



MINUTES

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

11.15 a.m. – 12.10 p.m.

12 November 2009

Present: Councillor Bradford (Chair) (from the middle of item 3), Driver (in the chair until end of item 3 below), Jago, S Little, Lubbock, Stephenson and Wiltshire
Apologies: Councillors Llewellyn (Vice-Chair), Banham, George and Lay

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Driver as chair in the absence of the Chair, Councillor Bradford, and the Vice-Chair, Councillor Llewellyn.

(Councillor Driver in the Chair)

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2009.

3. APPLICATION NO 09/00818/F 18 HELLESDON MILL LANE NORWICH NR6 5BA

The Planner (Development) presented the report with the aid of slides and plans. One further objection to the proposal had been received from a neighbour concerned about the access to the site, particularly by emergency vehicles. Members were advised that the option of bringing a driveway from the existing one had been considered but this would result in the unacceptable loss of a beech tree. Direct access from the site to Hellesdon Mill Lane was also unacceptable because of the dramatic change of levels and the engineering works involved, and was the reason why 14 Hellesdon Mill Lane did not have direct access. The proposed access was not ideal but was acceptable.

Discussion ensued in which the Planner, together with the Planning Development Manager, responded to members' questions.

RESOLVED, with 6 members voting in favour (Councillors Driver, Jago, S Little, Lubbock, Stephenson and Wiltshire) and 1 member abstaining (Councillor Bradford, having been absent for part of the item) to approve Application No 09/00818/F,

18 Hellesdon Mill Lane, and grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:-

1. Commencement of development within three years
2. In accordance with drawings approved on decision notice
3. Details of materials
4. Details of a) windows
b) bin store
5. Details of boundary walls, fences, hedges
6. Works to be carried out in full compliance with AIA submitted
7. Submission of specification and methodology regarding no dig areas and details of protective fencing
8. Provision of parking and cycle storage prior to occupation
9. Details of landscaping to be submitted
10. First floor side windows to be obscure glazed
11. Submission of construction method statement prior to any works on site

(Reasons for approval: The sub-division of the curtilage to provide a new detached dwelling and garage would be in accordance with Saved Local Plan Policies HOU13, HBE8, HBE12, EP22, TRA6 and NE9 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, Adopted Version November 2009 and to all material considerations. The scale and design of the dwelling are considered to be appropriate in the streetscene and its position would not be significantly detrimental to the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties or the wider character of this part of the Hellesdon Village Conservation Area.)

(Councillor Bradford in the chair from this point.)

4. PERFORMANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE, JULY - SEPTEMBER 2009 AND MEMBER TRAINING

The Planning Development Manager presented the report and, together with the Planning Team Leader (Development) and the Planner (Development), answered members' questions.

Discussion ensued in which members considered the effect of the recession and improved working practices which meant that new applications were dealt with more efficiently and there was now an opportunity to clear the backlog of applications. Members appreciated the efforts of all planning staff for the continued improved performance in determining applications to meet target timescales. Members noted that there had been a continued reduction in numbers "on hand" to 143 but Councillor Driver requested that there be more information in future on applications that had been around for some time. Members were advised that some of the applications that were submitted were speculative or might not proceed in current market conditions and therefore the applicant or agent was not under any pressure to commence construction, and this sometimes delayed the signing of legal agreements. Planners were advising new applicants that their application would be refused if they did not submit all the necessary paperwork for their application to be determined within 8 or 13 weeks.

In response to a question, the Planning Development Manager said that there had been a customer satisfaction survey of all neighbours notified of planning applications and the relevant agents and applicants earlier this year. This had received positive feedback. A questionnaire for members of the public attending meetings of the committee had been prepared. There would be a report on the outcome of the customer satisfaction surveys in due course.

Discussion then ensued on situations when applicants withdrew an application as a result of consultations with planners and feedback from initial consultations. Members requested that their thanks for the continued improved performance in determining applications to target timescales be passed on to all the planning staff. Members considered that it was more straightforward for the public to understand a new application than amendments to a previous application. Members also considered that in some instances applicants should consult local residents and ward councillors to 'test' whether an application was acceptable before it was submitted. Members were advised that many pre-application discussions with officers were informal and not in the public domain at the request of the applicant.

Detailed discussion ensued on the training needs for members of the committee. Councillor Lubbock had prepared a report on a training course she had attended last month which was circulated to members. She also advised members of courses organised by SHAPE East, and that the next one, a visit to the BRE Innovation Centre at Watford on 15 December 2009, was available for members free of charge provided they could get to Ely to pick up the transport.

During discussion members considered that they would like more briefings on the following: planning policy and the mechanism of changing it; practical case studies linked to real examples, and visits to look at design and proposed development sites in the city centre before the meeting and when there was not much business on the agenda, ecology and biodiversity issues, fees and charging, archaeology, green landscaping and pre-application processes. Members also expressed interest in inviting the Norwich Society to give a talk on the society's design awards and also a review of schemes that had had been successful and those that had not worked so well, possibly with involvement of the residents of those schemes.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note the report;
- (2) note the suggestions for training as minuted above;
- (3) record the Committee's appreciation to all planning staff for the continued improved performance in determining applications to meet target timescales and request that this is passed on to all the staff concerned.

CHAIR