

Sonning Common Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in the Village Hall on 29 August 2012 at 19.30 hrs

Present: Ms Noble (Chairman), Miss Hunt, Mrs Lewis, Mr Reynolds, Mr Kedge (ex officio). Mr P Simms (Henley Standard), Mr P Neville (re P13/062) and sixteen members of the public.

P13/066 Apologies for absence: Mr Greenwood.

P13/067 Declarations of Interest: None.

P13/061 Public Question Time: No general questions but specific ones raised on item P13/062 as below.

P13/062 New Applications:

062.01 P12/S1429/FUL Land to the rear of 19b-23 Wood Lane Sonning Common. Erection of 3 x two-storey 2-bedroom dwellings and 3 x two-storey 3-bedroom dwellings and 3-bay garage/carport building, incorporating parking and turning areas. Mr Neville described the key features of the proposal. Six members of the public spoke against the application. In particular it was suggested that an application whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is being developed is untimely and perverse. There was also considerable concern about the possible effects on the bus services and strong criticism of OCC Highways' apparent inability to comprehend the situation on the ground. After considerable discussion by the Committee it was resolved unanimously to recommend that SODC refuse this application. A letter confirming this is appended to these minutes.

062.02 P12/S1557/HH Two storey side extension, single storey rear extension. (Re-submission of P11/S0088) at 53 Orchard Avenue Sonning Common. After discussion the Committee recommended that this application be approved.

062.03 P12/S1638/T56 Replacement of an equipment cabinet and three antennae at existing telecommunications base station. On land at Bishopswood Playing Fields Gallowstree Road. After discussion the Committee recommended that this application be approved.

P13/063 Applications Granted: None to report.

P13/064 Neighbourhood Planning update: It was agreed that as so much is happening this should be deferred to the meeting on 17 September.

P13/065 Matters for future consideration: Nothing put forward.

The meeting closed at 20.05

Date of next Meeting: as there would be no applications to consider it was agreed that the meeting planned for Monday 3 September 2012 should be cancelled.

The next meeting will now be at 19.30 on Monday 17 September 2012.

Chairman Dated

PLANNING APPLICATION: P12/S1429 FUL

At our meeting on 29th August 2012 the Planning Committee unanimously recommended refusal of the above application because the development proposals breach the following planning policies contained in SOLP 11 :- H4, D1, D3, D5, T1, T2, T8, G2, G5 and G6.

Impact on the surrounding residential area: The proposed six houses would be located in a rear garden/backland site and therefore set well back from the line of existing properties on either side in Wood Lane. They would create an overdevelopment when compared with the older detached houses with large mature rear gardens that characterise the residential properties on Wood Lane and Grove Road. They would also introduce a significant number of new homes and cars into the current retail and service core of the village. We feel that if allowed it would damage the character of this part of the village and thus breach SOLP 11 policies H4 (iii) (v) and G6.

We also believe that the proposed buildings layout fails to respect existing settlement patterns and character. For example, having very small gardens with properties very close to boundaries and the alignment at right angles to current houses would breach the principles of good design and local distinctiveness etc as stated in Policies D1, D3 and D5.

Access, Parking and Highway Issues: The proposed new single lane access into the development from the very busy village centre will be neither safe nor convenient and, we believe, would contravene Policy T1. Directly opposite the proposed new access point is one of the main and busiest village bus stops. There is also on road parking on both sides along Wood Lane in that area. The movement of vehicles in and out of the new access point would compromise the flow of traffic along Wood Lane and increase the danger to vehicles and pedestrians passing by.

The proposed access is only one vehicle wide and without passing places which would restrict the flow and circulation of traffic contrary to Policy T2. In particular we are concerned that if a vehicle entering has to give way to one leaving it may reverse out into Wood Lane to create a new hazard. Likewise, without any designated visitor parking there will be additional pressure on the already insufficient parking in the village centre.

The potential for creating further difficulties for our bus service into Reading (Vitality 2) negotiating parked vehicles and the extra traffic generated by this development is of great concern to us as the bus company has already changed routes to circumvent similar difficulties elsewhere in the village centre. The bus route along Wood Lane is vital for access to Reading for our residents young and old. Emergency vehicles access to the development will be difficult or perhaps impossible if poorly parked vehicles get in the way and/or by the narrow access. Therefore the proposal also breaches T8.

Strategic impact. Approval of this proposal would create a precedent leading to similar proposals both to the NE and SW of this site and as a consequence seriously damaging the viability of the (central) retail, service and commercial centre of Sonning Common and indeed the sustainability and well being of village residents, retailers and out of the village users alike. It would prevent any rational redevelopment and modernisation of the village centre which is already an apparent need identified by the work of our Neighbourhood Planning Working Party. Approval of this development will seriously undermine public confidence in and support for this important initiative under the Localism Act.

Although we realise that the Core Strategy has yet to be adopted, we strongly believe that if approved this application would undermine the role and function of the village centre contrary to policy CST1.

We believe that this proposal breaches Policy G5 (best use of land in built up areas), CF3 (overall role of the shopping area) and the NPPF – clauses 70 (re planning decisions) 28, 37 and 40 (relating to protection of retail areas, parking and sustainable development).

Yours faithfully

Gail Noble
Vice Chairman of Planning Committee