

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON THURSDAY, 20TH MARCH, 2025 AT 7.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Elizabeth Dennis (Chair), Nigel Mason (Vice-Chair), Ruth Brown, Emma Fernandes, Ian Mantle, Bryony May, Caroline McDonnell, Louise Peace, Martin Prescott, Jon Clayden and Mick Debenham.*

In Attendance: *Peter Bull (Project Officer), Sam Dicocco (Principal Planning Officer), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Shaun Greaves (Development and Conservation Manager), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Edward Leigh (Senior Transport Policy Officer), Callum Reeve (Electoral Services Assistant) and Sonia Sharp (Senior Planning Solicitor (Locum)).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting there were 2 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

Anthony Collier (HCC Highways Officer) was also in attendance.

140 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 51 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Amy Allen, Sadie Billing and Tom Tyson.

Having given due notice, Councillor Mick Debenham substituted for Councillor Billing and Councillor Jon Clayden substituted for Councillor Tyson.

141 MINUTES - 13 FEBRUARY 2025

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 12 seconds

Councillor Nigel Mason, as Vice-Chair, proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 13 February 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

142 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 1 second

There was no other business notified.

143 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 6 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (3) The Chair clarified matters for the registered speakers.
- (4) The Chair advised that Section 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution applied to the meeting.

144 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 48 seconds

The Chair confirmed that the registered speakers were in attendance.

145 23/02935/OP LAND TO THE EAST OF HIGH STREET AND NORTH ROAD AND WEST OF TEN ACRE PLANTATION, HIGH STREET, GRAVELEY, HERTFORDSHIRE

Audio recording – 5 minutes 7 seconds

The Project Officer drew attention to the updated matters that were set out in the Addendum to the report and advised that:

- The development was located on an allocated site in the adopted Local Plan.
- The site had been removed from the greenbelt allocation and because of this, greenbelt impact would not be a policy consideration for the application.
- This was an Outline Application with all matters reserved except for the means of access.
- Details of the application included principal land use for up to 900 homes with the consideration of community, educational and commercial elements and details of 2 vehicular access points to the site.
- Landscaping, appearance, layout and scale would be dealt with in future reserved matters applications in the event of approval.
- Need for primary care health facilities had been raised by several third-party consultees including Graveley Parish Council.
- The development created a need for 215m² primary care floor space but typically a viable GP surgery would have 400m².
- The NHS sought health infrastructure from this development in the form of a medical facility with approximately 630m² floor space to accommodate additional patient numbers from this development, other developments and the projected need going forward.
- As Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations only allowed for impacts from the proposed development to be mitigated, the 415m² difference between the needed and requested floor space would require capital funding from other sources such as the NHS, existing local GP practices and s106 contributions from other developments.
- The s106 contributions for this site should be drafted so that on-site facilities were provided in the first instance.
- If this could not be secured, the NHS ICB had requested just over £1.5M to digitise or remove to secure offsite storage for existing patient records and the reconfiguration, refurbishment or extension of vacated space at the Canterbury Way Surgery. This would create additional patient facing clinical rooms for GPs and support staff to accommodate

the expected additional patient numbers from future housing growth in and around Graveley.

- Discussions around the delivery timing of the community hub, its location and the funding shortfall to facilitate the preferred on-site option for this would need to take place in the future.
- Regarding Highways conditions, s106 clauses were yet to be agreed with Active Travel England and Members were asked to include delegated powers within this application to allow officers to continue to deal with this matter.

Following this, the Project Officer presented the report in respect of Application 23/02935/FP supported by a visual presentation consisting of plans and photographs.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Ian Mantle
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Mick Debenham

In response to questions, the Project Officer advised that:

- Crime related issues were not something for Members to consider on this application as the Design Code would address these in future applications for the site.
- The County Council had indicated the need for two schools to be built as part of this development (NS1) and the other development north of Stevenage (HO3).
- A local neighbourhood centre had been included in the approved scheme for the HO3 development, however, it would not include community uses and as such, it would be likely that the community facility delivered as part of the NS1 application would serve residents from both developments.
- The buffer zone between the NS1 development and the HO3 development was not being considered as part of the application. The detail on this would be secured as part of a future reserved matters application through the Design Code and Illustrative Masterplan.
- Rights of Way (ROW) would not be fixed as part of this application but going forward, there would be a ROW Improvement Plan, suggestions had already been made to existing adjacent footpaths and there would be potential for Footpath 6 to connect to the Cricket Club.
- Distribution of 2-bed, 3-bed and 4-bed houses would be managed as part of the s106 scheme in consultation with the Council Housing Officer.
- A s106 contribution of £566,242 from the HO3 site had been made towards primary care services in the general location of the development but it was speculated that this had already been allocated as it had been submitted in 2017.
- Regular conversation had taken place between the NHS ICB, developers and the Council regarding the shortfall of contributions towards an on-site healthcare facility and these would continue to take place. Other measures would be considered to secure the shortfall such as using contributions from other developments like the one in Great Ashby.

In response to questions, the Hertfordshire County Council Highways Officer, Mr Anthony Collier, advised that the access junction, route to the primary school, spine road and hard surface cycle routes that provided wider public utility would all be adopted by the County Council Highways Authority. Further adoption would be decided through the approach to the Masterplan works.

