

**Minutes of a Meeting of Little Chalfont Parish Council Planning Committee
Held in the Village Hall, Cokes Lane, Little Chalfont
Wednesday 11 September 2013 at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr B Drew; Cllr J Hinkly; Cllr L Hunt; Cllr M Parker (Chairman); Cllr V Patel and Cllr D Rafferty.

In attendance: Mrs J Mason (Clerk).

Members of the public: Ms K Edmonds; Ms L Mowat (Buckinghamshire Examiner); Mr J Wyper.

1. **Apologies for absence:** These were received from Cllr J Walford, OBE.
2. **Approval of the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Tuesday 20 August 2013:** These were approved as a correct record and were duly signed by the Chairman.
3. **Suspension of standing orders enabling members of the public to speak (10 mins):** No members of the public wished to speak.
4. **Declarations of interest:** None.
5. **To consider the following applications:**

Application number and address	Summary of Proposed Works	Little Chalfont Parish Council Recommendations
CH/2013/1379/FA 32 Chessfield Park Little Chalfont HP6 6RX	Single storey side extension	No objection
CH/2013/1211/FA 4 Marygold Walk Little Chalfont HP6 6QF	Single storey front/side extension, fenestration alterations and associated hardstanding	The Parish Council objects. The proposed extension would be out of keeping with the street scene.
CH/2013/1137/EU 18 September 2013 Rowood Farm House Burtons Lane Little Chalfont HP8 4BA	Application for certificate of lawfulness for existing operations relating to alterations, to dwelling including chimney, bay window front porch and 1st floor rear extension. Including alterations and extension to garage including two dormer windows in roof space.	The Parish Council objects. The changes to the building represent substantial alterations in the green belt and area of outstanding natural beauty.
CH/2013/0898/FA 27 Birkett Way Little Chalfont HP8 4BH	Erection of detached outbuilding to be used for purposes ancillary to the residential use of 27 Birkett Way (retrospective)	The Parish Council objects on the grounds that the outbuilding might be in breach of planning regulations. If permission is granted, it should be on condition that the building must not be used as habitable accommodation and/or a separate dwelling.
CH/2013/1300/FA Cokes Lane House	Detached outbuilding with first floor accommodation in roof space,	The Parish Council had no objection if permission is granted

Cokes Lane Little Chalfont HP8 4UD	associated brick wall and gate and laying of hard standing	on condition that the building should not be used for financial gain.
CH/2013/1245/FA Site 101 (Known As The Donkey Field) Burtons Lane Little Chalfont Buckinghamshire	Development of site to provide 45 units comprising 14 dwellings and 5 buildings containing a total of 31 flats, all served by new access from Burtons Lane, with associated car parking, garaging, bin stores and landscaping	The Parish Council objects. see comments below.

CH/2013/1245/FA, Site 101 (Donkey Field) Burtons Lane:

The Parish Council objects.

The Little Chalfont Parish Council ("PC") recognises that Countryside Properties PLC ("Countryside") has made considerable effort to work within, and comply with, the housing target set for the site in the Adopted Core Strategy and the policies set out in the Chiltern District Local Plan. However, the application does not reflect para 9.9 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District which states "The site offers the potential for a well designed, high quality housing development that will respect the character of the surrounding area....". Furthermore, the PC has grave concerns about the traffic and pedestrian safety aspects of the proposed site access. Therefore, and for the detailed reasons set out below, the PC recommends that the application is rejected.

Policy CS20 (Design and Environmental Quality)

The site is located off Burtons Lane, in an Established Residential Area of Special Character (ERASC) with a surrounding density of 4.4 dwellings per ha. A development which truly "respects" this aspect of " the character of the surrounding area" and complies with Policy CS28 (on open space) cannot possibly be consistent with the over-ambitious new dwelling target set by the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

In seeking to formulate an acceptable compromise on dwelling density, Countryside's plans have included five blocks of flats/apartments ("flats"), a type of construction which is again out of character with the surrounding area. Nevertheless, such blocks of flats might have been acceptable if they were designed to look like large houses (as Countryside were advised at the pre-planning stage). However, with the possible exception of the two storey private apartments block 6-9, this design objective is not fulfilled. While the designs of the other four proposed blocks are an improvement on the corresponding designs set out in the previous application (CH/2012/1842/FA), in terms of their bulk and obtrusiveness these blocks are unacceptably incongruous, and adversely affect the amenity of the houses around the site, in the surrounding ERASC.

