

**Minutes of a Meeting of Little Chalfont Parish Council Planning Committee
Held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 27 July 2010 at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr M Dear; Cllr M Dale; Cllr C Gibbs; Cllr L Hunt; Cllr C Ingham; Cllr P Martin and Cllr G Smith.

In Attendance: Mrs J Mason (Clerk).

Members of the Public: Ms H Williams (Buckinghamshire Examiner.)

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr B Drew
2. **Approval of the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Tuesday 6 July 2010:** These were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
3. **Suspension of standing orders enabling members of the public to speak :** There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.
4. **Declarations of interest:** None.
5. **Item for Any Other Business:** Revised allocation of roads for planning purposes.
6. **The following applications were considered :**

Application number and address	Summary of Proposed Works	Little Chalfont Planning Committee Recommendation
CH/2010/0987/FA Little Ash Lodge Lane Little Chalfont Buckinghamshire HP8 4AQ	One dormer window in each of the front and side roof slopes, rooflight in rear roof slope, front bay...	The Parish Council object. The proposed new dormer on the South elevation would give a view into an upstairs window, probably a bedroom, on the flank wall of Woodlea next door
CH/2010/1022/FA Twin Gables 21 Latimer Close Little Chalfont Buckinghamshire HP6 6QS	Single storey rear extension, garage conversion and alteration to opening in the south side elevation...	No objection.
CH/2010/0941/DE Former Sawmill Site Bell Lane Little Chalfont Buckinghamshire HP6 6PD	Residential development to provide 250 dwellings (submission of details pursuant to outline planning permission)	The Parish Council comments are set out in the attachment to these minutes, pages 3 -9.

7. **Certificates of Lawfulness:** None
8. **Decisions of Chiltern District Council's Planning Committee:** An updated list was circulated.
9. **Appeal notices and decisions:** An updated list was circulated.
10. **Licensing applications:** None.
11. **Enforcement :**(i) *Highbury Farm, Lodge Lane* – no update available from CDC as yet. (ii) *Rowood Farm, Burtons Lane*- as discussed under item 9 appeals have been received against CDC's

enforcement notices. There will be a public enquiry for which the inspector has still to set a date.

12. **Core Strategy:** The meetings with CDC Cabinet members were well underway and Cllr Ingham reported that he would give a detailed update at the 17 August meeting.
13. **Any other business:** *Revised allocation of roads*- this was circulated and agreed. The Clerk undertook to send out an electronic copy the next day.
14. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 17 August 2010 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Signed.....

Dates.....

LITTLE CHALFONT PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE, 27 JULY 2010

CH/2010/0941/DE Former Sawmill Site, Bell Lane, Little Chalfont, HP6 6PD

Little Chalfont Parish Council's comments are summarised as follows. More detail on some of the main points is given in the annex.

Objections

1. The overriding need in a mixed tenure site is for successful social integration to avoid an atmosphere of 'us and them' which, once it exists, can sharply reduce pleasantness of place. In the present proposal the siting of the affordable housing along the southern and eastern borders of the site would give the occupants markedly less amenity than those in other parts of the site would enjoy. The northern border, with its woodland edge and easy access to the LEAP, is attractive, while at the southern side rear views are of the railway and the former warehouse, with a longer walk to the LEAP. Either a good deal of the amenity should be moved closer to the blocks of flats, or the affordable housing should be more evenly distributed around the site by 'pepperpotting'. See annex sections 1-4.
2. Changes which might be made to improve the amenity of the blocks could include moving the LEAP closer, the construction of a second LEAP, and the inclusion of a community centre or other facility near the flats.
3. Security is important and the present proposal is unsatisfactory in this regard. The LAP in the SW corner is positioned to become a focus for crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It is in a relatively isolated spot and can be accessed from the nearby railway footbridge, already in poor condition and a scene of graffiti and vandalism. See annex sections 4 and 6.
4. A second security problem, raised by the Thames Valley Crime Prevention Officer, is the placing of the LEAP alongside the open and wooded northern boundary of the site. The applicant has suggested that this and other problems could be solved by fencing. However, fencing the northern border would force anyone who wants to leave the site on that side, for example to walk towards Amersham, to go first to Bell Lane and then double back. Fencing by the SW corner LAP would prevent residents crossing the footbridge to go to the shop on White Lion Road. See annex section 5.
5. The height, bulk and appearance of blocks A and B are objectionable. See annex section 7 for details.
6. At present the layout of 8 flats places a bedroom in one adjacent to the living room of another. This is often a source of noise complaint in similar blocks and should be changed. Details at Annex section 8.