In response to questions, the Chair clarified that there was an objection in principle from Hertfordshire Constabulary to the application, however, if the site was secured by the Design Code in future applications through the Masterplan, they would be able to reconsider their position.

In response to questions, the Senior Transport Policy Officer advised that:

- The Passenger Transport Team had designed a new bus service that would run through both the NS1 development and the HO3 development into Stevenage with more stops and more frequent buses than the existing number 55 bus service. In addition, the number 55 service would have a new stop added on North Road close to the access junction. The funding required for these bus services had been calculated and detailed in the report.
- There was no question that an extra bus service would be instated as there would be a clause in the Section 106 agreement to secure funding, however, the precise amount had not yet been agreed. Additionally, they did not know when it would be commissioned.
- The design of Public Rights of Way would be explored through the Design Code and would take into account whether a route provided a utility or leisure function.
- Shared pedestrian and cycle use on a portion of the North Road pathway and other areas within the site had been agreed by Active Travel England and the applicant as the width was deemed to be sufficient. However, there would be segregation where there was a need for it within the site, such as near the school due to the anticipated large volumes of people which could result in conflict.

In response to questions, the Development and Conservation Manager advised that:

- Detail of the transport provision would be clarified through negotiations for the s106 obligation. If Members wished to express their views on this, they would be accounted for during the negotiations.
- Substantial weight had been given to this application as it was an allocated site within the Local Plan and formed an important part of housing delivery within the district. Whereas, moderate weight had been given to the biodiversity net gain resulting from the development as the application had been submitted before 10% net biodiversity gain became mandatory which meant that it was just beneficial rather than necessary and therefore, carried less weight.
- Neutral, limited, moderate, significant and substantial were the rankings of weighting from the least to most.

The Chair invited the Applicant, Mr Richard Kelly, and the Applicant Representative, Mr Paul Derry, to speak in support of the application. They advised that:

- This site was one of the largest land allocations in the Local Plan and would play a key role in delivering the housing strategy for the district.
- 40% of the development would be secured as affordable homes and there would also be provisions for a community centre, primary school, extensive open space and allotments.
- Good integration with the Stevenage urban area to the south and respect to the existing village of Graveley would be given.
- One of the proposed conditions was that a Design Code would be produced to guide the character of the scheme in the Reserved Matters for each phase of the application.
- There were no outstanding objections that had been made by statutory consultees towards the application, and only thirteen objections had been made by members of the public.

- The SP16 Policy had set out several requirements to ensure sustainable development within the site and this was also accompanied by an Environmental Statement that had been assessed by Council officers.
- Community was at the centre of the application with the primary school, community building and an open square adjoining the bus route.
- The proposed hub would adjoin the main open space of the site and provide a green infrastructure link with Forster Country Park.
- Two points of vehicle access, a signalised junction point on North Road and a link into HO3 would be delivered as part of the development.
- Extensive pedestrian and cycle links along with a bus route designed to promote sustainable and active travel.
- The Highways Authority were satisfied with the Transport Assessment that was included within the application that detailed the impacts of the site and the proposed mitigation for these.
- Improvements would be made to local health services and discussion with the NHS had concluded that their preference was for an on-site facility located within the neighbourhood centre.
- The current s106 arrangement allowed for flexibility for either on-site delivery or off-site payment given the need for the NHS to further test needs before committing.
- The gold target for sustainable travel within the Council Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document had been met along with a number of silver targets.
- Although the application was submitted before the 10% statutory net biodiversity gain requirement, a 10.61% gain would be achieved by the development.
- Permission should be granted for the application based on the recommendations within the report and they thanked all those involved in the application process including the Case Officer for their time.

In response to a point of clarification from Councillor Ruth Brown, Mr Kelly advised that the s106 obligations would specify clauses for when the new bus service would need to begin operating, but he highlighted that as the existing number 55 bus service had stops on the western portion of the site, this might not be until after the first residents had occupied dwellings on the site.

The Project Officer advised that the addendum should be considered with the report as guidance for proposals that should be put forward.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed to grant permission subject to the items referenced in the addendum to the report and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Application 23/02935/OP be **GRANTED** subject to:

- (a) The completion of a satisfactory legal agreement and the applicant agreeing to extend the statutory period to complete the agreement if required: and
- (b) Providing delegated powers to the Development and Conservation Manager to (i) resolve outstanding matters including financial contributions and (ii) update conditions and informatives with minor amendments as required: and
- (c) Conditions set out in the report of the Development and Conservation Manager: and
- (d) Amendments and additions to that report as set out in the supplementary report of the Development and Conservation Manager.

146 APPEALS

Audio recording – 57 minutes 12 seconds

The Development and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled 'Planning Appeals' and advised that:

- One appeal had been allowed and related to the conversion of a former ground floor commercial building to a dwelling house in High Street, Baldock. The reasons for the Inspector allowing the appeal were set out in the right column of the table in the report.
- Three appeals had been lodged, the most notable being against the objection to planning permission for a solar farm at Land North East of Wandon End. A four-day Public Inquiry would commence on 17 June and a planning consultant, landscape architect and barrister had been appointed as advocates for this.

The Chair reminded Members of the Public Inquiry that would take place on 29 April for the proposed 42-dwelling residential development on Land East of Rhee Spring and Orwell View, Royston Road, Baldock.

The meeting closed at 7.59 pm

Chair