

## Ashford Borough Council: Planning Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on **19<sup>th</sup> May 2021**.

### Present:

Cllr. Burgess (Chairman);

Cllr. Blanford (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Anckorn, Bartlett, Chilton, Clokie, Forest, Harman, Howard, Iliffe, Ovenden, Shorter (ex-Officio, non-voting), Sparks, Walder, Wright.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(c) Cllr. Bartlett attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Howard-Smith.

### Apologies:

Cllr. Howard-Smith.

### Also Present:

Head of Planning and Development; Consultant Planning Officer; Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development) and Deputy Monitoring Officer; Member Services Manager; Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

## 15 Declarations of Interest

| Councillor | Interest   | Minute No.          |
|------------|--|---------------------|
| Bartlett   | Declared that he was a Member of Sevington with Finberry Parish Council. He had not been a Member of the Parish Council when it had commented on the application. Nevertheless, he would not take part in the vote on this item. | 18 –<br>20/00667/AS |
| Blanford   | Made a Voluntary Announcement that she was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.   |                     |
| Burgess    | Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.  |                     |
| Clokie     | Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.  |                     |

## **16 Public Participation**

The Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer advised that at this meeting registered public speakers had been invited either to address the Committee in person, or to have their speeches read out by a designated Council Officer. On this occasion, two speakers had registered. One had opted to appear in person and deliver his own statement, and the other had chosen to have his speech read out on his behalf.

## **17 Minutes**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **18 Schedule of Applications**

**Resolved:**

**That following consideration of (a), (b) and (c) below,**

- (a) Private representations (number of consultation letters sent/number of representations received)**
- (b) The Parish/Town/Community Council's views**
- (c) The views of Statutory Consultees and Amenity Societies etc. (abbreviation for consultee/society stated)**

**Supports 'S', objects 'R', no objections/no comments 'X', still awaited '+', not applicable/none received '-'**

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|                         |  |  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Application Number      | 20/00667/AS  |  |
| Location                | Land Adjoining the Paddocks and Orchard cottage,<br>Church Road, Sevington, Kent   |  |
| Parish Council          | Sevington with Finberry  |  |
| Ward                    | Mersham, Sevington South with Finberry   |  |
| Application Description | Outline Application to consider access and layout for the erection of 3 buildings to provide B1 office space with associated parking |  |
| Applicant               | Mr Stickells   |  |
| Agent                   | Urbancurve Architecture  |  |
| Site Area               | 0.37ha   |  |
| (a ) 2R                 | (b) R  | (c) KHS/X,KCC/LLFA/X, PROW/X,<br>NE/X/EA/X,HS1/X,AAG/X<br>KCCH/X |

The Consultant Planning Officer gave a presentation and drew Members' attention to the Update Report. She provided further information on the proposal, additional consultation feedback and two changed or new conditions. She also read out a statement by the applicant in support of the application.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Coppins, a local resident, had registered to speak in objection to the application. His speech was read to the Committee by the Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer and is attached to these Minutes at Appendix A.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Martin, on behalf of Sevington with Finberry Parish Council, had registered to speak in objection to the application. He addressed the meeting in person and his speech as submitted in advance of the meeting is attached to these Minutes at Appendix B.

### **Resolved:**

### **Refuse**

For the following reasons

1. There is no evidence to demonstrate that a rural location is essential for the proposed use, and the scheme would therefore be contrary to Policy EMP5 a) of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The proposed scheme would be located in a sensitive rural location where the character and scale of the development would harm the open natural character of the landscape, contrary to the provisions of Policies EMP1 (a) and EMP5 (b) of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 and the National Planning Policy Framework.
3. The proposed scheme would result in built development on an important rural gap that would, when considered cumulatively with other existing development, lead to the significant erosion of the remaining gap between the settlements of Ashford and Sevington, thereby resulting in the loss of the separate distinctive character and identity of Sevington contrary to the objectives of policy SP7 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030.
4. The proposed scheme would result in significant adverse impact upon the amenities of local residents contrary to the provisions of Policies EMP1 b), EMP5 c) of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 and the National Planning Policy Framework.
5. The proposed scheme would result in traffic being drawn onto Church Road that would adversely affect the character and use of this rural highway by local residents, contrary to the provisions of Policies EMP1 d), EMP5 d) and TRA7 of the Ashford Local Plan and the National planning Policy Framework.
6. The site lies adjacent to a Priority Habitat Inventory Area and would by reducing the area of undeveloped land available for wildlife movements adversely affect local biodiversity, contrary to the provisions of Policy ENV1 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 and the National Planning Policy Framework.
7. The proposed development would cause harm to the setting of three Statutorily Listed Buildings (Ashdown Cottage, Orchard Cottage and Maytree Cottage) contrary to the provisions of Policy ENV13 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Note to Applicant**

#### **1. Working with the Applicant**

In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF Ashford Borough Council (ABC) takes a positive and creative approach to development proposals focused on solutions. ABC works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by;

- offering a pre-application advice service,

- as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application
- where possible suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome,
- informing applicants/agents of any likely recommendation of refusal prior to a decision and,
- by adhering to the requirements of the Development Management Customer Charter.

