

## Planning Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **18<sup>th</sup> March 2020**.

### Present:

Cllr. Burgess (Chairman);

Cllr. Blanford (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bartlett, Chilton, Clarkson (ex officio), Clokie, Feacey, Forest, Harman, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ovenden, Shorter, Sparks, C. Suddards, Wright.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(c) Cllrs. Feacey, Bartlett and C. Suddards attended as Substitute Members for Cllrs. B. Heyes, Howard and Ward respectively.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. B. Heyes, Howard, Smith, Spain, Ward.

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Campkin, Iliffe, White.

Chief Executive, Head of Planning and Development, Senior Communications Officer, Digital Content Officer, Communications & Marketing Manager, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development); Deputy Principal Solicitor – Planning/Section 106, Member Services Manager (Operational).

## 358 Requests for Deferral/Withdrawal

A Member put forward a proposal that this meeting be adjourned until the Planning Committee Meeting in July, due to the current situation surrounding COVID-19, and this proposal was seconded.

The motion was defeated, with 4 votes in favour and 8 votes against.

## 359 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Bartlett	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Member of Kent County Council, which had expressed views on these applications, but he had taken no part in forming these views.	
	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Member of Kennington Community Council, which had expressed views on these	361 – 19/00025/AS

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	applications, but he had taken no part in forming these views.	
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.	
Chilton	Announced that he was a Member of Stanhope Parish Council, who had supported this application. He would not vote on the application.	361 – 20/00191/AS
Clarkson	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.	
Feacey	Made a Voluntary Announcement that a close family member owned property in the close vicinity of the application site.	361 – 19/01701/AS
	Declared an Other Significant Interest as a close family member lived in a property abutting the application site. He would not vote on the application.	361 – 19/01517/AS
Ovenden	Made a Voluntary Announcement that the applicant was a Member of the Ashford Independent Group.	361 – 20/00191/AS
C. Suddards	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was one of the Ward Members for the area. He would speak as Ward Member. As he had already indicated his support for the application, he would not vote on the application.	361 – 19/01278/AS 19/01262/AS

## **360 Minutes**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meetings of this Committee held on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **361 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 indication of the Parish Council's/Town Council's views**
- (c) The views of Statutory Consultees and Amenity Societies (abbreviation for consultee/society stated)**

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

**decisions be made in respect of Planning Applications as follows: -**

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<b>Application Number</b>	19/00025/AS
<b>Location</b>	Land between railway line and Willesborough Road, Kennington, Kent
<b>Grid Reference</b>	02903/44327
<b>Community Council</b>	Kennington
<b>Ward</b>	Kennington
<b>Application Description</b>	<p>Hybrid planning application seeking:</p> <p>(i) Outline planning permission (all matters reserved except for points of access) for up to 437 dwellings; formal and informal open space incorporating SuDS; and associated services, infrastructure and groundworks; and</p> <p>(ii) Full planning permission for the erection of 288 dwellings; the creation of service plot of land to facilitate the delivery by Kent County Council of a two-form entry primary school with associated outdoor space and vehicle parking; a new Bowls Centre including a clubhouse of 292 sq.m, ancillary building and a bowling green; a local centre to provide 280 sq.m of A1 (retail), 180 sq.m of A1 (retail food store), 100 sq.m A3 (café), 75 sq.m A5 (takeaway), 190 sq.m D2 (gym/fitness studio space) open space incorporating SuDS; vehicle parking; and associated services, structural landscaping, infrastructure and groundworks.</p> <p>Subject to Environmental Impact Assessment</p>
<b>Applicant</b>	Quinn Estates & Redrow Homes c/o Agent
<b>Agent</b>	Montagu Evans LLP 5 Bolton Street London W1J 8BA

The Head of Planning and Development gave a presentation and drew Members' attention to the Update Report.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Atkins, a local resident, had registered to speak in objection to the application. His speech was read out by the Senior Communications Officer. Mr Atkins objected to this application on a number of grounds, the first of which was weight of public opinion and a changed world. As of the previous evening, there were 1059 objections to this application and just 74 representations in support. There was considerable public opinion against this development and it was important that the Council took this into consideration. This

was a changed world, entering recession, with no potential end to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the economy was in freefall. Nothing like this had been experienced before. The development had long been proposed but there were times when caution should be exercised and changed circumstances should reflect this. Regarding traffic impact, the construction of Conningbrook Park, along with Orchard Farm and Conningbrook Lakes, would add approximately 2,250 additional car movements per day. Kennington had no arterial road to adequately handle the additional traffic and relied on a system virtually unchanged in 50 years. Whilst the Highways England submission, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, stated no objection, they were interested in the impact to the M20 as part of the Strategic Road Network and access to it, and they referenced the new Junction 10a as their reason for no objection. However, Junction 9 was more easily reached for London bound traffic. Highways England gave no countenance to the impact on local roads such as the A28. KCC Highways suggested a SCOOT at the signalled junctions at Magazine Road and A28 Canterbury Road. This system needed to be installed and trialled before the development was underway, and its effects modelled and simulated, with the projected numbers from the various developments taken into account. The A28 and the A2070 were already congested at peak times. This site was the best and most versatile agricultural land, with approximately 60% of the site being Grade 1 highest quality land. The majority of land around Ashford, according to Natural England, was Grade 3 Agricultural Land, and therefore the development of this site would result in the reduction of an already scarce resource. With regard to sewerage, Southern Water's report stated they had concerns over capacity issues and they did not provide details of how the excessive odours emitted from the Kinney's Lane works would be managed if the development was allowed. Regarding the William Harvey Hospital, the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust was currently undergoing a review of services at the William Harvey, Canterbury and Margate hospitals as to the capacity issues and the location of various services. William Harvey Hospital was already overstretched and may lose its A&E department. The public transport infrastructure was already inadequate and trains to London were at capacity with standing room only at peak times. With the developments in Ashford and the wider area, for instance the 6800 houses proposed at Otterpool Park, this was only set to worsen. The ecological impact had been underestimated, stating that it was agricultural land and therefore of little importance and that the development would enhance the ecological situation by introducing green corridors. Clearly, this was not the case and the considerable wildlife at this site would be lost by developing the site. Importantly, the Kent Wildlife Trust objected to this application on the grounds that insufficient consideration had been given to potential recreational disturbance on Conningbrook Country Park. In conclusion, these were difficult times. We all needed to stop and consider the implications of what was taking place, not just in our local authority, but in the wider world. There were many reasons for rejecting this application. Mr Atkins urged the Council to listen to the residents, consider the weight of public opinion and not ignore the changed circumstances we were now faced with. Approving the development at this critical time would have many potential consequences that could not, at this stage, be foreseen. The future was unclear.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Hopkins, a local resident, spoke in objection to the application. He said he did not want this development. If he had his way it would never have made it into the Local Plan. Using the best agricultural land

