

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Planning Committee



held on Wednesday 21 August 2024 at 7.00 pm in Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

**Open to the public, including the press**

### **Present in the meeting room:**

Councillors: Val Shaw (Vice-Chair in the chair), Paul Barrow, Ron Batstone, Jenny Hannaby, Scott Houghton and Robert Maddison  
Officers: Nathaniel Bamsey (Planning Officer), Becky Binstead (Democratic Services Team Leader), Emily Hamerton (Development Manager), Emily Barry (Democratic Services Officer) and Natasha Ireland (Planning Business Manager).

### **134 Chair's announcements**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

### **135 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Max Thompson, who was substituted for Councillor Paul Barrow, Councillor Cheryl Briggs, who was substituted for Councillor Sarah James, Councillor Jill Rayner, and Councillor Mike Pighills.

### **136 Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 24 July 2024 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign these as such.

### **137 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Scott Houghton declared that he was ward member for item 7 on the agenda, P23/V0571/FUL. Councillor Houghton confirm that he would stand down from the committee and not participate in the debate or vote for this item.

### **138 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.

### **139 Public participation**

The committee noted the list of the members of the public who had registered to speak at the meeting.

## **140 P24/V0571/FUL - 16 Cumnor Hill, Oxford, OX2 9HA**

The committee considered planning application P24/V0571/FUL for the demolition of existing dwellinghouse. Erection of 2 no. detached dwellinghouses with associated works including landscaping. (As amplified by additional information received 19 March 2024 and amended plans and additional information received 2 May 2024 and as amended by plans received 22 July 2024) on land at 16 Cumnor Hill, Oxford, OX2 9HA.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted the application came before the committee as the result of a call in from a local ward member. The application sought permission for the demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of two dwellings. One of the proposed dwellings was in the approximate location of the existing dwelling with the second to the rear. He went on to inform the committee that the site was in an area designated in the neighbourhood plan as an area of low density and of special local character.

The planning officer informed the committee that the application site was on a significant slope from the south to the north down from Cumnor Hill to the rear of the site. The proposed dwellings each had parking to the front with the rear property also being served by a garage. The rear dwelling would be accessed via a new access road which would run between the new dwelling to the front of the site and the existing flats. As the rear dwelling would be built behind the existing frontage to Cumnor Hill, it represented backland development.

The planning officer demonstrated the elevations of the proposed dwellings advising of their two storey height with rooms in the roof with both being of a similar scale and appearance. Both bin stores and cycle parking were proposed although the cycle stores were not shown on the site plan and therefore a condition requiring details of the cycle store was recommended.

The planning officer showed a number of site photos to the committee and informed the committee that a proposed condition requiring details of vision splays was recommended due to concerns about the existing hedge obscuring the splays and affecting visibility. The planning officer illustrated the changing land levels across the site and the relationship the proposed dwellings would have to neighbouring properties.

The planning officer advised the committee that Cumnor Parish council and a number of residents had objected to the application. The main areas of objection were in relation to the impact of the development on the character of the area and the compliance with neighbourhood plan policies, the impact on neighbour amenity and the impact in terms of flood risk and the suitability of the proposed drainage. The planning officer confirmed that the development was backland development which policy DBC1 of the Cumnor Neighbourhood plan seeks to avoid where it undermines the strong character of the area.

The planning officer concluded that for the reasons outlined in the report the specific context of the site with existing backland development around the site, its position set down from Cumnor Hill, the distances which will remain between the proposed dwellings and their neighbours and the building to plot ratio being comparable to those of surrounding properties, the development would not be harmful to the local character nor conflict with the

neighbourhood plan policies. The officer confirmed that the distances between the two dwellings and neighbouring properties were sufficient to prevent harm to amenity even when considered in the context of the changing land levels between the site and its neighbours. The planning officer further advised that due to the impermeable nature of the site and the slope meaning gravity could not be relied upon to move surface and foul water up the site to public sewers it was proposed that surface and foul water would be pumped up the site. He confirmed that the drainage engineer was satisfied this was acceptable and the system had capacity to deal with flooding and any failure of the pumps without increasing the risk of flooding to other properties.

