



MINUTES OF THE WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL'S PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 30th JANUARY 2017 AT 7PM IN THE CIVIC CENTRE

PRESENT: Cllrs T Luker (Chairman), P Barton, R Claydon, N Clement, John Cordwell, June Cordwell, L Farmer, A Kendall, A Proctor, N Pinnegar, P Smith, A Wilkinson, C Young

In attendance: Deputy Clerk Mrs Y Milsom, Approx 96 members of the public, Mr M Evans of Colburn Homes.

P. 5650 Apologies Cllr Luker welcomed everyone to the meeting and then handed over to the Mayor, Cllr P Smith, who took the Chair. There were no apologies for absence as all members were present.

P. 5651 Declarations of Interest

Cllr A Wilkinson declared an interest as President of the Chamber of Trade. Cllr Barton and Cllrs June and John Cordwell had taken advice and considered that they had no conflict of interest.

P. 5652 Colburn Homes Mr Evans of Colburn Homes was welcomed to the meeting and explained his development proposal. In January 2016 Wotton-under-Edge Town Council had agreed in principle to support an application for housing with car parking on the land to the rear of the Fire Station. In March 2016 Colburn Homes had held a public consultation, resulting in 68 questionnaires being completed. They believed they had addressed the issues raised.

P. 5653 Public Forum

Proposed by Cllr John Cordwell, seconded by Cllr Kendall, to adjourn to allow the public to speak. Agreed all in favour.

Members of the public raised many matters both in support and against the development, summarized as follows:

Against:

- Electorate do not support development – 61% against the proposal in a Gazette poll
- Views would be lost and the AONB eroded
- Development outside of settlement boundary
- Road congestion on Symn Lane and onto New Road would be exacerbated, causing danger to pedestrians and motorists. New Road is already hazardous for pedestrians crossing and there are no measures included in the plans to make these any safer
- Developers traffic survey was conducted on a Wednesday afternoon when shops in the town are closed – a quiet time and not representative of the true situation. It also mentions a pedestrian/cycling route – where is this? There were also several other errors in the Developer's reports
- Road congestion will deter people from visiting the town.
- It could jeopardize a future appeal for the Holywell Farm application by setting a precedent
- Claims that the Mayor had advised the developer to defer his application. The Mayor denied that he had corresponded with the developer and said he was seeking legal advice regarding this allegation. Mr Evans of Colburn Homes also confirmed that the Mayor had never been in direct contact with him or Colburn Homes
- A parking survey conducted by residents which referred to the Symn Lane development proposal showed that, out of 122 respondents, only 36% were in favour

- A letter from Wotton Auction Rooms had been received today by the Save the Symn Lane Field Action Group offering use of their 50 space car park to traders apart from 3 days per month when it was required for their own use – so there was a viable alternative.
- Fears that this development will grow and lack of trust in developer assurances to the contrary. The agricultural access will leave a way for a phase two development, likely larger and more lucrative.
- Costs such as providing lighting, CCTV, dealing with littering and anti-social behaviour and general maintenance will revert to local taxpayers
- Car park is too far away from commercial centre of town
- Likely to affect Fire Station response times
- No affordable housing
- Oversized car park on the edge of town is likely to become a crime and anti-social behaviour hotspot
- Fears for the TPO-protected horse chestnut tree, particularly as developer damaged roots of trees on Chipping Surgery site during construction. Also, increased maintenance costs to Blue Coat School for boundary tree maintenance

Support

- A Chamber of Trade customer survey had resulted in 1187 in favour of the development with 90 against.
- The Community Plan states a need for more parking at no cost to residents. The old community plan cites lack of parking as being a constraint to achieving other objectives of the plan
- Town Council parking group set up to consider parking concluded that, for various reasons, there was no other viable option
- Parking difficulties make people go elsewhere for shops and services – need to preserve the towns retail outlets and entertainments
- Parking difficulties increase traffic congestion as people circulate trying to find a space
- This is a rare opportunity to provide car park at no capital cost to taxpayers - should not ignore demonstrated parking deficiency.
- Will help to reduce congestion in town centre and so reduce pollution impact on the historic buildings there
- Fears that Wotton will become a dormitory town
- Parking has been a problem for decades and this has been demonstrated over the years by independent parking surveys
- Successful local businesses will consider moving out of town due to recruitment problems caused by parking difficulties – first impression of candidates is empty shops and no parking
- Town Council agreed to ‘support in principle’ in January 2016
- Increased parking is not just about traders but for residents as well, safety of children and visitors, reducing traffic pollution – benefits outweigh disadvantages
- Shopping competition is huge and convenience is key to attracting shoppers
- A lot of towns have out-of-town car parks. Coach spaces are key to attracting tourists
- Shops are closing down and flats are being created above shops with no parking provided so need for additional parking is becoming ever more acute
- Additional parking would allow businesses and services to benefit from significant housing developments in neighbouring villages

