



Highworth Town Council

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P6.

THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY FULL COUNCIL (PLANNING) MEETING TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021

PRESENT

Councillor: (Miss) J Murphy (In the Chair)

Councillors: (Mrs) K Barber
A Bishop
(Mrs) J H Bishop
G Evans
N Gardiner
G Olley
P Newton-Smith
K Smith
K Saunders
S Weisinger
R Williams

Borough Councillor: V Manro

Town Clerk: D Rose

IN ATTENDANCE

24 Members of the Public

APOLOGIES

13. Councillors, (Mrs) L Vardy and S Wolfensohn due to Declaring an Interest in Agenda item 7a. and (Mrs) M Penny



Highworth is a Fair Trade Town



Twinned with Wassenberg



Twinned with Pontorson

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

14. None

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

15. Residents I Morton (Mrs) A Cook and P Beaumont all spoke in relation to Agenda item 7 - Planning Application S/OUT/20/0422 – SASM. Land At Shrivenham Road, Highworth, to urge Highworth Town Council recommend refusal for this application.

CORRESPONDENCE

16. Councillors unanimously agreed for Highworth Town Junior Football Club to replace the broken wooden gates on the equipment compound with metal gates to enhance the security.

MINUTES OF MEETING

17. **RESOLVED TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 4 MAY 2021.** (The minutes are to be duly signed).

MATTERS ARISING

18. Minute 2: Apologies to include Councillor S Weisinger

TOWN CLERK REPORT

19. An informal Meeting was held at the request of Swindon Housing Company (SHC) with Councillor (Miss) J Murphy as Chair of Planning and the Town Clerk on Monday 17 May 2021. The Town Clerk advised SHC that no discussion would take place with regards to the proposal presented to Highworth Town Council. The Meeting was a simple fact-finding exercise to ascertain the detail of what SHC wanted to present to HTC at a future Meeting so an Agenda could be drawn up.

Initially SHC planned to discuss design codes and request feedback from HTC, however it was felt this was very premature considering HTC would be required to surrender the lease for this development to be brought forward and that any such discussion should be at a Full Council Planning Meeting. On this basis the discussion was concluded.

SHC will present a proposal regarding the lease of the Lechlade Road site for HTC to debate and consider the advantages and disadvantages of this site being developed. This will be brought to a future Council Meeting.

PLANNING PERMISSIONS AND REFUSALS

PLANNING PERMISSIONS

20. a. S/HOU/21/0469-LZWI - Erection of a single storey rear extension. Willowmead, 39 Bellingham Lane, Sevenhampton, SN6 7QF. **Councillors defer to Conservation Officer.**
- b. S/HOU/21/0472-LZWI - Erection of a single storey front extension. 31 The Willows, Highworth, SN6 7PG. **Councillors recommend acceptance.**
- c. S/HOU/21/0364 - SAC - Erection of a single storey front extension, 7 St Michaels Avenue, Highworth, SN6 7JZ **Councillors recommend acceptance**

PLANNING REFUSALS

21. None

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

22. S/OUT/20/0422 – SASM. Outline Planning Application for up to 250 dwellings (including 30% affordable housing) with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access point from Shrivenham Road. All matters reserved except for means of access. Land At Shrivenham Road Highworth. **Councillors strongly recommended refusal on the following grounds:**

The Highworth Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) excluded Shrivenham Road as being suitable for development during site selection and this was supported by the Inspector when passing the Plan. The HNP was based on the retention of Highworth as a Hilltop Town and this application, if accepted, would destroy that concept. The proposed site is also outside the Settlement Boundary and any development here would have a detrimental effect on the Town and its current status as a Hilltop Town. This is supported in the Conservation Officer's report where she states that the Proposed Development would be contrary to the NPPF and Policies DE1, EN5 and EN10 of the Swindon Local Plan. Overall, she recommended that the development will cause harm sufficient to advise a Heritage Objection.

The infrastructure of the Town would need serious investment to cope with this and any future developments. This has been identified by Swindon Borough Councils infrastructure review and is further evidenced within the consultee comments.

As per Highworth Town Council previous objections to this development *Councillors have serious concerns over both Traffic Surveys undertaken. The Traffic Survey carried out on behalf of Gladman was carried out in September and October 2019. The outcome of that Survey is questionable in terms of its results as it does not pick up capacity issues and highway safety. The SBC Highways Consultee, Gerry Prodohl, did his assessment during COVID-19 crisis when schools were not operating stating "I tried to calculate capacities at the bottleneck".* **Councillors recommend a Holding Objection be registered pending a new Traffic Survey based on actual recorded data of both peak traffic and Schools traffic in Shrivenham Road.** These objections are still relevant as no further Traffic Surveys have been carried out

in spite of Planning Committee stating on the 8 December 2020 ' That the application be deferred to allow for further assessment of the highways impact of the proposal particularly in relation to the impact on the pedestrian and vehicular movement associated with the schools at the beginning and end of the school day.'

A site visit was completed on the 10 March 2021 to undertake a visual Road Safety Audit. The school was at limited capacity with only 3 of the 5 year groups attending school and on that particular day the school was carrying out mass testing and had advised parents not to come to the school site, this has been confirmed by the Headmaster. The Highway Officer was approached by the school (13 January 2021) and was invited to meet with the school on 2 dates but this offer has not been taken up.

Councillors are already concerned about the traffic safety of Shrivenham Road and the additional traffic caused by this development will result in an even more dangerous situation, particularly as there are two schools there. The additional vehicles generated will throw a huge burden on car parking in the Town where there is already insufficient capacity for the Town's needs. There is a wider issue with additional traffic to the Town as a whole. At peak times there are various bottlenecks around the Town which this additional traffic will exacerbate.