This issue was recognised in the email of 5 February 2013 from Senior Planning Officer, Rosie Foreman, in which she advised Countryside that "[the height of] dwellings should be limited to 8-9 metres, with buildings not exceeding 10 metres". This advice, with which the PC is in complete agreement, was blatantly ignored in the aforementioned previous application, and continues to be disregarded in the current application. In view of the volume and weight of objections to the apartment dwelling heights in the previous application, it is astonishing that the current application fails to specify dwelling heights. However, it is noted (from Appendix 1 of the Planning and Heritage

Statement (Addendum)) that Countryside confirmed at the meeting held with CDC on 19 June 2013 the heights of the apartments at approximately 11.8 metres, and that Countryside has informed the PC that blocks 10-15 and 16-21 are 11.4 metres high, and that blocks 31-39 and 40-44 are even higher at 11.6 metres. Nevertheless, Countryside claims that the revised design "addresses the building height concerns raised by the [Chiltern District] Council. ". It clearly does not. Countryside now seeks to justify these heights over 10 metres using a "verified view montage report", based on three selected locations but excluding views from the residential areas of Village Way and Loudhams Wood Lane that are adjacent to the site as well as the view from the site entrance. The PC refutes this claimed justification. It must be acknowledged by all that the development is an offshoot from Burtons Lane; there is no design precedent for the proposed flats in the Donkey Field location to be drawn from buildings in the village centre. Chenies Parade is not relevant to this application. However, it is relevant that the Council's Planning Committee rejected the planning application 2001/0421/CH at Westside, Burtons Lane which, as you will be aware, was for a proposed 3-storey block of flats and was rejected as "wholly unacceptable and inappropriate". A consistent decision is requested in relation to this aspect of the current application for the Donkey Field.

The Transport Statement

As made clear in the PC's response to the previous application (CH/2012/1842/FA), the PC considers the Transport Statement to be inaccurate and superficial and is gravely concerned about its main conclusion relating to public safety.

The Council was astounded by the claim in the Statement that the "proposed access arrangements have evolved following extensive consultations with Buckinghamshire County Council Highways officers" and that "No objections have been raised by the Highway Authority to the access proposal". From the 15 February 2013 letter from BCC's Development Management Officer, Bill Homewood, now included as Appendix 2 of the Planning and Heritage Statement (Addendum), it is clear that BCC had raised some issues for clarification/amendment, and was unable to give the "no objections" sign off that Countryside implied.

The PC wishes to record again its concern about the Transport Statement, as follows:

a) The Accuracy of the Report

The report is riddled with errors of fact. For example:

- i) In the section on Existing Pedestrian Facilities there is a reference to a footway continuing along the southern edge of Burtons Lane from the parade of shops to the site. This is not the case; the footway stops at Burtons Way. For the record, the footway on the northern edge of Burtons Lane does extend to the site entrance, but it is narrow and barely adequate for its current usage, and the edge has a tendency to crumble into the adjacent ditch. (These issues explain part of the PC's concern about the site's implications for pedestrian safety.)
- ii) The section on Public Transport Facilities exaggerates the number of bus routes through Little Chalfont [4 are claimed, but only 2 serve Little Chalfont, viz the 336 and the 71, which later on the route becomes the 73]; Table 2.2 on Rail Service Frequencies exaggerates the number both of Chiltern Railway and Metropolitan Line services running to/from Chalfont and Latimer station and misleadingly shows totals in a period of several hours (e.g.1800-0000) as if they are "Frequency per hour".

iii) Section 5 on Traffic Generation indicates a 90km distance from the site to central London, more than double an accurate figure!

b) The Viability of the Traffic Surveys

The surveys are superficial and non-representative. For example:

i) Traffic counts were undertaken for one week from 26th March 2012 and turning movements and queue lengths were measured on only one day, 28th March 2012. There is no justification for these samples to be considered representative.

ii) Furthermore, in appearing to average traffic counts over seven days, including a weekend, the figures seem to understate the more relevant figure for weekdays. However, we note that Mr Homewood believes the error to be "only" typographical, and that the quoted average should represent a 5 (week) day estimate.

iii) The 7-day average speed of vehicles using Burtons Lane is measured at between 25.6mph and 29mph, with the average 85th percentile speed measured at between 31.5mph and 35.3mph. Not only are these averages lower than those typically observed by local residents, and lower than corresponding averages measured in a previous survey by Countryside Properties, no concern is expressed, nor is remedial action proposed, in relation to the safety issue arising from the several vehicles recorded daily in the survey with speeds in excess of 45mph.

iv) Traffic queues are measured in car lengths, without any assessment of the more relevant queue duration, before and predicted after the assumed additional traffic flows.

v) Capita Symonds' estimates of Trip Generation from the proposed development, and Mr Homewood's acceptance of them, are remarkably confident in the absence of any knowledge of the socio-economic details of the future residents of the development.

It is noted that Mr Homewood's accepts Capita Symonds' conclusions despite his view that Capita Symonds' TRICS analysis was technically deficient, and that his own calculations indicated (curiously unspecified) higher figures.