Comments

- Improve signage to current car parks
- Convert green area in Chipping to parking
- Use Renishaw car park out of hours

- Continue to put on great events – people are not attracted to the town simply by the building of a new car park
- Earlier plan showed a footpath from car park to Blue Coat School, which is no longer on the plan. The Developer advised that this was due to concerns from the school about additional entrance and logistics of siting but he would be happy to discuss with school.
- More progressive solution – encourage lift sharing, cycling, walking.
- Traders need to embrace online shopping and opening hours which are more convenient for customers – new car park will not reverse changes in shopping habits
- Request for a more detailed report on presence of bats

The Chairman thanked members of the public for their comments and stressed that the Town Council was only a consultee in the planning process. The decision would be made by Stroud District Council. The developer, Mr Evans, commented that many of the issues raised could be dealt with as part of the planning process.

Proposed by Cllr John Cordwell, seconded by Cllr Barton, to return to committee. Agreed all in favour. Cllr Wilkinson left the meeting.

P.5654 S.16/2895/FUL – Colburn Homes Ltd, Land South of the Chipping Surgery, Symn Lane, Wotton-under-Edge. Construction of 10 no. houses with access road and a car park for 96 cars and 2 coaches.

The Chairman outlined three possible options for the Council – 1. Comment only; 2. Approve, in which case the ongoing cost implications would need to be considered; 3. Object, in which case it would need to be established what had changed since the January 2016 decision to support the proposal in principle. It was pointed out that the future ownership of the site, cost implications and related matters should not be part of the discussion on the planning application but would need separate consideration by the Town Council should the application receive permission.

Discussions included comments as follows:

Against

- The development is outside the settlement boundary as defined in the Stroud District Local Plan November 2015. The NPPF only permits building outside of settlement boundaries and in AONBs if exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. It has not been demonstrated that this development is of benefit to the community.
- There had been previous applications for this site and the Town Council had, on one of these occasions, objected to the proposal. Another was refused by Stroud District Council for reasons that are still relevant
- Congestion on Symn Lane and at junction with New Road leading to increased risks to motorists and pedestrians. Route used by a lot of children walking to KLB School and increased traffic will pose considerable safety hazard. It is already chaotic at peak times – an unofficial survey had recorded 757 total movements of pedestrians and vehicles between 7.30-8.30am and a total of 526 movements between 4pm-5pm
- The position of the Fire Station entrance is not satisfactory. Retained firefighters trying to reach the station in response to an emergency will face delays as they have to use the shared access road to the car park, housing development and surgery. This will slow emergency response times
- The suggested yellow lines in the plans are not in the gift of the developer and, if implemented, they would have no effect on blue badge holders visiting the surgery and

would make it more difficult for other less able people to access the doctors' surgery. This will encourage parking within the Fire Station perimeter and impact emergency services.

