

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Planning Committee

held on Tuesday, 16 February 2021 at 6.00 pm



**A virtual meeting**

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

### **Present:**

Members: Councillors Max Thompson (Chair), Val Shaw (Vice-Chair), Jerry Avery, Ron Batstone, Jenny Hannaby, Diana Lugova, Robert Maddison, Mike Pighills and Janet Shelley

Officers: Paul Bateman, Holly Bates, Adrian Butler, Adrian Duffield, Susie Royse and Penny Silverwood

Michael Deadman, Transport Development Control Lead Officer, Oxfordshire County Council

Jason Sherwood, Locality, Infrastructure & Road Agreements Manager, Oxfordshire County Council

Also present: Councillor Sarah Medley, Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne, Councillor Andy Cooke and Councillor Catherine Webber

Number of members of the public: 7

### **PI.224 Chair's announcements**

The chair ran through housekeeping arrangements appropriate to a virtual meeting.

### **PI.225 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **PI.226 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **PI.227 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.

## **PI.228 Public participation**

The committee had received statements which had been made by the public in respect of the applications. These had been circulated to the committee some days prior to the meeting.

The chair advised the committee that in view of the number of speakers registered to speak in respect of item 6 on the agenda, Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot, objectors, supporters and ward councillors would each receive 6 minutes speaking time as a category.

## **PI.229 P14/V2873/O - Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot, (parishes of Harwell and Milton)**

The committee considered application P14/V2873/O for an outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works on Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot.

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 reported that this was an outline application with access to be considered, issues such as landscaping, scale and density of buildings, would be the subject of a later application. The planning officer reported that at the planning committee held on 20 April 2016, it was resolved to approve this application subject to the completion of a S106 legal agreement and conditions. The planning officer's report to the April 2016 committee was attached as Appendix 1 of the report to this present meeting. The planning officer reported on the changed planning circumstances since that date and provided an update on the progress of the S106 agreement. Paragraph 1.2 of the report outlined the key changes, notably the adoption of the Local Plan 2031, a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework, the submission of revised plans and updated advice from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in its capacity as the highway authority.

The planning officer also reported on representations which had been received since the despatch of the agenda. Didcot Town Council had objected to the proposal on several grounds; it considered that the primary school should be provided prior to the occupation of housing and that a seven-year lead-in period for this provision was unacceptable. The town council had acknowledged the need for the reduction in the use of vehicles implicit in the proposals and considered that zero carbon targets for all dwellings should be pursued. There should also be an increased biodiversity requirement. Improved vehicular connectivity to Great Western Park and Didcot, and to the west of the site, should be provided prior to occupation in the view of the town council. In respect of medical facilities on site, the town council considered that there should be six new GPs' surgeries and five dentists' practices. The town council had objected to the proposed location of the local centre in the south of the site. In its view, a 'good-sized' community centre should be provided, or two smaller meeting facilities as an alternative.

The planning officer reported that a local resident had objected on the grounds housing and infrastructure, though all of those points had been made by other objectors and were listed in the report.

The planning officer also reported on masterplan changes to the proposals to facilitate access to the site. The location of the roundabout had been moved slightly to the north east and the widening of the A4130 road fully facilitated the construction of the 'science bridge'. In 2020 OCC had received government funding for infrastructure improvements, which would assist in delivering the local plan growth strategy.

The planning officer reported on modified highways proposals following discussions with OCC. Details were provided of the suggested amendments with the assistance of a slide presentation. It was intended that a 'Dutch style' roundabout would be provided on the B4493 (the '5-arm roundabout'), incorporating underpasses and bridges and eliminating two circuitous 'dog legs', to better facilitate cycle and pedestrian travel. Pedestrian and cycleways were to be separated from vehicles and there would be full connectivity with Great Western Park. At the request of OCC, a vehicular connection with Great Western Park had been deleted from the scheme as a result of the new cycleways and capacity issues of the B4130. The Environment Agency had no objection to these proposed changes.

