

MINUTES

Committee: Planning Committee
Date: Monday, 5 February 2024
Time: 6:30pm
Venue: Younghayes Centre, 169 Younghayes Road, Cranbrook EX5 7DR

Present

Cllr Ray Bloxham (Chair)
Cllr Les Bayliss
Cllr Matt Bayliss
Cllr Kevin Blakey
Cllr Kim Bloxham
Cllr Colin Buchan

Also Present

Cllr Vincent Wilton
Alexandra Robinson Deputy Clerk, Cranbrook Town Council

P/24/9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr James Gill

P/24/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATION

No interests were declared or dispensations granted.

P/24/11 MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr Les Bayliss seconded by Cllr Colin Buchan and **resolved** to accept and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024 as a correct record.

P/24/12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

P/24/13 MONITORING REPORT

The Chairman reported on items within the monitoring report:

- a) 22/2343/MRES Site of Tillhouse Farm (108) seeking approval of the reserved matters (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for the demolition of existing buildings, conversion of dairy building to 2 residential dwellings, construction of 10 new residential dwellings, and associated car parking, roads, access, landscaping, infrastructure and engineering works (including ground modelling and utilities). This is a subsequent application in respect of outline permission 03/P1900 which was accompanied by an Environmental Statement and seeks the discharge of the relevant conditions of the outline permission 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29 and 37. The application had been approved in accordance with the Town Council's recommendations.
- b) 23/0962/FUL Land at Saundercroft Farm, Whimble (111) seeking the development of a battery energy storage system, connected to the National Grid, along with associated works including drainage, access and landscaping. The application had been approved in accordance with the Town Council's recommendations.
- c) 23/2241/FUL 5 Higher Furlong Road Cranbrook (115) construction of a secure bike shed in the rear garden with associated pathway and access gate and additional boundary features to match the existing. The committee noted the concerns previously raised, had been addressed and therefore raised no objection to the revised application.

- d) 24/0103/FUL Ingrams Sports Pitches, London Road, Cranbrook (114) erection of temporary sales centre and use of four existing parking spaces. As the application was on land owned by the Town Council and was submitted with the agreement of the Council, the Planning Committee resolved to make no formal planning comments.

In summary, the planning applications above had been previously consulted on by committee members and were brought forward to note and ratify that the comments had been submitted to the local planning authority within the deadline.

The Committee noted the decisions in respect of planning applications c) and d) above and the updated monitoring report.

P/24/14 PLANNING APPLICATION 14/2945/MOUT – FARLANDS LONDON ROAD WHIMPLE

The Chairman referred to the outline application proposing the development of up to 260 houses, commercial/retail uses, public open space including youth sports pitch, vehicular access and associated infrastructure (outline application with all matters reserved except access and accompanying Environmental Statement).

The Committee noted the application had been under consideration for some time and had commented on a number of occasions including March 2016, December 2019 and most recently in June 2023. The most recent consideration raised concerns that the proposed principal access onto the London Road was unacceptable as an uncontrolled junction. The Committee encouraged the local planning and highways authorities to develop and apply a holistic approach in their treatment of existing and future junctions off the B3174.

The Chairman provided clarity and context to the proposed Farlands site, where Cobdens was situated to the east, the Grange opposite and Ingrams immediately to the west giving rise to a significant number of vehicular movements via the London Road.

Members considered the wider aspects of the application in terms of access, ecological impact, access to the Ingrams Sports Pitches, youth sports pitch and the historical value of the World War II radio station within the development site.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Colin Buchan, seconded by Cllr Kevin Blakey and **resolved** that whilst the principle of development of the site was acceptable as it was in accordance with the Cranbrook Plan, the Committee **Objected to the application** on the following grounds:

1. Access and highway layout

The Committee objects to the proliferation of uncontrolled junctions connecting this part of Cranbrook to the London Road. The only controlled junction proposed to date is Cobdens with in excess of 1400 homes being served with a single traffic light controlled 'T' junction. Additionally in this locality, junctions directly opening on to the London Road include this application (260 homes), Ingrams (150+ homes) and Grange (180+ with a further 600+ at a later stage). These are in addition to the existing access to Ingrams Sports Centre as well as several smaller developments and private access points.

Given what is known about the difficulties at Station Road, Broadclyst and the fact that these developments are likely to each deliver more vehicle movements at peak times than Station Road does today - and the fact that the vast majority of rush hour traffic will seek to head west towards Exeter resulting in a majority of right turns across both traffic lanes, these proposals when considered together represent real concerns for motorist frustration, drivers seeking rat runs through residential parcels and collisions. Given that the Planning and Highway authorities are already working on a scheme to divert Station Road traffic through the Bluehayes parcel and connect to London Road via a new roundabout, the thinking in this locality seeks to deliver something substantially worse. The whole scheme around this locality needs to be thought through collectively and at the very least major development connections with London Road should be light controlled or via one or more roundabouts.

In addition, the routing of substantial housing developments on to London Road as proposed has the impact of making London Road an inner by-pass for Cranbrook. This seems completely opposite thinking to the proposed calming of London Road and its transition into a slower less used route.

The proximity of the proposed neighbourhood centre along London Road will result in passing trade stopping along London Road to access the retail units and result in inappropriate and dangerous parking. Couple this with the traffic levels highlighted above.

There is no pedestrian crossing over London Road proposed, yet this application does include a pedestrian crossing over the adjacent cycle way. Pedestrians are expected to cross an uncontrolled highway but have the benefit of a pedestrian crossing to negotiate the few additional metres over the cycle way. This is flawed thinking - there should be safe pedestrian crossing facilities over BOTH the highway and cycle way.

2. Ecological Impact

The application lacks clarity as to how biodiversity net loss will be managed. This coupled with the fact that, at best, there is a 15% net loss, indicates that the proposals for 260 homes within the parcel is overdevelopment.

3. Other Matters

Whilst these matters are reserved, the Committee wishes to raise the following:

- The indicative layout, overall housing numbers, high number of flats with no outside space, streetscene with terraces with substantial proportion of unallocated parking in front of homes and the very low percentage of larger family homes is not supported as this will lead to an unattractive urban landscape and exacerbate the already unbalanced community that is Cranbrook today. The indicative proposals are more akin to town centre development and the Committee did anticipate a more balanced delivery in this locality.
- The Council would seek a commitment to allocated parking provision for all householders including, in each case, access to electric vehicle charging points as well as EV charging available on visitor parking allocation.
- The Council would seek early conversations about the layout of public green areas in order to ensure that they are protected from damage by inconsiderate parking and provide genuine and usable areas of public open space. The indicative areas of grass on corners as shown on the sketch plan are both vulnerable to damage and afford no amenity value.
- The Council seeks clarity on the future management of public open space as the developer is outside the contract between the Town Council and New Community Partners.
- Clarity is sought on the proposed links to Ingrams Sports Centre including both how the access will cross the existing eastern boundary hedge and ditch and also the responsibility for delivering the continuation of pathways within Ingrams to connect to the remainder of the site.
- The proposed youth pitch is located in a wet area of the Farlands site and will, no doubt, be affected by periods of not being playable. Whilst the Ingrams facility being adjacent has considerable need for an all-weather surface, the Council is concerned that such a facility in the proposed location would be isolated from the sports centre and subject to misuse. Therefore, the Council would ask the Planning Authority and Developer to give further consideration to the best use of this part of the site by making the best provision possible for amenity use by local residents and their families. A Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) open to the community would be one suggestion.
- The final proposals should, in some measure, recognise the history of the second world war radio station that was located within Farlands and it is recommended that there is wider engagement as to how this is best achieved.

The meeting closed at 6:55pm