Questions

The Parish Council requests answers in due course from Chiltern District Council to the following questions.

1. What will be done to control and monitor the flow of construction traffic to the site, to mitigate disruption and mess in the local area? For example, Bell Lane north of Elizabeth Avenue is completely unsuitable for heavy lorries, as the latter often find out to their cost when they have to reverse southwards until they can escape at Elizabeth Avenue. Elizabeth Avenue itself, and particularly its northern exit into Bell Lane where cars park on both sides, is also unsuitable for heavy lorries. That exit, and the whole area around the entrance to the site, will be particularly exposed to congestion at times of the school run to Bell Lane School (where there will be danger to children) and during rush hours. Can something be done to limit construction traffic at these times? The Parish Council is certain to receive complaints, and would like to have a system in place which promotes a rapid and effective response from the relevant authority as soon as any breach of the rules is detected. See also annex section 9.6.
2. What will be done to monitor compliance with the numerous planning conditions which will need to be enforced by Chiltern District Council? Will adequate resources be available for monitoring and enforcement as construction proceeds? Will there be robust and clearly publicised legally enforceable procedures which can be called on rapidly to respond to any breach of the conditions? See annex section 9.
3. Further comment and questions on the Conditions attached to the permission for application CH/2006/1722/OA are in Section 9 of the Annex.
4. When the appeal was allowed on the 2008 application, the applicant was obliged to fund extra school places. The Parish Council would like to know exactly what places will be provided and where. Will CDC seek this information from the appropriate authority and give it publicity?
5. Plans for lighting on the site are not clear. What will be provided, and who will be responsible for maintaining the lighting?
6. Who will be responsible for maintaining the playground(s)?

Suggestions

1. CDC should urge the developer to hold a public exhibition to inform local residents about what is planned on the site, answer questions and allay any concerns.
2. The planned alterations to the Bell Lane/White Lion Road junction should be carried out before construction begins on the site, to deal with the large increase in heavy vehicle traffic. This should be a condition in any permission given.

Little Chalfont Parish Council reserves the right to make further comments on the application as consideration proceeds.

**Annex to Little Chalfont Parish Council's comments on
Application CH/2010/0941/DE Former Sawmill Site, Bell Lane, Little Chalfont,
HP6 6PD, dated 27 July 2010**

1. The Council welcomes the proposed changes in the overall design of this site over the previous Application (CH/2006/1772/OA), believing it to more appropriate to a village like Little Chalfont. At the same time, it questions whether the more (quote) 'domestic scale' of the proposals, in markedly increasing the number of individual houses and gardens within the boundaries of the site, places pressure on the amenity value of the some of the remaining flats, blocks of affordable housing and the open spaces proposed for these blocks. For example, it is noted that the number of LAPS has been reduced from three to two over the course of a number of plan iterations, in order to facilitate changes in the built form layout on the site. The Council also notes, in particular, the extreme variation in amenity value between houses on the northern 'Woodland Edge' of the site and the large Blocks C, D& E on the southern 'Urban Perimeter Edge'. The former not only overlook a considerable proportion of the open space available throughout the site, but are also within easy reach of the one large proposed LEAP. In contrast, the design of the large Blocks D and E in particular, in the words of the Applicant, facilitates their capacity to act as a 'buffer' between the rest of the site and the railway with its surroundings. The only view from the back of Block C is the back of The Entertainer's warehouse.
2. In addition, the only dedicated open space in the proximity of these flats is the small LAP in the extreme south west corner of the development, the placement of which the Council believes could be tailor made to be the focus for crime within the site and beyond. Moreover, it is necessary for children in these southern boundary Blocks, for whom the LEAP might be of the greatest benefit, to traverse the whole of the site to access it - a markedly less than optimal solution for them. Overall, therefore, the attraction of being able to live in the southern Urban Perimeter Edge is not immediately apparent.
3. In sum, the Council questions whether the intense focus on architectural and scenic considerations as evidenced in the Associated Documents, has caused the sustainability of social harmony within the site in the face of such extremes of amenity value to be overlooked. The Council believes that further effort should be devoted to improving, considerably, the amenity value of the 'Urban Perimeter Edge' Blocks; this would mitigate the potential social tensions that the Council believes may be inherent in the current design and architecture of the site, and would be perfectly possible within the parameters of the Reserved Matters.