It is also noted that Mr Homewood's conclusion, that he does not consider the additional [predicted] traffic flows to be material, is subject to the parking issues [on Burtons Lane] being resolved. In fact, these issues are not resolved, so Mr Homewood's conclusion in this regard is currently unsafe.

vi) While the Statement refers to concern about the current lack of parking restrictions in (certain sections of) Burtons Lane that "could cause difficulty for vehicles approaching the bend (immediately) before the proposed site access", and indeed Capita Symonds suggest a solution of financing (via a "S106" contribution) an extension of the current yellow lines restrictions along Burtons Lane, the Statement does not consider the likely increase in traffic speeds if/when extended parking restrictions are implemented (and the almost daily chicanes of parked cars are eliminated), nor does it consider the consequences of such increased speeds for the necessary safe visibility splays from the site entrance.

vii) The pathway to the south of the site and the adjacent road are currently subject to flooding when it rains, to the detriment of pedestrians (notwithstanding the Flood Risk Assessment falsely claiming that the council (BCC) has not reported any known problems with highway drainage in the vicinity of the site). The deep ditch adjacent to the pathway is then often completely full and this combination of water is a potential danger to pedestrians. The additional traffic speed issues and potential for increased water run-off from the site, once developed, will exacerbate the dangers. The Parish Council is aware of the developer's claim (via

the Flood Risk Assessment) that the proposed preliminary drainage design should provide betterment in terms of reducing local flood risk. Nevertheless, as a minimum requirement, any approval must be conditional on these flooding issues being addressed and rectified by the developers.

Furthermore, no consideration is given at all to the safety of pedestrians on the pathway on the northern side of Burtons Lane once the site is developed.

c) The Transport Statement's Conclusions

Although the Parish Council ("PC") has reservations about methods and assumptions used in the production of the Statement, the PC does accept the Statement's conclusion that the site access location is optimal both for visibility splays and to minimise the impact on the mature trees on the site boundary. The PC also accepts that traffic movements to/from the site may prove not to be material, in terms of the operation of the junction, provided that the number of residential units is no more than that currently proposed, and unless the socio-economic mix of the residents is unusual, but this latter detail is not yet verifiable.

However, as already indicated, the PC is gravely concerned about the traffic and pedestrian safety aspects of the proposed site access, and requests that, in compliance with policies CS25 and CS26 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy for Chiltern District, CDC and/ or Buckinghamshire County Council Highways officers insist that:

- i) Not only are the current parking restrictions extended on both sides of Burtons Lane within 100m of the proposed site access, but further traffic calming measures are introduced to reduce vehicle speeds as they approach the site access. (Indeed, the PC has resolved to oppose any development of the type proposed for this site unless acceptable traffic calming measures are included, with the PC's strong preference being the establishment of a mini-roundabout at the site access, so that Burtons Lane marginally extends into the site.)
- ii) During the development of the site and thereafter, provision is made for safe access for pedestrians, including/especially those with disabilities, across the site access from the existing pathway on the northern side of Burtons Lane.
- iii) During the development, contractors' vehicles are prohibited from parking other than on the site, and, once the development is completed, parking is prohibited except in the spaces designated for residents and visitors.

Omissions

There are several significant omissions from the current application. Although Countryside has advised the PC that some are expected to be finalised in post-planning consent, it would have been helpful if the application included Countryside's intentions. Specifically, the PC seeks early clarification on the following issues:

- Those already highlighted in relation to traffic and pedestrian safety, particularly in Burtons Lane after any development of the site;
- Confirmation of footpath widths, in response to Mr Homewood's comments;
- The provision of disabled access ramps and disabled car-parking spaces within the site;
- " Other Matters", assumed to be dealt with by way of Conditions or Informatives, as recorded in the response made by the Little Chalfont Community Association to this application - incidentally the PC suggests as a further Condition the prohibition of the conversion of any garage space to residential accommodation); and

- The provision of any street lighting within, and adjacent to, the site.

Furthermore, while Countryside has informally indicated its intention that a management company will be set up to manage the open spaces and to private lighting on the site, the PC awaits formal clarification of the responsibility for the future maintenance of these aspects, and footpath maintenance, on the site.

Conclusion

For the several significant reasons set out in this document, the PC objects to this particular application. Nevertheless, the PC does accept that ultimately a development of this SHLAA-designated site is inevitable.

Furthermore, provided the appropriate actions are taken to address the major issues that the PC has highlighted, on traffic and pedestrian safety, and the design and height of the flats, the PC considers that it should be possible to achieve an acceptable basis for the development with only a relatively minor reduction in the currently proposed number of dwellings.

- 6. **Decisions of Chiltern District Council’s Planning Committee:** Carried forward to next meeting
- 7. **Appeal notices and decisions:** Carried forward to next meeting
- 8. **Licensing applications:** Carried forward to next meeting
- 9. **Enforcement updates:** Carried forward to next meeting
- 10. **Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 1 October 2013 at 7.30pm in the Community Library.

Signed.....

Date.....