In this instance the applicant/agent was

- was provided with pre-application advice,
- updated of any issues after the initial site visit,
- The applicant was provided the opportunity to submit amendments to the scheme/ address issues, resulting in a favourable recommendation.
- The application was considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the committee and promote the application.

**Post-Meeting Note by the Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development) and Deputy Monitoring Officer:**

In the counting of votes on the motion to Refuse the above application, a vote incorrectly given by Cllr Shorter was erroneously included in the tally. However, this error made no difference to the decision made by the Committee on the motion, because the tally taken and declared at the Meeting was 8 votes in favour of the motion, and 4 against. Therefore, disregarding Cllr Shorter's vote, the motion was passed by a clear majority, and there was no need to re-take the vote.

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Queries concerning these Minutes?

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Mr Coppins – Local Resident**

The historic settlement of Sevington was first recorded nearly 1 millennium ago in the Domesday Book of 1086. Now largely developed, a small pocket of historic buildings remain in the area of Church Road, from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Grade 1 listed Church through to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Bridge Cottage.

The surrounding context of these dwellings have been eroded through development over the past 40 years, most recently with the Inland Boarder Facility. However, some open, undeveloped land remains that provides a buffer between the largely developed area of Ashford, the boarder facility, and the historic buildings.

The current Ashford Local Plan recognises this, with Sevington being removed from HOU3a and HOU5 policy, classifying the area as countryside and thus not for development. This change was made following the granting of planning permission of Stour Park, suggesting that further development would be inappropriate. Enough is enough.

Whilst the proposed development is somewhat minor, it will set a precedent for the remaining undeveloped areas to be built out. This assessment is supported with The Old Rectory, an unlisted gothic building which forms part of the local character, being listed for sale as a 2-acre development opportunity in 2020. Land belonging to The Old Rectory shares a boundary with this development.

The Ashford Local Plan provides significant designated development area for provision of such accommodation as proposed, should the developers determine a genuine need. B1 space can be provided just few hundred meters away in a designated development area and benefit from the local amenities and transport that are being provisioned. The nearest bus stop to the proposed development is more than a Kilometre away at Orbital Park.

Flexible, starter office space is also provided in various locations including in the town centre, where users support other trades in the centre of town.

Permitting this development will result in wider implications with the eventual permanent loss of what little remaining buffer space this Historic area has, for the purposes of short-term gain. A loss extending beyond the historic context to include loss of Biodiversity, Wildlife and a green corridor to the east.

I therefore ask the committee to consider the losses already incurred to this historic area from the past 40 years of development, most recently with the IBF, and protect what little undeveloped area that remains around the Historic Church Road area of Sevington.

**APPENDIX B****Mr Martin – on behalf of Sevington with Finberry Parish Council**

Planning application [20/00667](#)/AS Land adjoining Paddocks and Orchard Cottage Sevington.

I attend tonight in my role as chairman of Sevington with Finberry Parish Council.

Our objections to this development are as follows:

1. This is the last remaining part of Sevington village and it has long been primarily a rural site, on a rural lane, consisting of mainly grade 2 listed cottages, and a grade 1 listed church. As such, we believe it should be protected to maintain the integrity of these important old buildings and to ensure separation of the village from urban sprawl.
2. The site was not identified as a development site in the Local Plan and so is a Windfall and not permitted under HOU5 as this includes small rural parishes such as Sevington from Windfall developments.
3. The situation at Waterbrook, which has far better road access, yet still has numerous empty units, would indicate there is no immediate demand locally for this type of office development.
4. This rural lane is not wide enough for two vehicles to pass safely. The blind spots on the bend have been the cause of numerous incidents occurring over the years. To increase the traffic on this lane will further increase the problems for existing residents, when, again, there is no proven demand for this type of development.
5. The KCC traffic plan, with access and parking for 34 vehicles, would indicate that this is a far bigger enterprise than just a small rural business, and as such is out of keeping with the location.

For these reasons, and the clear local opposition to the plans, we urge the planning committee to refuse this application.

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