

Sonning Common Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in the Village Hall, Sonning Common, on Monday 16 January 2017 at 1900 hrs.

Present: Mrs Lewis (chairman), Mr Fort, Mr Rawlins, Mr Kedge, Mr Rust, Mr Stoves, Mr Collings (Parish Clerk) and Mrs Varnes (Deputy Parish Clerk). A Henley Standard representative.

P17/136 Apologies for absence: none.

P17/137 Declarations of interest: none.

P17/138 Public consultation time: six members of the public attended in relation to both applications.

P17/139 New applications:

139.01/P16/S3630/O. A residential development of up to 245 dwellings (including up to 40 per cent affordable housing), structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children's play areas, vehicular access from Peppard Road and Kiln Road and associated ancillary works. All matters reserved with the exception of the main vehicular access.

Address: Land off Peppard Road, Emmer Green.

After discussion members resolved to recommend refusal of the application. See attached letter.

139.02/P15/S4119/FUL. A residential development of 50 dwellings, access, public open space, landscaping and provision of land for community sports/recreation facilities (as amended by drawings and information received 8 December 2016) on land at Bishopswood Middle Field and Kidmore End War Memorial Hall RG4 9LL.

After discussion members resolved to recommend approval of the application. See attached letter.

P17/140 Matters for future agendas: none.

Meeting closed at 1955.

Date of next meeting: Monday 6 February 2017 at 1915.

Chairman: Dated:

SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Office

VILLAGE HALL, WOOD LANE
SONNING COMMON, OXON, RG4 9SL

Clerk – Philip Collings

Tel 0118 972 3616

Email: clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk

Ms Joan Desmond
SODC Planning Officer
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Oxfordshire
OX14 4SB

Friday 20 January 2017

Dear Ms Desmond

Re: P16/S3630/O. A residential development of up to 245 dwellings (including up to 40 per cent affordable housing), structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children's play areas, vehicular access from Peppard Road and Kiln Road and associated ancillary works. All matters reserved with the exception of the main vehicular access. Address: Land off Peppard Road, Emmer Green.

At its meeting on Monday 16 January 2017 members of Sonning Common Parish Council's Planning Committee voted unanimously to recommend to SODC rejection of the above application.

Refusal of the application is strongly recommended on the following grounds:

1. The proposed development would occupy a significant part of the Strategic Green Gap between Sonning Common, Emmer Green and Eye and Dunsden. This green gap provides vital separation not only between these rural areas but between these rural settlements and Reading. This gap is essential to preserve the character and integrity of the rural settlements.
2. One of the primary objectives of the adopted Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan (SCNP) – backed overwhelmingly by residents – is to preserve the village's separateness from Reading. This development would be only one mile from Sonning Common's southern boundary. The village's character and surrounding rural landscape would be permanently and irrevocably damaged by allowing this urban extension to Reading.

The Council's Autumn 2016 OUTLOOK newsletter which is delivered to every householder in the district, emphasised SODC's continued support for neighbourhood plans in the following extract:

"They (neighbourhood plans) are based on the views of local people - the people who know the most about how their communities work. We see them as a vital part of making sure housing and other developments in the district are the right ones in the right places at the right time. They will support and complement our

Local Plan to make sure the thriving, rural nature of our district is protected and supported by new houses and jobs."

3. The proposed housing development is unsustainable. The provision of sustainable development is an essential requirement of the NPPF. The nearest South Oxfordshire services would be in Sonning Common. New residents would be unable to walk to the village along the B481 since there are no pavements. It would be dangerous to walk or risky to cycle along the road since there is often a high volume of traffic, including heavy-weight vehicles and farm machinery.
4. An urban extension beyond the Reading boundary would not meet South Oxfordshire's housing requirement as the site is not connected to any settlement in South Oxfordshire. It would therefore not accord with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2032 Preferred Options.
5. The option of siting new housing next to neighbouring major urban areas has already been specifically rejected in the South Oxfordshire Proposed Submission Core Strategy December 2010:

7.22. As part of our distribution strategy we have considered land outside Reading. Some of this lies within the floodplain and other areas within the Chilterns AONB. Further development focused on Reading would increase the pressures on the constrained bridges crossing the Thames and the strategy does not therefore provide for urban extensions to Reading.

