

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Planning Committee

held on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 at 6.00 pm  
in the virtual

**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, Mike Pighills and Janet Shelley

Officers: Paul Bateman, Martin Deans, George Jackson, Emily Hamerton and Luke Veillet

Also present: Councillor Eric de la Harpe

Number of members of the public: 4

### **PI.16 Chair's announcements**

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

### **PI.17 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robert Maddison.

### **PI.18 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting, held on Wednesday 11 February 2021, were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and it was agreed that the chair sign them as such, subject to the insertion of an amendment to indicate that the chair stated that he was a resident of Ock Street, Abingdon, but was located at a sufficient distance from 39a and 39b Ock Street to demonstrate that he did not have any interest in the applications at those addresses.

### **PI.19 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Eric de la Harpe, a local ward councillor who had registered to speak on the applications regarding Austin House, Abingdon (item 7) and Crescent House, Abingdon (item 8), declared that his children were former pupils of Abingdon School and that he regularly used sports and social facilities connected with the school.

### **PI.20 Urgent business**

Vale of White Horse District Council - Planning Committee Minutes

Wednesday, 31 March 2021

The senior planning officer reported that agenda items 9 and 10, respectively, Land at Townsend Road, Shrivenham (P20/V1279/FUL) and Fourwinds, 26 Bagley Wood Road, Kennington (P20/V2669/FUL) would be withdrawn from the meeting's agenda.

The reason for the withdrawal was that both Shrivenham and Kennington were identified as larger villages within the local plan, and that the housing policy specifically referred to identifying 'local need'. The committee would need to consider the local need aspect of the local plan policy and the report and application documents were silent on this matter. Therefore, both items required withdrawal to allow planning officers to request each applicant to provide local need evidence for the applications to be presented before the committee for determination.

## **PI.21 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 prior to the meeting upon their receipt.

## **PI.22 P19/V3211/FUL & P19/V3212/LB - Austin House, 76 Bath Street, Abingdon**

The committee considered applications P19/V3211/FUL and P19/V3212/LB for the demolition of a modern flat roof extension to Austin House, the remodelling of Austin House, a new building to provide boarding accommodation and a link corridor to link the new building to Austin House (as amplified and amended by plans and documents received 10 September 2020; 6 November 2020 and 09 February 2021) at Austin House, 76 Bath Street, Abingdon.

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. Members of the committee had attended a site visit to Austin House on 29 March 2021.

The planning officer reported that the application site comprised a large residential property Austin House, which incidentally formed part of the surrounding wider Abingdon School site. Austin House had grade II listed building status and was located within the Albert Park conservation area, which was a grade II registered park and garden. The proposed development followed on from several pre-application enquiries commencing in 2017, which had sought to explore the potential to extend the existing boarding accommodation. The present application was supported by an updated site-wide 'Masterplan', which detailed future development of the school, as well as articulating the rationale for selecting Crescent House and Austin House as most appropriate to extend. The 2019 Masterplan was attached to the planning officer's report at appendix 1.

The planning officer also reported that the application sought both planning permission and listed building consent to demolish the existing two-storey flat roof rear extension of Austin House and erect a three-storey linked extension. The proposed works to the listed building were of a limited nature, constituting some internal alterations and remodelling of a small number of rooms, to provide en-suites and the walkway connections to the new extension at first and ground floor level. Extracts of the key proposed plans were attached to the planning officer's report at appendix 2. The planning officer asked the committee to note that this application had been submitted in conjunction with an application to extend

Crescent House (P19/V3213/FUL) which also sought a three-storey extension to consolidate boarding accommodation on the western part of the school site. Whilst this was a separate application under consideration and thus determined on its own merits, it was part of the wider masterplan to upgrade the school's boarding facilities. The committee noted that there was no intention to increase staff or boarding numbers, as the school had reached capacity; the application sought to consolidate existing accommodation which was scattered amongst different buildings

The main Bath Street elevation of the school would remain unchanged, with the roofline following neighbouring buildings. The impact of the proposals upon drainage and trees would be limited, but could be mitigated. The main impact of the proposed development would be upon heritage assets, namely Austin House being a listed building in a conservation area. Planning officers acknowledged that the proposals entailed some level of harm but that this was considered to be less than substantial when weighed against the public benefits to the local community and the prosperity of the school and local businesses. Additionally, if planning permission and list building consent were granted, a low quality existing extension would be replaced by a high quality building.

Hester Hand, of the Friends of Abingdon Civic Society, spoke objecting to the application. Ms. Hand stated that her remarks on this application also applied to the related application, also on the agenda for this meeting (P19/V3213/FUL, Crescent House, 21 Park Crescent, Abingdon). Ms. Hand's statement had been circulated to the committee some days prior to the meeting.

Stephen Sensecall, the agent, spoke in support of the application.

In response to a question regarding the extent of the benefits which the development would bring to Abingdon, Mr. Sensecall responded that the proposal would help the school to continue to compete in a very competitive school market. It would also assist in further outreach to state schools. This would be a purpose-built accommodation, removing a 1950s-era housing block and provide a building which would be an asset to Abingdon, sympathetic to the conservation area and to the Albert Park surroundings. The 'boarding offer' was important to the school and would provide funding to be invested into school activities. The existing good links with the community would be improved through increased public use of the sports centre and theatre. Mr. Sensecall repeated the economic benefits of the proposal (which were outlined in paragraph 6.6 of the report), namely that the school supported 650 jobs, either directly or indirectly, and provided £23m into the local economy. The UK taxpayer also saved £7m per annum by reducing the number of pupils in state education.