4. As a further expression of the above, but at a detailed level, the Council notes that TVP's Crime Prevention Officer has expressed doubts as to the security of the LAPs and the immediate surroundings to all of Blocks A through to E. The Applicant has countered these concerns by reference to fencing and the clear delineation of private against public spaces, but there is no evidence within the Application papers that these remedies are satisfactory to the CPO. In its turn, the Council takes the view that an 'open' space for use by children which has to be secured by fencing is inherently insecure.
5. The Council is also concerned that extensive references to fencing throughout the Design and Access Statement (DAS) to counter security and other considerations is going to lead to a general inability of residents within the site to move freely into surrounding areas for shopping, business or recreation, other than by getting into their cars. This is obviously going to increase the dangers of traffic within the site as well as adding to congestion on local roads which is already severe at peak times. It might also be remarked that extensive fencing is not going to facilitate the integration of the site and its residents into the surrounding community.
6. In connection with the above, the Council has a specific objection which relates to the site of the LAP in the south west corner of the development.

This particular segment of the site can be accessed overland at present and via a footbridge over the railway from the White Lion Road. The footbridge is badly neglected and covered in graffiti, some of it obscene. Unsurprisingly, the area has become a dangerous wasteland that has been neglected for years. ***(Whatever the outcome with regard to the site of the LAP, the neglected state of the footbridge needs to be addressed, whether or not it is to be a regular conduit to and from the development site).***

Because of the LAP's geography, the Council believes it may be vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and is, therefore, unsuitable as a play area for children. Apart from this, the Council believes that to site a LAP next to a railway line, dark footpaths, out of sight of most dwellings on the site and away from easy and immediate access for emergency vehicles, is prima facie irresponsible. No amount of fencing as proposed by the Applicant will overcome these objections. The Council notes that the site of this LAP has still not been approved by the CPO but beyond that, the Council will refer the proposal to its partners in the Neighbourhood Policing Team for comment, for only then can an informed and objective assessment be made by both the Council and CDC as to the security and suitability of this site as a LAP for children.

7. The Council has a further objection which relates to the height and bulk, as proposed, of Blocks A and B at the entrance to the site in Bell Lane.

According to artist's impressions and cross sections in the DAS, the height of these Blocks is considerably in excess of the existing tree line which means they would dominate houses on the opposite side of the Lane and the School, as even the briefest site visit would confirm. The DAS states that, ".....[Urban Perimeter] Areas will reinforce and reflect the existing built form of Bell Lane to the east.....". This statement is false. Houses along the relevant stretch of Bell Lane are relatively small semi-detached and detached houses, the ground floor (slab) levels of which are often below the height of the roadway. The Council notes that designs for the office blocks built a few years ago and indeed the new Children's Centre at Bell Lane School restricted the height of these buildings to a level below the existing tree line. This at least preserves the impression of open land leading to woodland that can be enjoyed from the LILA and Bell Lane to the north of the site, and unbroken woodland from the east. The artist's impressions and cross sections, however, show that Blocks A and B will be highly visible from all cardinal points and their sheer height and bulk will dominate, not 'reflect', the built form of surrounding buildings, even the office block. The northern (highly visible) elevation of Block A, with its almost unrelieved brickwork, is particularly ugly.