Sufficient recognition has not been taken of the effect the traffic generated by this site and the impact it will have on the village of Sevenhampton. Only 2 residential homes have been consulted according to the Swindon Borough Council Neighbourhood Consultee list. The quickest route into Swindon for potential residents is through Sevenhampton, the villagers of which are already experiencing heavy increases in the traffic using the village as a "rat run", to the extent that they formed a huge delegation at a Town Council Meeting demanding that something be done about it. There is a 30mph speed limit and a 7.5 Ton weight restriction neither of which are being adhered to. The additional traffic generated by this site, if it is allowed to go ahead, will make life in the village even more dangerous and even more intolerable.

The Councillors have Highway Safety concerns regarding school children walking to and from school. There is both a Junior School and a Secondary School on Shrivenham Road. The footpaths are extremely narrow and children will be walking in both directions and will have no choice but to step into the road to pass. The location of the controlled crossing will prevent parking outside the school due to road markings, however it is highly likely parents may still stop briefly to drop off their children as there is minimal parking in the vicinity. Vehicles who do adhere to this restriction will be displaced elsewhere along the road causing further congestion over a larger expanse. This will cause obstruction of vision which will impact the visual of the crossing and the safety of pedestrians waiting to cross, we cannot rely on policing of this restriction. This congestion will also encourage pedestrians to cross between cars when at standstill which can be very dangerous. Cars approaching Highworth will be drawn to the area outside the cottages where it is single file due to parked cars to determine their priority to go and this will detract their attention from the crossing and is an accident waiting to happen.

The Highways report requires a crossing to be included in any plans to allow children, walking to school, to safely cross over from the proposed new development to the pavement on the opposite side of the road. However, no thought has been given to how the children can cross safely back onto the school side when they get to that point. Councillors believe that a second crossing would be required for the children to

cross back over to the schools. The proposed location does not address the issue that the crossing does not lead directly into the school premises and there will be further requirement to cross the entrance to the school site. In addition LA19 (f) of the Local Plan Review requires highway improvements to secure school safety and capacity. Further to this the Road Safety Audit Report stipulates 'The controlled crossing is located incorrectly and a Pedestrian Survey is required for walking desire lines. As it stands it may result in some pedestrians choosing not to use the crossing and cross the road elsewhere, this may result in collisions between those pedestrians and vehicles.' To date this Survey has not been undertaken and nor is it mentioned as a condition although as a condition can be altered under a Section 73 this should be part of a legal agreement.

The Highways Officer recommends in his report as part of Planning Conditions, s106 is to be attributed to a cycle path from Highworth to Swindon but there is no mention of a cycle path along Shrevenham Road only for cyclist to use the road. S106 monies is to mitigate the detrimental impact of a development in the Town and it is therefore concerning that the cycle path would not link to the schools. SBC Local Plan review LA19 (g) identifies that there is a requirement for pedestrian and cycle links to the schools and has concerns over safety of children cycling on this road. Please refer to the letter dated 6 April 2021 from Highworth Town Council to the Planning Officer.

The additional vehicles joining the already long queues at peak times will increase exhaust emissions, becoming a serious environmental issue and go against Swindon Borough Council Clean Air Strategy. The Travel Plan, "Routes into Town", claims that a reduction in CO2 emissions will be achieved within 5 years by people using Public Transport, walking and cycling. This claim is based on theory and cannot be taken seriously. It would appear to have been put forward as an attempt to take attention away from the harm that this increase in emissions will do to the environment. The claim cannot be justified by wishful thinking and cannot be sustained; and no strategy has been put forward to show how this 10% reduction will be achieved.

The report by the Drainage Engineer from the Lead Local Flood Agency recommends "Not Approved" requiring much additional information. The applicant has not demonstrated that enough consideration has been given to this important aspect. This goes against policy EN6 of the Local Plan.

The Ecological Officer at SBC was wholly dissatisfied with the developer's supporting report and noted that the Survey of ground nesting birds and, essentially, bat populations were carried out at the wrong time of year. The Ecology Officer also notes the site is too large for an Ecological Assessment. Other aspects were not carried out in the proscribed manner and the report in support of the application cannot be accepted. RA1 of the Local Plan seeks to prevent significant and adverse environmental impacts. Councillors were particularly concerned with the potential to remove mature trees to allow this development.

The SBC Landscape Officer's report is equally at odds with the supporting Landscape document. He disputes much of the claims made in the developer appraisal and disagrees with the suitability of the site for development. He states he is familiar with the site and the surrounding area and reviewed the site as part of the SHEELA process in October 2019. At that time, he considered development of any part of the field would be very harmful to the Town and **should be avoided**. The Conservation Officer considers this development is at the higher end of harm on the

Grange. The Enforcement Officer is quoted by a Borough Councillor in relation to another application in close vicinity as saying 'Furthermore, The Local Plan policies do not allow for new dwellings in this type of open countryside location.'

The SBC Archaeological Consultant stated that the proposed area of development is in an area of archaeological potential. She had advised on the need for an evaluation prior to determination, but this has not been undertaken. She advised that she maintains an objection, as no evaluation has been undertaken. This contravenes EN10 of the Local Plan.

Councillors requested that, should the Officer be minded to recommend acceptance, the application be called in for consideration by the Planning Committee. In this event there will be Town Councillor in attendance at the Committee Meeting.

Councillors agreed to lobby Swindon Borough Council Planning Committee Members in writing.

MEMBERS' BUSINESS

23. Councillor K Saunders: Councillors thanked newly elected Borough Councillor Monro for his attendance at the Meeting.

Meeting closed 7.45pm

Action Points: -

Planning letter to be sent to Swindon Borough Council