

Planning Committee

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Michael Chalk (Chair), Councillor Julian Grubb (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Imran Altaf, Karen Ashley, Tom Baker-Price, Aled Evans, Andrew Fry, Gemma Monaco and Timothy Pearman

Also Present:

George Nock (County Highways) and Nat Healey (Ecological consultant for the Local Planning Authority from Red Kite)

Officers:

Helena Plant, Steve Edden, Amar Hussain and Ruth Bamford

Democratic Services Officer:

Sarah Sellers

33. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15TH SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 15th September 2021 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

36. UPDATE REPORTS

There was no update report.

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Chair

37. APPLICATION 20/00863/FUL - LAND OFF IPSLEY CHURCH LANE, REDDITCH, WORCESTERSHIRE - REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Change of use of land from open grassland to cemetery including burial of non-cremated and cremated remains. New vehicular access to Ipsley Church Lane

Members considered the application for change of use.

In presenting the report officers pointed out a typographical error on page 32 of the agenda. Officers also updated Members that 3 additional objections had been recorded since the report had been written, bringing the total to 837. No additional points not already covered in the summary of objections on page 24 of the agenda had been made.

Officers took the Members through the plans and photographs in the Site Plans and Presentations Pack and outlined the layout and setting of the site and its designation as primarily open space under the Local Plan and the location and detail of the proposed access.

Members were referred to the indicative landscape plan showing how the site might be developed. It was noted that the only decision was the principle of change of use and the plans for the creation of the access; the full details to develop the site as a cemetery had not been submitted at this stage and would have to be covered in a separate detailed planning application in the future.

Members were referred to the applicant's statement of intent as summarised on pages 10 to 12 of the agenda.

In terms of the principle of development, officers had assessed the application against policy 45 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan no.4 dealing with future provision of cemetery land. The application had been found to meet criteria (i) to (vii) of policy 45 as summarised in the officer comments on pages 26 to 27 of the agenda.

Officers commented that the application had also been found to be compliant with Policy 12 regarding Open Space Provision. With regard to Policy 13, (Primarily Open Space) Members were referred to the 10 different typologies set out on page 28 of the agenda. It was noted that were the proposed change of use to be granted, the land would continue to fall under one of the prescribed 10 classes, changing from "Parks" to "Churchyard /Cemeteries /Crematoria". As such it would continue to be function as an area of publicly accessible open space of public value, and the change of use was therefore assessed as acceptable under Policy 13.

County Highways had assessed the creation of the proposed access and found this to be acceptable subject only to the collection of a financial contribution towards the extension of the existing double yellow lines on Ipsley Church Lane.

In relation to ecological issues, Members were advised that the Local Planning Authority's own independent Ecological Adviser (Red Kite) had reviewed the ecological appraisal submitted on behalf of the applicant by Wharton (Wharton Natural Infrastructure Consultants Ltd). It was noted that the applicant had put forward detailed plans to mitigate any impact on existing habitats and following full consideration of these measures no objections were being raised on environmental grounds. The mitigation measures would be secured by detailed conditions covering environmental aspects including a great crested newt study, a proposed habitat plan, and other enhancement measures. The conditions would ensure that the site was appropriately managed over a thirty year period.

Members were referred to the other considerations set out on pages 31 and 32 of the agenda.

In conclusion the application had been found to be acceptable and compliant with the relevant policies in the Local Plan. As such officers were recommending approval.

At the invitation of the Chair, the following speakers addressed the Committee under the Council's Public Speaking Rules

Local residents in objection to the application (up to 30 minutes)

- Mr Steve Williams
- Mr Ivan Willcock
- Mr Ian Soady (written statement read out by an officer)
- Dr Ann Bicknell
- Ms Georgie Thomas (written statement read out by an officer)
- Dr Electra Soady (written statement read out by an officer)

Ward Members (3 minutes each)

- Councillor Juliet Brunner
- Councillor Alex Fogg

In support of the application (up to 30 minutes)

- Mr Guy Revans - Head of Environment Services for Redditch Borough Council

- Mr Matt Wall - Senior Ecologist Wharton Natural Infrastructure Consultants Ltd (Consultant for the applicant)
- Mr Mike Birkinshaw - Bereavement Services Manager for Redditch Borough Council

Members asked officers to advise them on the following matters:-

- In response to points made in public speaking about the possible location of a borehole on the site, Members asked if this was correct and what the implications would be. Officers advised that they believed proper enquires to check this would have been made by the Environment Agency and members were referred to Condition 3 on page 34 setting out that no burials could take place within 250 metres of any potable supply including wells and boreholes.
- In relation to the definition of primarily open space, officers advised that this was a policy designation indicating the land would be kept open from development. There was no difference in status as between the 10 different typologies or classes of primarily open space referred to in the officer's report.
- On the issue if the possible fencing off of the site, officers clarified that there would not be any difference in the way the land was accessed were the application granted, and there were currently no proposals for fencing to be put up.

Other points of clarification from officers included that:-

- There were no plans to divert any existing rights of way and if the need to do so arose there were standard processes that would be followed.
- The recorded deficit of open space land in Matchborough Ward had to be considered in the context that the calculation was made excluding the available open space at Arrow Valley Park because it was classed as a sub-regional facility.
- The application site exceeded the minimum site area requirement of 1.7 hectares set out under Policy 45, the site being 4.6 hectares in area, with the applicant's intention to bring the site into use via a phased approach being noted.

In debating the application Members acknowledged that this was a sensitive proposal and referred to the need to balance the severe lack of cemetery provision in the borough as against the current recreational use of the application site and the grassland habitat that it provided. A number of issues were referred to including the concept of the site being developed slowly in phases, the continued

ability of the public to access it, the options for less obtrusive design than for traditional cemeteries and the imposition of detailed conditions to control environmental aspects. It was noted that there were no objections to the application from statutory consultees and that it complied with the Local Plan.

RESOLVED that

Having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, authority be delegated to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to GRANT planning permission subject to:

- a. The satisfactory completion of a suitable legal mechanism to provide a financial contribution to Worcestershire County Council for localised improvements on Ipsley Church Lane;**

and

- b. The Conditions and informatives set out on pages 33 to 40 of the agenda.**

The Meeting commenced at 19:00
and closed at 9.04 pm