Further confirmation of the dominant nature of these buildings can be found in the DAS which states, inter alia, that Block A represents a (quote) 'strong' building at the entrance to the site. In the early part of the DAS, however, the Applicant offers justification for the redesign of the site (in part) by referring to the desirability of introducing a more (quote) 'domestic scale' to the development, yet the first impression to be gained from the height and bulk of these Blocks as drawn will run completely counter to this avowed intention. Their aggressive appearance is also aggravated by the choice of red brick (Oast House Red) for them, which negates the power of any available tree screening. Tellingly, no cross section as between Blocks A and B and houses on the other side of the Lane are offered, or as between Block B and the School. In sum, on the evidence in the DAS, the Council believes the current designs of Blocks A and B fail completely to follow planning principles which argue for a gradual transition from one built form to another or from one landscape classification to another, and that their dominant nature would compromise the Bell Lane street scene to an unacceptable degree. If it is necessary to retain the built form of the buildings to stay within the parameters of the 2008 Appeal Approvals, the Council can still see no reason why a reduction in slab level to reduce the overall height of these Blocks should not be possible.

8. At a micro design level, the Council also notes that in certain blocks of flats bedrooms are placed next to the living rooms of adjoining properties. Although this affects only 8 flats it is objectionable and, we understand, a frequent source of complaint about noise in similarly designed buildings. This feature should be changed to improve the amenity of the occupants. The problem occurs (a) where in Floor Plan 2048587 labelled SECOND AND THIRD FLOOR & SECTIONS A-A TO C-C PLOTS 105-118 the drawing shows plots 113-118, and (b) in Floor Plan 2048585 labelled GROUND & FIRST FLOOR & SECTIONS A-A TO C-C PLOTS 105-118.

9. Conditions.

Because of the strain likely to be placed on its resources pursuant to this development, the Council has also been obliged to address the Conditions attached to eventual approval of Application CH/2006/1722/OA and subsequent documents. Some 25 Conditions are involved and the Council wishes to place on record its concern as to the resources that will be available within CDC and Bucks.CC to ensure their control and enforcement. Such Conditions (as set out in the Secretary of State's letter dated 24 September 2008 to the Applicant) as are of concern include, but are not confined to :

9.1 Condition 8 - the investigation and removal of potential contaminants from the site - an issue that has been outstanding for over four years but has still not been resolved. What happens if contaminants are found AFTER the site has been occupied & who will bear the resultant costs of remedial action and compensation?

9.2 Condition 9 – management of drainage and surface water; again, who bears responsibility for problems in this area after expiration of any contractor liabilities?

9.3 Condition 10 as it relates to landscaping, open and play spaces; who will determine whether this is being managed effectively?

9.4 Condition 12; who will 'approve' the landscaping work?

9.5 Conditions 13-17; again, where do the contractual obligations lie and which body is responsible for enforcing such obligations?

9.6 Condition 20; the Council is of the opinion that alterations to the junction of Bell Lane and the White Lion road should be completed BEFORE work starts on the site, not just building work above slab level. This is because of the substantial increase in the number of heavy vehicles that will use local roads during the initial site preparation stage.

The Council recognises that for some years during the development of the site and its subsequent occupation, it will be obliged to exercise a degree of due diligence in minimising the impact of the building work on the Parish, and that its Office is likely to be the first port

of call for any complaints or concerns from local residents. Accordingly, it will be seeking to clarify precise lines of communication and responsibility, legal and fiduciary, with all of the higher echelons of CDC, Bucks CC, the Applicant and the latter's contractors. It is assumed that at least minimum insurance requirements will be in place at all times and monitored by CDC, but will reserve the right to examine such in case of need and in the light of its local knowledge.

The Council will also be seeking assurances from CDC (the Planning Authority) that the latter's enforcement unit is sufficiently resourced to monitor and enforce, quickly, compliance with all the Conditions and other legal obligations attached to the Application and the actual building development therein.