6. Reading Borough Council has already rejected the application as being unsustainable. Education and healthcare provision in and around Sonning Common and Emmer Green is already struggling to meet the needs of the existing population. Primary schools are over-subscribed and there is only one secondary school serving the whole of Caversham and Emmer Green.

The area's health surgeries, both in Sonning Common and Emmer Green, are already under significant pressure. Sonning Common Health Centre currently has some 8,600 patients and the dental surgery 3,800 – the village's population is less than 5,000 people, so a notable number of patients come from smaller settlements around the village's periphery.

Sonning Common's sustainability with regard to education and healthcare will be further stretched by the 195 new homes allocated under the SCNP and the additional 44 homes in reserve.

This planning application fails to make provision for the necessary infrastructure and facilities to ensure that the development is sustainable, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

7. The proposed development is in an unsuitable location. The large scale of the proposed development would place intolerable pressure on the area's rural road network.

The B481 – the main route through Sonning Common - is not equipped to cope with the significant increase in regular traffic movements that would be associated with this site; neither is the Kennylands Road, off the B481, another main route into the village.

Under the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan, 113 new homes with their associated traffic movements are already being accommodated off these roads. The construction of 65 of these new homes is already underway at Lea Meadow (SON 9).

Permitting additional traffic movements on the scale associated with this proposed development would cause an unacceptable risk to road users, pedestrians and existing residents.

8. The proposed access from the B481 is inadequate and dangerous. The alternative proposed access, off Kiln Lane, is narrow and leads to a network of country lanes in Eye and Dunsden, many of which are single-lane. The Oxfordshire Cycleway crosses this route and cyclists would be placed in danger by increased traffic movements on these narrow, rural routes.
9. The applicant's traffic flow data is flawed and inaccurate. Photographic evidence was collated to demonstrate that data collection points were sited at points in the road where speeds were atypically low. Consequently, access roads are much more dangerous than they claim.
10. In the absence of a third bridge to Reading the proposed development would place intolerable pressure on the already seriously over-stretched river crossings in Sonning and Reading. Pressure on these Thames crossings will be further increased by the new housing allocations under the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan and infill in the wider area.

This proposed development would contribute to blocking the scope for a relief road from any third bridge to Reading.

11. Local bus services are inadequate for a development of this scale. The applicant's assertion that an increase in demand will result in additional bus services being provided is speculative. The proposal to provide bus stops near the entrance to the development site on the B481 (Peppard Road) will have a detrimental impact on traffic flow on that road which is a busy cut-through for traffic travelling through South Oxfordshire to Reading and beyond (to the M3 and M4).
12. There is concern over the capacity of the sewerage system locally and the provision of water supply to the site, problems identified by the applicant.
13. The Oxfordshire SHMA identifies future job growth as being in Didcot and the Science Vale, not in this part of South Oxfordshire. Neither Sonning Common nor Emmer Green are areas of high or growing employment – quite the opposite, in fact – and sufficient employment opportunities for new residents in this area would not exist.

14. The Chilterns AONB is just 700m away from the site. This large-scale development would cause an unacceptable intrusion into the AONB and permanently destroy the landscape setting of the area.
15. Significant amenity value will be lost if the development goes ahead. The site is defined by the applicants themselves as "ancient countryside" and has long been used for informal recreation purposes. There are ecological and environmental benefits in retaining the existing landscape which is typical of the Chilterns dip slope and offers pleasing vistas from a large number of neighbouring properties.
16. We are concerned that the applicant has inadequately addressed the geology of the local area where a large number of chalk caverns and swill holes exist.
17. This proposed development is out of keeping with the rural character of the parishes of Sonning Common and Eye and Dunsden.