The planning officer also reported that the timing of the spine road located between the A4130 and the B4493, north of the school site, had been brought forward; this would be delivered at 500 dwelling occupations. It was also reported that the S106 biodiversity contribution had been increased by £50,000 and now totalled £200,000. The standards for the cycleways fully complied with OCC standards, namely a 1.5m. width, on a raised step for on-road routes and off-road lanes having a 3m. width.

The planning officer also reported on the latest situation regarding leisure development at the site. He advised the committee, with reference to the table at paragraph 5.36, (financial contributions to be secured through the S106 agreement) that a financial contribution of £3.186m had been agreed. The resolution in April 2016 had included a requirement for an on-site sports hall with health and fitness gym. However, subsequent discussions between planning officers and the council's leisure team had identified that such a building on site was unnecessary, and that the impacts of this proposal could be mitigated through a financial contribution towards off site sports hall and health and fitness provision in the Didcot Leisure Sub Area (as described in the draft Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Councils Leisure and Sports Facilities Joint Statement for the Didcot Leisure Sub Area 2013 to 2029), which included parts of South Oxfordshire District around and including Didcot, as well as the wider Vale of White Horse District. This approach was considered reasonable, as future residents were likely to use leisure facilities in the Didcot town area. It was also proposed that the rugby and swimming pool financial contributions would be available for spend within the Didcot Leisure Sub Area, as well as the wider Vale of White Horse District. The development would still provide a community building on site and changing room/pavilion facilities for the onsite sports pitches and tennis courts.

The planning officer also reported that the April 2016 committee resolution had included 53 planning conditions. Following a review, officers would now suggest 39 planning conditions. This was because some of the conditions would now be dealt with through the provisions in the draft S106 agreement, such as those relating to extra care housing, delivery of the Milton Interchange improvements requested by Highways England, and the details of playing pitches and their delivery. Other conditions had been combined into single conditions, such as the housing delivery document, maximum number of dwellings

Vale of White Horse District Council – Planning Committee Minutes

and housing mix. Also now a feature was a single surface water drainage condition, enabling any infiltration to be addressed, rather than there being two conditions. Conditions preventing construction works affecting public rights of way had been deleted, as this issue would be covered by other legislation. The committee was also recommended to agree a condition relating to dwelling space standards, requiring the development to accord with development policy 2 and appendix H of the Local Plan Part 2.

The planning officer concluded by stating that in April 2016 the committee had resolved to grant outline planning permission for up to 4,254 dwellings and this present application, incorporating changes since that time, was fully compliant with the development plan and, if permitted, would provide a significant improvement in housing land supply.

Councillor Jeremy Hawthorne a representative of Harwell Parish Council, spoke objecting to the application.

Ms. Sally Povolotsky, Director of Living Oxfordshire, spoke objecting to the application.

Mr. Kevin Wilkinson, a representative of HarBUG, spoke objecting to the application.

Mr. David Marsh a representative of Sustainable Harwell, spoke objecting to the application.

Mr. Stewart Lilly representing three medical centres and the primary care network for the area, spoke objecting to the application.

Mr. Andy Birch, an agent, spoke in support of to the application.

Mr. Dean Swann, an agent, spoke in support of to the application.

Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

Councillor Sarah Medley, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

Councillor Andy Cooke, a local ward councillor, spoke objecting to the application.

The democratic services officer had sent the joint statement by Councillors Gascoigne, Medley and Cooke to the committee prior to the meeting.

In response to a question regarding medical and healthcare provision in the locality, Mr. Lilley advised the committee that the situation regarding the 9 villages he represented was already serious, with facilities barely meeting demand. This development would require considerable provision to meet the needs of its residents. The committee noted that the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) had not publicly engaged with the council or representatives, such as Mr. Lilly, and therefore local primary healthcare needs required careful definition. It would be necessary to obtain the OCCG's opinion on the impacts of the proposal as a matter of urgency. The planning officer reported that the OCCG had been made aware of growth proposals coming forward as part of the local plan consultation, but had received no response. Although the local plan did not require health care provision on site, this proposal included two health centres. The 2016 committee decision required NHS England to be consulted on possible contributions on and off site, including a new surgery. Planning officers had contacted that agency three times, with no response. With respect to the present situation, the agent advised the committee that a

lack of input from the OCCG was not uncommon and undertook to engage with the commissioning group without delay.

