenity space with cycle and refuse storage facilities, electricity sub-station and means of pedestrian, vehicular and servicing access. The Committee had before it a report in which all information was set out, see also Amendment Sheet.

This application had been withdrawn from the agenda immediately prior to the commencement of the meeting on 15 December 2011. The Committee had made a site visit at that time in order to assess the impact of the proposal upon the locality and the suitability of the proposal for the site.

Bradly Heffer, Principal Planning Officer, and Vincent Pearce, Planning Service Manager, attended to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

Andrew Nightingale addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Planning Committee Procedure Rule 8 in support of the application. Currently the University could accommodate 9,050 students at the University of Essex on the campus, representing 40% of all students, and this proposal would increase this percentage to 49.3%. The proposal was consistent with the Masterplan. There had been a Travel Plan in place for sometime at the University and there were other measures in place to deter students from parking on campus. The University believed that their current

policies and plans would reduce the demand for parking. The suggestion that students park on the public highway could be overcome by the introduction of residents parking schemes.

Councillor J. Young attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. She had called in the application because she was concerned about the conflict with residents caused by students parking their cars in roads in the locality. She referred to other student accommodation nearby which operated with little or no parking facilities and she had heard Mr Nightingale refer to the high cost levied on students who parked on campus. She was aware of students parking their cars during the week in surrounding roads and it appeared that they were moved at the weekend when parking on campus was free. Requests for parking restrictions in Mascot Square had been made for the last three years and residents parking schemes, took even longer. This proposal containing 420 flats was contrary to the council's policies for the provision of parking spaces. Whatever the university states, students wanted to take their car with them.

Members of the Committee were also concerned about students parking in surrounding roads. They also mentioned the possibility of selling off the accommodation or renting units to people other than students or to students from other institutions. There appeared to be a failure to provide accommodation for disabled students and disabled visitor parking in this area. At the start of the term there was an issue with parking on pavements in nearby student accommodation. It was suggested that the University be requested to discuss the parking situation with local and adjacent ward councillors.

Other concerns were the provision of lighting and regular area security patrols prior to occupation. In particular the light switch for the cycle store appeared to be located within the store. If it was turned off from inside it would plunge the outside into darkness creating a potentially dangerous situation. There was some disappointment that such a large development was being carried out in small blocks. There was a request that the University give serious consideration to improving pedestrian access to both sides of the bridge over the railway and make it easier to move and walk about.

Planning officers explained that this accommodation was being provided for a particular tenure group and there was a condition that the accommodation could only be lived in by students or by people visiting the university; a planning application would be required for a change of use to residential use C2/C3. Secure cycle parking was provided which met the Essex County Council requirement and was an incentive against using a car. In terms of accommodation for disabled students, it was a matter for the University to determine how they allocated such accommodation as part of their strategy. All units would comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and whether students could live in them would be dependant on their level of disability. It was likely that the University would provide disabled accommodation in more convenient areas, not on the outskirts.

in respect of parking issues, whilst residents parking schemes was not a planning process, it would be possible to ask for a working party to be set up involving borough

council planning and parking colleagues, Essex County Council highways officers and the University to explore the lengthy lead in time, a car club or other ways of managing the car parking problem. There was a suggestion that the University may be able to provide the funding for a residents parking scheme. Students were permitted to bring their cars onto the campus in order to transfer their belongings to their accommodation. It was believed that car parking may be available for those attending a summer school or an event. There looked to be a possibility of providing a disabled space alongside a group of four parking spaces, or alternatively one of the spaces on this site appeared to indicate that it could be set out to disabled space standard.

In respect of lighting and security issues, on-site security was already provided. The courtyard area, outside areas and the open space on this site will be lit and the road infrastructure was already in place with lighting. It would be possible to require the switch to operate the light for the cycle store to be provided somewhere other than inside the store. In general lighting was expected to be in place prior to occupation but a condition to that effect could be added.

In respect of the bridge over the railway line, when it was designed there were some strong restrictions from Railtrack about the amount of exposure they would allow. This matter would require further investigation.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY) that the application be approved subject to conditions and informatives as set out in the report and on the Amendment Sheet together with additional conditions to require lighting for the development to be provided prior to the occupation of the development, lighting for the cycle parking to be controlled remotely and not within the structures themselves and additional disabled visitor parking spaces to be provided adjacent to the four spaces currently shown for facilities management use. The Committee requested that a working group should be convened by the Planning Services Manager comprising the ward members for Wivenhoe Cross and St. Andrew's together with representatives from the University of Essex, the borough council planning service and ECC highways to explore a number of issues in connection with parking problems on adjacent residential areas.

104. 111941 Co-operative Building Works Depot, 102 Magdalen Street, Colchester, CO1 2LA

The Committee considered an application for the temporary change of use to the site, previously in use by the East of England Co-op, to a car wash facility on every day of the week. The Committee had before it a report in which all information was set out.

Simon Osborn, Planning Officer, and Vincent Pearce, Planning Service Manager, attended to assist the Committee in its deliberations. It was explained that a further condition could be imposed to address neighbours' concerns about disturbance by noise particularly at the weekend. The condition would require a notice to be displayed requesting that customers switch off their engines when not required and reduce the volume of their audio equipment on arrival at the site.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY) that the application be approved subject to conditions and informatives as set out in the report together with a further condition to require a sign asking drivers to switch off engines and car stereos.