The planning officer informed the committee that subject to the proposed conditions the application was recommended for approval as officers did not consider the development would be harmful and in the absence of objections from technical consultees it was held that the application accords with policies from the development plan and the NPPF.

Councillor Laurence Waters spoke on behalf of Cumnor Parish Council, objecting to the application.

Dr Kathryn Davies spoke objecting to the application.

Alex Cresswell (JPPC), the agent representing the applicant, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Scott Houghton, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

The committee asked the planning officer to confirm if the site was located in Botley or Cumnor. The planning officer advised that the Local Plan designates areas in hierarchy of settlements. Botley is a local service centre and is a blanket definition for the continuous settlement around the local service centre which extends up to Cumnor Hill therefore in planning policy terms the site is located in Botley.

The committee asked the officer to comment on the design and character of the proposal. The officer reflected on the relevant neighbourhood plan policies but was of the view that the proposal was not out of keeping with its context as there is existing backland development. He confirmed that the impact of proposed backland development had to be assessed under the policy.

The committee asked for clarification on a point raised by Councillor Houghton when he addressed the committee that the access was too narrow for access by emergency vehicles. The planning officer confirmed sections of the access road were narrower than required but that provision can be made for alternative arrangements such as sprinklers under building control regulations where this was the case.

The committee asked if the officer wanted to provide further information on the issue of overlooking which had been raised. The planning officer confirmed that the Joint Design Guide sets out guidance that a minimum of 21 metres should be provided between properties. Whilst the design guide does not provide a distance that would apply specifically to the site layout the distance was in excess of the 21 metres given as a guide for back to back distances which were acceptable. He went on to advise that it was recognised there was a change in levels on the site but that the distance from the rear of the proposed property to the back boundary was 21 metres and then there was another five metres to the property of Martins Close and this additional five metres was sufficient to prevent the difference in levels from being harmful.

The committee asked the planning officer to confirm the height of the proposed dwellings. The planning officer confirmed that the houses were two and a half storey but with rooms in the roof therefore the height of the proposed dwellings was two storey.

The committee asked the planning officer to explain the proposed drainage arrangement. The planning officer confirmed that there would be two pumps – a main pump and a standby and then a tank which was sufficient to hold 24 hours worth in the event of loss of power to the pumps or the level of water of a one in one hundred year flood. He went on to confirm that the foul drainage was a single pump but that despite initially objecting the drainage engineer was satisfied with the proposed scheme before the committee.

The committee asked the planning officer to comment on the shadowing concerns which had been raised by residents of Martin Close. The planning officer advised that the distances between the proposed dwellings and the existing buildings on Martins Close were sufficient to prevent significant harm and therefore any overshadowing was not sufficient to warrant refusal.

The committee asked for confirmation of the number of cycle parking spaces required and the location of these. The planning officer confirmed that 12 spaces would be required and that the location of these would be provided under the further details condition with the plan superseding the plans before the committee.

The committee reflected that it was clear from the neighbourhood plan that residents did not want backland development and this had been echoed by the public speakers. Some members were of the view that the proposal was harmful to the character of the area due to the designation for low density of developments in the area.

Some members did not feel that there was sufficient information before them to determine the application and that a site visit should be conducted to obtain a better understanding of and allow them to envisage the context and character of the area.

A motion, moved and seconded, to refuse the application was tied on being put to the vote. Due to the vote being tied, the Chair exercised her right to her casting vote and voted against the motion. Therefore, the motion fell.

A motion, moved and seconded, to defer application P24/V0571/FUL in order for the committee to conduct a site visit was carried on being put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** to defer planning application P24/V0571/FUL in order to allow for a site visit to take place

## **141 Appeals Information**

The committee received the appeals information report from the head of planning.

The committee agreed to note the report.

The meeting closed at 7.56 pm