The committee noted the proposed changes to the five-arm roundabout to fully facilitate pedestrians and cyclists and enquired about the feasibility of an underpass. The agent contended that the present proposals represented a safe and practical solution and that an underpass would not be possible, owing to the contours of the land at this location and maintenance and drainage issues. The OCC representative concurred with this view. The committee remained concerned that the five-arm roundabout as presently proposed did not provide a reasonable solution for cyclists and pedestrians, and considered that further work on design options for should be commissioned.

In response to a question regarding the sustainability of the application, the agent reported that this issue was a local plan objective and that the developers had worked hard to meet these requirements. For example, the dwellings were situated close to job locations and the local infrastructure improvements were of a high standard. In addition, the site contained 12km of cycleways. The development would make provision for electric vehicle charging points and have water efficiency measures. Flood risk, as well as climate change, had been factored into the proposals.

In response to a question in respect of the ability of a S278 agreement to deliver enforceable actions, the planning officer responded that there was a requirement for the developer to enter into such an agreement, prior to commencement of works on site, for all the necessary mitigation highway works, vehicular access, new footway links, bus infrastructure, carriageway widening, and a right-hand turn lane. This would include a signal-controlled site access and new roundabout via the A4130.

In response to a question in respect of secondary school facilities, the planning officer reported that there was not provision for a school on site in the application, but that there was financial support available for expanding the existing school at Great Western Park.

The committee remained concerned that the five-arm roundabout as presently proposed did not provide a robust solution for cyclists and pedestrians and considered that further work on design options for should be commissioned.

The committee also required a further strengthening of the biodiversity proposals via a funding guarantee. It remained concerned at the scarcity of reliable information on the nature and extent of health care provision in connection with the proposal and the lack of engagement on the part of the OCCG.

A motion moved and seconded, to grant planning permission failed on being put to the vote.

A motion moved and seconded, to defer planning permission was declared carried on being put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** to defer consideration of the grant of planning permission for application P14/V2873/O, subject to the following reasons;

1. The applicant to review the proposed 5-arm roundabout design to investigate options for:

- Details of any pre-designs of the roundabout envisaged by the applicants
  - Providing either a bridge or an open underpass to provide direct cycle and pedestrian access across the roundabout.
2. The applicants commit to providing the £200,000 biodiversity contribution prior to development commencing.
  3. Planning officers to engage with the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to obtain their opinion on the impacts of the proposal for healthcare provision. Should the OCCG justify a need for any financial contributions or land on site for providing improved healthcare facilities, then committee members wished to secure the requirements through the s106 agreement.

### **PI.230 P20/V3188/HH - 42 Hutchcomb Road, North Hinksey**

Part way through the consideration of this application, members took a vote just before the meeting guillotine of 8:30pm to continue.

Councillor Jerry Avery left the meeting before the commencement of the determination of this application and therefore did not participate in the discussion or voting on this item.

The committee considered application P20/V3188/HH for a loft conversion and ground floor rear extension at 42 Hutchcomb Road North Hinksey.

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. There were no public speakers on this application.

The planning officer reported that as the rear projection was single storey and that the height followed the slope of the land downwards, away from the dwelling, the proposal was not considered to result in a dwelling which would be overly dominant in its relationship to the adjacent neighbour. It would in fact move the built form in from the northern boundary as a result of the demolition of the existing garage. The majority of the building works could be undertaken under permitted development rights. The North Hinksey Parish Council, the Oxfordshire County Council highways officer and the district council's drainage officer all had no objection to the proposal. There were no neighbour responses.

A motion moved and seconded, to grant planning permission was declared carried on being put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** to grant planning permission for application P20/V3188/HH, subject to the following conditions;

#### Standard Conditions:

1. TL1 - Time limit - Full Application (Full).
2. Approved plans.

#### Pre-occupation condition:

3. HY7[I] - Car Parking (Full).

Compliance Conditions:

4. MC3 - Materials in Accordance with Application (Full) Grant planning permission.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm