NORWICH City Council

MINUTES

Planning applications committee

10:00 to 11:35 **10 September 2020**

Present: Councillors Driver (chair), Maxwell (vice chair), Bogelein, Button, Lubbock, Neale, Oliver (substitute for Councillor Huntley) Peek, Sands (M), Sarmezey and Stutely

Apologies: Councillors Huntley and Ryan

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 13 August 2020.

(The chair agreed to amend the order of the agenda to take the oral report on government changes to planning policy at the end of the meeting.)

3. Application no application no. 20/00819/F - Eaton (City of Norwich) School Eaton Road Norwich NR4 6PP

The area development manager (outer) presented the report with the aid of plans and slides. The proposal was for a new sixth form block. In accordance with the rules agreed at the committee's April meeting, a statement was read out on behalf of the applicant in support of the application. (The statement had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting and is available on the council's website.)

During discussion the area development manager (outer) referred to the report and answered members' questions. He confirmed that the applicant would be required to provide a detailed landscaping scheme, as set out in condition 5, and had been in contact with the council's landscaping team. The proposal was to improve facilities for sixth form students and would not increase the number of pupils at the school. The proposal was for class room facilities and if used for evening classes would have a minimal impact. The issue of noise from students congregating in the outside area near the boundary fence was an ongoing situation which was managed by the school which would not be changed to a great extent by this proposal. The proposed planting could however limit the space available for students to access this

space. The plan included in the agenda pack showed that solar panels would cover a large extent of the roof of the proposed building.

The chair moved and the vice chair seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Councillor Lubbock, Eaton ward councillor, said that she had opposed the earlier application by the school for a dance studio as it would have adversely affected the amenity of residents in Branksome Close. This application was for a single storey building to replace existing buildings and the houses in Eaton Road had long gardens attached to them would not create a loss of privacy or amenity. The use of the proposed building for evening classes would also not create an adverse effect on neighbourhood amenity. She did regret the removal of the substantial Leyandii hedge along the boundary but appreciated that there would be replacement planting.

Councillor Stutely commented that he considered that this was an excellent scheme. The construction would be modular and the school anticipated that it would be available for use in January 2021.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve application no. 20/00819/F - Eaton (City of Norwich) School Eaton Road Norwich NR4 6PP and grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard time limit;
2. In accordance with plans;
3. Works to be carried out in accordance with submitted arboricultural report;
4. Works within RPA of trees to be carried out under arboricultural supervision;
5. Hard and soft landscaping to be agreed;
6. Surface water drainage to be agreed;

Informatives

1. Construction working hours and practices
2. Site clearance and wildlife.

4. Application no 20/00688/F - 105 Gipsy Lane Norwich NR5 8AX

The area development manager (outer) presented the report with the aid of plans and slides. The application was an officer one and no objections had been received. The proposal was for minor changes to the bungalow and annexe. The main issue was that the use of the annexe remained ancillary to the main dwelling. The annexe was currently occupied by the applicants' elderly family members.

During discussion the area development manager (outer) referred to the slides and showed that the footprint of the neighbouring dwelling to the east had changed to the plans and that construction had commenced in accordance with approved planning consent.

The chair moved and the vice chair seconded the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Peek, Wensum ward councillor, said that this area had been in his ward until the boundary changes, and that the large garden would easily accommodate the extension of the bungalow and annexe.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve application no. 20/00688/F - 105 Gipsy Lane Norwich NR5 8AX and grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard time limit;
2. In accordance with plans;
3. Annexe accommodation to remain ancillary.

5. Review of Arrangements for Public Speaking

The area development manager (inner) presented the report. The proposal, set out in Appendix C, was to review the arrangements for public speaking which would apply whether the meeting was held remotely or face-to-face.

During discussion the area development manager (inner) together with the area development manager (outer) and the committee officer, commented on the report. The purpose of the proposal to limit speakers was to make better use of resources and reduce the length of committee meetings. The value to the decision making process of a large number of people each making the same point was questionable. The proposal also sought to redress the balance and increase the time that an applicant had to respond to issues raised by other speakers.

Members strongly opposed the proposal to limit the number of speakers to six (eight with ward councillor and agent/applicant) and considered that there should be no restriction because public participation in the committee process should be encouraged. Members also considered that the division of speakers equally between objectors and supporters would be disproportionate, particularly as the applicant would also be permitted to speak, and that the proposed first come first served basis would mean that people, including adjacent neighbours, would be denied the opportunity to put their view to the committee. The committee also noted that councillors could act as a proxy/advocate for a resident but would also be permitted to speak in their capacity as a ward councillor. Members considered that there was a need for balance and agreed with increasing the time limit for applicants or agents where there was more than one speaker. A member commented that where the application was recommended for approval the applicant should not need to address the committee if there were no other speakers. Another member said that he regretted that members did not get an opportunity to cross-question applicants.

Members also considered that going forward an element of remote participation in the committee meetings should be retained as this would assist residents who were unable to attend in person. It was noted that hybrid council and committee meetings, comprising elements of in-person attendance and remote access, were being considered at Group Leader level and by the council's corporate leadership team.

Councillor Stutely moved and Councillor Bogelein seconded that the procedure for speaking at planning applications committee as set out in appendix C of the report be approved, subject to the removal of paragraph (7) ie, removing the restrictions on the number and type of speakers.

The area development manager (outer) advised members that there were implications on staffing resources from lengthy committee meetings and that there was no legal obligation for members of the public to speak at planning committees. The proposed scheme was more generous than most councils. Broadland District Council limited speakers at its planning committee to 15 minutes in total with speakers being permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each. At South Norfolk Council the total time allowed for speakers was 5 minutes. The chair had discretion to permit other speakers or extend the time permitted. Discussion ensued on the use of the chair's discretion and that although there should be some flexibility it should be used only in exceptional circumstances.

Councillor Stutely in moving to the vote said that he was proud that the city council stood out from other councils in allowing people to address the committee and not restrict numbers. The proposed scheme would provide the applicant with more time to address the committee when there was more than one speaker registered to speak. He also pointed out that, on the rare occasion where an application had a very large number of people wanting to speak, the committee could hold a meeting specifically for that item.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the procedures for public speaking at committee as set out in Appendix C, subject to deleting paragraph 7 and references to it, and the renumbering of subsequent paragraphs, for inclusion in Appendix 11 of the council's constitution.

6. Committee Briefing on Changes to the Planning System, Use Classes and on the Planning White Paper

The area development manager (outer) updated members on government changes to the planning system in response to the Covid-19 and proposals to change the planning system and use classes. A report on the government Planning White Paper would be considered by the sustainable development panel at its next meeting (1 October 2020).

RESOLVED to ask the area development manager (outer) to provide a report which will be circulated to members with the minutes of the meeting.

CHAIR