In summary, there are so many significant reasons for rejecting this application that it would be difficult to see how the application could be justified at all – other than to help restore the district's five-year land supply.

A recommendation of approval from SODC on this application would mark a betrayal of existing residents and cause serious, substantial and permanent harm to the local area. Given that this is an outline application, a full application with potentially more new houses would have even more damaging consequences for the area.

This proposed development fails the test for sustainable development in a suitable location, as required by the NPPF, and is contrary to spatial strategy of the adopted Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan. It must be refused.

Yours sincerely



Ros Varnes
Deputy Clerk, Sonning Common Parish Council
(On behalf of the Planning Committee)

cc Paula Fox, Paul Harrison, Will Hall, John Cotton (SODC); David Bartholomew (OCC);
John Howell MP

SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Office

VILLAGE HALL, WOOD LANE
SONNING COMMON, OXON, RG4 9SL

Clerk – Philip Collings

Tel 0118 972 3616

Email: clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk

Mr Phil Moule
SODC Planning
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Oxfordshire
OX14 4SB

Tuesday 24 January 2017

Dear Mr Moule

Re: P15/S4119/FUL. A residential development of 50 dwellings, access, public open space, landscaping and provision of land for community sports/recreation facilities (as amended by drawings and information received 8 December 2016) on land at Bishopswood Middle Field and Kidmore End War Memorial Hall RG4 9LL.

On Monday 16 January 2017 our Planning Committee resolved to recommend approval of the application by Linden Homes to build new 50 homes on SON 2, **subject to our approval of the planning conditions prepared by SODC and the proposed Section 106 Agreement for the site.**

The Planning Committee is providing its conditional support to this application on trust that the outstanding issues of concern will be addressed in the planning conditions and Section 106 Agreement prior to the determination of this application by SODC.

The Parish Council has highlighted to you, both in writing and verbally (at our meeting on 12 January) that the outstanding issues that require addressing in respect of the proposed development on SON 2 are:

- a. The removal of the spur road adjacent to SON 1
- b. Clarity on the exact nature of the proposed emergency access from Lambourne Road; confirmation that no general vehicular access will be permitted; and the access will be for emergency vehicle and pedestrian use only (in perpetuity)
- c. That existing hedgerows and trees are retained throughout the site and particularly along the borders with Lambourne Road and Ashford Avenue; and that every opportunity is taken to enhance existing and provide new planting to mitigate against the impact of the new development upon existing residents. We request that new planting – a mix of architectural trees and some under-storey planting – is concentrated in the corner adjacent to SON 1 and in other public, open areas of the site.

It should be noted by both SODC and Linden Homes that existing residents in this area currently enjoy a public open view over the AONB and that the

residential development of this AONB site has only been accepted, reluctantly by many residents, because of the planned transfer of the adjacent SON 3 for community and recreational use. It should also be noted that residents were largely happy with the original site lay-out but have some major objections to the amended site lay-out.

- d. That protections are provided to prevent the amenity land being built on at any future date.

SON 3

In relation to SON 3 specifically, we require confirmation that the following will be included as planning conditions and/or as part of the relevant Section 106 Agreement:

- a. An irrevocable obligation that within four weeks of the granting of planning consent we will be offered for £1 the freehold of SON3.
- b. £250,000 to be paid over to be used for the 'laying out and provision' of the recreation ground (as per the wording of the independent examiner's report on the SC Neighbourhood Plan).
- c. £16,000 for fencing, in the first instance alongside Bishopswood Farm.
- d. Overhead electricity cable to be re-routed underground (ideally under the new road) before building starts.
- e. An entrance to be provided for interim access (for groundworks and site maintenance) from Reade's Lane into the SON 3 within six weeks of the grant of planning consent. This entrance to be 3.5m wide, gated and with hardcore laid out to Reade's Lane. Linden to obtain any consents required.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Yours sincerely



Ros Varnes
Deputy Clerk, Sonning Common Parish Council
(On behalf of the Planning Committee)