to build houses upon was never a good idea in his book. Sustainability seemed to be key here and the developers talked in their design evolution statement about the Local Centre serving residents of Little Burton. Mr Hopkins asked how that affected the sustainability of the shops there. If this development was to go ahead, the Planning Committee should be refusing the application as submitted for the following reasons. The Local Centre should be located in the middle of the development so that it did not impact on surrounding areas, and to encourage people to walk to their local shops. The school should be located closer to the A2070 to minimise traffic flows through the estate. Tandem parking was a recipe for on-street parking chaos. It inhibited refuse collection, caused issues amongst neighbours and problems for emergency vehicles. This development, in an effort to squeeze as many units in as possible, had too many of these. Plans should be redesigned to allow for side by side parking for all units. The developers talked of environmental standards, but dual flush toilets, a water butt and a bit of insulation in the loft were totally inadequate. Mr Hopkins asked where were the innovative uses of recycled materials, plastic/asphalt road sections, water collection for use in toilet systems, solar tiles built into the roof, induction hobs, heat pumps and triple glazing for all properties? The Kent Unit for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was opposed to the plans submitted, as the estate would impact adversely on the view from the Downs. They wanted no more than 2 storey buildings. Mr Hopkins would like to see a selection of 1 storey properties on the edge of the development closest to the Downs, to cater for all abilities in the population. This would allow for a more effective screening of the site and help to preserve a view that attracted countless tourists to this area and inspired local residents. If we were going to build on prime greenfield sites, the least we could do was to make the development in question a flagship for future design and sustainability. The only exceptional thing about this development, as submitted, was its blandness and lack of imagination. Homes for the future were needed: ones that would signal that Ashford was building for the decades to come, not repeating the designs of the past. Houses should be eco-friendly, carbon zero and designed to the very highest of standards, so that people chose to live in Ashford, rather than settle here because housing was cheap and plentiful. There were enough planning permissions on the books already to satisfy that criteria. Did this Committee want to be remembered for anything other than boring, repetitive developments, or was it willing to signal a change of direction: one that said 'yes, we are open for business, yes, we can provide you with a home, but more importantly, we will give you a sustainable and long term lifestyle that reflects Ashford as a forward thinking town, with properties to match'?

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Bray, a local resident, had registered to speak in objection to the application. His speech was read out by the Senior Communications Officer. Mr Bray wrote that, not for the first time, we were back in these Council chambers considering the future of Kennington's farm land – a rich agricultural resource that sloped gently down to the river towards Wye and the Downs. The last time we were here the application to build on this land was refused. Nothing had changed in the circumstances or arguments since, except that there were even more reasons now why this land should not be built on than there were before. There were a number of arguments against the development. Grade 1 Agricultural Land should only be built on in exceptional circumstances; the land included a flood plain and climate change was dictating the challenge of potential flooding; traffic was an increasing issue in our times and those who would live in the

eventual 750 new houses or bring their children to the new primary school, would exit onto a narrow road. These new arrivals were going to seriously impact on traffic movement all the way into Ashford. Four to five bedroom homes, representing around 3 cars per house, multiplied by 750 homes, totalled 2,250 extra cars on the road, plus another 200 parents and staff for the school. This equated to 2,500 cars during peak times. There would be gridlock and the air quality would be seriously compromised. The prospect of the emergency services needing to negotiate their way to the hospital, to the motorway, or to a person in need, was a worrying one. Health services were already overstretched, with current Kennington residents finding it difficult to access a GP or the hospital. The land was now part of the Ashford Plan, earmarked for development. Taking an aerial view of Ashford, it looked like the one section that had not yet been filled in with housing. It was not too late to change this approach, considering how much needed to be done in order to make it a sustainable option. Firstly, there had to be a calculated approach to how many houses, and therefore new residents, were sustainable. An eventual 750 new homes was an impossible target. Even half that number would still be a threat to life as residents knew it. New arrivals would have to be accommodated, doctors and dentist would need to be found, as well as school and hospital places. Nothing could be done to the roads. Mr Bray suggested that the idea of the bypass was resurrected, with a link from the motorway through to the main road to Canterbury feeding into the new estates.

There was then a significant interruption to the online streaming of the meeting. After a period of time, a Member proposed that the meeting be adjourned as it was no longer possible to make the rest of the meeting accessible to a significant number of interested parties. The proposal was seconded.

**Resolved:**

**That the meeting be adjourned to a date to be determined by the proper Officer.**

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