Councillor Eric de la Harpe, a local ward councillor spoke to the application. He declared an interest as a past parent of pupils at the school and as a user of the theatre and the swimming pool, the athletics club, and Tilsley Park, which was managed by the school,

In response to a further question regarding the public benefits of the proposal, the planning officer reported that the school was a community facility and that the national planning policy framework classified developing and altering the school as having a public benefit, in that this assisted the school in being fit for the future. The master plan, attached as appendix 1 of the report, demonstrated that there was limited scope to expand the existing accommodation. The development in planning terms could be regarded as sustainable development. The highways authority, Oxfordshire County Council, had no objection on the basis of there being no increase in pupil numbers attaching to the proposal. In the final

analysis, the committee would determine whether the proposed development had sufficient mitigation to be regarded as constituting less than substantial harm.

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

**RESOLVED:** to grant planning permission for application P19/V3211/FUL for the following reasons;

Standard conditions

1. Full Planning Permission – three-year commencement
2. Development in accordance with the approved plans

Pre-commencement conditions

3. Tree Protection (submission of final Arboricultural Method Statement and details)
4. Construction Traffic Management Plan
5. Schedule of Materials (Photographs)
6. Archaeology; Written Scheme of Investigation

Pre-occupation conditions

7. Submitted Landscaping implementation
8. Submitted Drainage implementation
9. Sustainable Design Features - as approved

Compliance conditions

10. Submitted Ecology mitigation
11. Piling Method Statement submission – if necessary
12. Submitted External Lighting - no further lighting with LPA approval

Considering the application for listed building consent, the committee accepted that the proposed development would entail only limited works to the listed building, and that, in its entirety, the scheme would be in keeping with the existing buildings and that heritage harm would be minimal.

A motion moved and seconded, to grant listed building consent was carried on being put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** to grant listed building consent for application P19/V3212/LB for the following reasons;

Standard conditions

1. Commencement three-year commencement
2. Approved plans

Prior works/relevant works

3. Schedule of Materials
4. Details of glazed bridge

Vale of White Horse District Council – Planning Committee Minutes

Wednesday, 31 March 2021

## **PI.23 P19/V3213/FUL - Crescent House, 21 Park Crescent, Abingdon**

The committee considered application P19/V3213/FUL for the demolition of modern side and rear extensions, the remodelling of Crescent House, a new building to provide boarding accommodation and a link corridor to link the new building to Crescent House (as amplified by amended plans and further information received 28 August 2020; 22 September 2020; 1 October 2020; 6 December 2020 and 9 February 2021), at Crescent House, 21 Park Crescent, Abingdon.

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. Members of the committee had attended a site visit to Crescent House on 29 March 2021.

The planning officer reported that this application sought to demolish modern side and rear extensions and build a new large three-storey linked extension to the rear of Crescent House. The extension would include three separate, but linked sections, leaving Crescent House mostly in its original state. Extracts of the key proposed plans were attached at appendix 2 to the report. The proposed accommodation would be below the ridge line of Crescent House and in appearance would be subservient to it. Planning officers considered that the proposal represented less than substantial harm, as the scheme would only be visible from a small number of locations and the building would be largely hidden from Albert Park.

The committee noted that this application had been submitted in conjunction with applications to extend Austin House (P19/V3211/FUL and P19/V3212/LB), which also sought a three-storey extension to consolidate boarding accommodation on the eastern part of the school site. The planning officer reported that whilst the Crescent House proposal was a separate application, to be considered on its own merits, it was part of the wider masterplan to upgrade the school's boarding facilities. This application did not seek an increase in the number of pupils attending or boarding at the site but sought to consolidate existing accommodation which was scattered amongst different buildings. This was a high-quality scheme, bringing benefit to the school and to Abingdon.

Mr. Bryan Brown, a local resident, spoke objecting to the application.

Mr. Frank Wright, a local resident, spoke objecting to the application.

Mr. Steven Sensecall, the agent, spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Eric de la Harpe, a local ward councillor, spoke to the application.

In response to a question regarding the probable effect upon the street scene and necessary landscaping, the planning officer reported that a scheme for good quality landscaping and planting had been agreed with the developer, which would also incorporate low level lighting; proposed planning condition 6 covered the implementation of a submitted landscaping scheme. In answer to a related question regarding tree protection, the planning officer reported that proposed condition 3 dealt with the protection and safeguarding of existing trees.

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

**RESOLVED:** to grant planning permission for application P19/V3213/FUL for the following reasons;

Standard conditions

1. Full Planning Permission – three-year commencement
2. Development in accordance with the approved plans

Pre-commencement conditions

Vale of White Horse District Council – Planning Committee Minutes

Wednesday, 31 March 2021

3. Tree Protection (submission of final Arboricultural Method Statement and details)
4. Construction Traffic Management Plan
5. Schedule of Materials (Photographs)

Pre-occupation conditions

6. Submitted Landscaping scheme implementation
7. Submitted Drainage scheme implementation
8. Submitted Sustainable Design Features - as approved

Compliance conditions

9. Submitted Ecology Mitigation
10. Submitted External Lighting – no further lighting with LPA approval

### **PI.24 P20/V1279/FUL - Land at Townsend Road, Shrivenham**

Consideration of this application was deferred to allow the applicant to provide further information to the council on the local need aspect of the local plan policy in respect of Shrivenham.

### **PI.25 P20/V2669/FUL - Fourwinds, 26 Bagley Wood Road, Kennington**

Consideration of this application was deferred to allow the applicant to provide further information to the council on the local need aspect of the local plan policy in respect of Kennington.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm