

# Development Control Committee

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Development Control Committee** held on **Wednesday 2 February 2022** at **10.00 am** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

**Chair** Andrew Smith

**Vice Chair** Mike Chester and Jim Thorndyke

John Burns

Jason Crooks

Roger Dicker

Susan Glossop

Ian Houlder

David Palmer

David Roach

David Smith

Peter Stevens

Carol Bull

Brian Harvey

**Substitutes attending for a full member**

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Of2Rows

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**In attendance**

Sarah Broughton and

Beccy Hopfensperger

208. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Alecock and Andy Drummond.

209. **Substitutes**

The following substitutions were declared:

Councillor Andy Neal substituting for Councillor Richard Alecock; and Councillor James Lay substituting for Councillor Andy Drummond.

210. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

211. **Declarations of interest**

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

212. **Planning Application DC/21/1142/FUL - All Saints Hotel, The Street, Fornham St Genevieve**

**Planning application - a. change of use of part of golf course for the siting of 15 caravan lodge holiday homes b. associated infrastructure (as amended)**

Planning permission DC/19/1700/FUL for the change of use of land for the stationing of up to 35 holiday let caravans was refused in 2020 and a subsequent appeal dismissed. This application was a re-submission for a significantly reduced scheme for the siting of 15 holiday let caravans, which sought to address the previous refusal reasons and the reasons the Inspector dismissed the appeal.

The application site and large parts of the golf course fell within the parish of Fornham All Saints. The All Saints Hotel and parts of the golf course was within the parish of Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve. Therefore, both parish councils had been consulted.

The application was referred to the Development Control Committee from the Delegation Panel because both Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve Parish Council and Bury St Edmunds Town Council had objected, whilst Fornham All Saints Parish Council raised no objections to the application. The Ward Members for The Fornhams and Great Barton Ward and one of the Ward Members of the adjoining Tollgate Ward had all objected to the proposal.

The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that following the publication of the agenda and report, an additional letter of objection had been received, together with another letter of support. Both representations had reflected the views already received from other third parties, as summarised in paragraph 40. of the report.

Speakers: Marilyn Sayer (local resident) spoke against the application, expressing her own objections, together with those of other local residents registered to speak, Emma Curwen and Dr Nick Meyers.

Peter Plumb (local resident) spoke in support of the application.

Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger (one of the Ward Members for The Fornhams and Great Barton ward) spoke against the application.

Andrew Kellock (architect); Melissa Jolly (All Saints Hotel Events and Marketing Manager); and Joshua Harris (applicant) all spoke in support for the application, each sharing the three-minute time allocation for this category.

A detailed discussion was held and the majority of Members expressed several concerns with this application, particularly in respect of the potential impact on the visual amenity, character and landscape of the area. It was considered this location in the Lark Valley was a major gateway into Bury St Edmunds and the siting of the proposed lodges would have an adverse impact

on the visual amenity and landscape of this important gateway. The removal of a significant number of trees to allow for the development was considered to have a harmful effect on the character of the landscape.

In addition, concern was expressed whether the proposals constituted development in the open countryside, therefore this, together with a loss of green, open space would potentially contravene relevant planning policies.

Some Members felt the economic benefits of the proposal, which included the creation of a number of jobs, was not considered to sufficiently outweigh the harm to the character of the landscape and the detrimental impact on the visual amenity.

Although this new application proposed a reduction in the number of caravan lodge holiday lets from 35 to 15, some concern remained, although to a much lesser extent than when previously considered, regarding the potential for coalescence and it was therefore imperative that this be resisted so that the two villages of Fornham All Saints and Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve remained clearly separate and distinct.

Other matters of concern included:

- The potential increase in traffic in connection with the proposed upgrading of the access road for maintenance vehicles off the A1101 including the potential safety implications as this road would be located within a 40 miles per hour restriction zone
- The proposed management of refuse collection from the site
- The proposed management of car parking for the lodges to ensure vehicles did not park elsewhere off-site
- The proposed number of electric vehicle charging points provided for cars and golf buggies.

In response to the above issues, the Committee noted that the Highways Authority had not raised objections, subject to conditions, and other matters had been addressed by the applicant's Design and Access Statement or by condition (or additional conditions could be imposed, as appropriate).

Other Members, however, concurred with the officers' recommendation of approval and considered the development to be acceptable and in accordance with development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy DM34 – Tourism Development of the Joint Management Policies Document sought to direct larger scale tourism activities and overnight accommodation to the larger urban areas. The policy permitted new tourism facilities, including overnight visitor accommodation such as holiday lodges, static and touring caravans provided that a number of criteria were being satisfied, as set out in the report. These Members agreed that whilst the proposal was located in the countryside, it accorded with the above policy and other relevant policies, and therefore was considered to be acceptable development in the countryside in this case.

These Members also considered the impact on visual amenity and the landscape was minimal and temporary, particularly given the proposed

development's proximity to an industrial area. Recognising the economic benefits for supporting local businesses, the creation of jobs and the promotion of tourism, the location was considered to be appropriate for encouraging tourists that wished to visit Bury St Edmunds and its surrounding area. The proposed landscaping scheme was also considered to be acceptable by these Members, including that the settlement boundaries of Fornham All Saints and Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve would sufficiently remain separate and distinct.

Before the conclusion of the debate, the Committee was reminded that although the appeal against refusal of the previous application was upheld by the Planning Inspectorate, the Inspector had considered the principle of development was acceptable. The matters of concern raised by the Inspector had been considered by officers to have been sufficiently addressed in this application.

It was moved by Councillor Ian Houlder that the application be approved, as per the officer recommendation. This was duly seconded by Councillor James Lay.

Upon being put to the vote and with 7 voting for the motion, 9 against and no abstentions, the motion was lost.

It was subsequently moved by Councillor Peter Stevens that the application be refused on the grounds of the adverse impact on the visual amenity, character and landscape of the area. This was duly seconded by Councillor David Smith.

Upon being put to the vote and with 9 voting for the motion, 7 against and no abstentions, it was resolved that

#### Decision

Planning permission be **REFUSED** on the grounds of the adverse impact on the visual amenity, character and landscape of the area.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am

**Signed by:**

XXX.WS.dd.mm.yyyy

## Chair

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