- Too far away from commercial centre. People will try to park closer and will continue to circulate around the town centre to find a space
- The developer's transport assessment is flawed - the traffic survey was conducted on a Wednesday afternoon when shops in the town are closed – a quiet time and not representative of the true situation. It also mentions a pedestrian/cycling route – where is this? There were also several other errors in the Developer's reports
- The 10 houses are fairly large and expensive. Several have glass-fronted balconies which are at odds with the landscaped area which will prevent views. The Town Council will have to maintain the landscaped area.
- Developer's MHP report on Landscape and Visual Appraisal is misleading – photography techniques used distort the real visual impact and MHP conclusions that there would be limited effects on the landscape and visual amenity contradict their statement in a similar report for the Holywell Farm application, in which they asserted that this site off Symn Lane had a high sense of remoteness from the existing settlement, had high visual sensitivity, was highly visible from Kingswood and that residential development here would be uncharacteristic of the current established settlement pattern of Wotton. The site is also highly visible from the escarpment and from the southern approach to Wotton.
- A roundabout was initially suggested for the Symn Lane/New Road junction but this was opposed due to the inability of the Fire truck to get out.
- Recommendation in developer's reports of a crown reduction of the TPO-protected horse chestnut raises additional concerns for the safety of the tree.
- Waiting limits in current car parks are not properly enforced – proper enforcement would free up spaces, making even less need for such a large car park.
- Would the new road be adopted by the County Council or would this, too, fall to the Town Council to maintain?
- Edge of town car park could attract travellers
- There are already sufficient developments planned for the town e.g. Dryleaze, Fountain Crescent.
- There is no affordable housing provision in the development
- The Chamber of Trade survey cites over 1000 signatures in favour but this is only a small proportion of the population and so is not representative
- A car park will not attract more visitors and this is confirmed by the Transport Assessment. Schemes like Wotton in Bloom and shop window competitions are more effective ways to promote the town
- The developer is not providing lighting, CCTV etc and the Chamber of Trade is trying to raise funding for the estimated £25000 cost of this. If this is unsuccessful the Town Council, and thus the tax payer, will have to foot the bill. Town Council budget makes no allowance for costs pertaining to the management of the site
- How would use of the car park be controlled?
- Shopping habits have changed and additional parking will not reverse this or solve shops' problems
- Car park is needed, but not at any price. Beautiful scenery is one of the things that attracts people to the town and this development would make the town less attractive. The beauty of Wotton is a bigger draw to visitors than the shops
- Genuine need for parking but concerns about traffic situation and concern about setting a precedent

- Potters Pond car park has spaces available at most times – if people are unwilling to walk from there to the Town Centre they are unlikely to walk from a car park south of Symn Lane

Support

- Parking surveys consistently show the need for more parking. The Town Council survey was carried out by Councillors from both sides of the debate and sought to establish whether more parking was needed. It deliberately excluded any mention of specific parking sites as this leading question would bias the result. The survey established that at least 30 more spaces were required even without taking into consideration potential future demand arising from new visitors to Wotton
- Town Council's Car Parking Working Group explored all potential options which were all ruled out for various reasons as permanent solutions, including the Auction Rooms car park – the offer to use it for public parking was withdrawn by the owner
- The argument that it is too far from the town centre is valid but it is the only option available. It would work as a long stay car park, freeing up the other car parks nearer the town centre as short stay
- Downside is that it is a greenfield site outside of the development boundary and in an AONB. However, the visual aspect is already affected by the Fire Station tower and Chipping Surgery development. With suitable landscaping this new development could be visually acceptable
- Additional parking will result in less people driving around the town in search of a space, so less congestion and pollution in the town centre
- With regard to traffic concerns, vehicle speeds will be low and double yellow lines on Symn Lane will help to address any potential interference with the operation of the Fire Station
- The development is small and sustainable. If benefits outweigh the disadvantages and it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest then it complies with the criteria of paragraph 116 of the NPPF and Policy CP15 of the Local Plan. Other potential Greenfield developments would not have these benefits and so the strict criteria will still apply and permission in this case should not set a precedent. It might also be possible to change the development boundary to include the proposed site
- It will help to attract new shoppers from nearby housing developments
- It would free up the Chipping for use for markets and special events
- No other real options available other than concreting over the Green Chipping and the bottom of Parklands
- The potential for crime could be reduced by installing lighting and CCTV and the Chamber of Trade is seeking funding for this.

Proposed by Cllr Claydon, seconded by Cllr Smith, to support this application. 3 in favour, 7 against, 2 abstentions. Motion failed.

Proposed by Cllr Young, seconded by Cllr Barton to object to this application. 8 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention, therefore motion carried. The reasons for the change since the support in principle decision in January 2016 are that the development is contrary to Stroud District Plan November 2015 policies CP1, CP3, CP4, CP7, CP9 and HC1.

The Chairman thanked members and public for attending. Meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed:

Dated:

Chairman of the Planning Committee