

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Extraordinary Planning Committee held on Wednesday 17th August 2022 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall (Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Council)

Present: Cllr Paton - Chairman
Cllrs Adams, Anstey, Earth, Hale, Goldsmith, Jackson, Lewendon, Millar and Wilson

In attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Rachel Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
Cllr Sevier, NFDC
Ruth Croker, Footpath Representative
Reporter from the Salisbury Journal
Chair of Alderholt Parish Council
7 members of public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Perkins and White. Also, from Cllr Bellows (NFDC).

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

3. To consider Planning Application 21/10052

21/10052	Land To West Of, Whitsbury Road, Fordingbridge	Pennyfarthing Homes Limited
Residential development and change of use of land to Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace and all other necessary on-site infrastructure (Outline planning application all matters reserved except means of access only in relation to a new point of vehicular access into the site)		
Cllr Lewendon presented this application for outline planning permission.		
He said that the new roundabout will bisect the existing SANG. The approach road has been moved 2m further from the Parsonage Park estate. The bridge has been lowered slightly in the plans - there is not enough room for statutory clearance maintenance but is reported as being close enough to be acceptable, however the embankments will be steep.		
The surface water plan has basins / swales joined by pipes with hydrobrakes which engage if there is too much water, with the water then being released gently. The pumping station is close to existing properties.		
The masterplan shows 342 new dwellings and therefore 7.2 hectares of SANG / ANRG is required within the development. However, the green alleyways and the swales and basins have all been included in the calculations despite not being usable recreational green space.		
The Highways reports for applications 20/10522 and 21/10052 appear to conflict, with one saying that traffic modelling showed junctions would be within capacity, another saying capacity would be exceeded. The traffic modelling assumed no link road.		
Hampshire Highways had no objections to this application but imposed the condition that developers must provide a minimum hourly bus service paid for from section 106 agreements. Members were concerned that this money would be paid up front when the development begins, before there are enough residents to make the service viable, with the service then being withdrawn shortly afterwards.		

Bickton Fish Farm has been purchased to offset phosphate issues.

Councillors had concerns about the large number of conditions imposed on this application and whether so many conditions would be upheld by NFDC.

Members of the public raised concern about the local infrastructure struggling to cope already, without the additional demands of a greater number of residents.

The Chair of Alderholt Council recommended that a traffic management plan be drawn up. Fryern Court Road was especially deemed to be unsuitable for additional traffic, with the road being a single-track lane and traffic already using residential driveways as passing places. Councillors were clear that this development must not commence before the new link road to the A338 has been built and a condition imposed on the site as such.

The Mayor, Cllr Wilson read a statement:

"We as a Town Council can recommend refusal. In the end, it will be up to New Forest District Council to make the final decision. There is a good chance they will recommend approval. This application will be decided by the NFDC planning committee next month. The Planning Committee includes both of this town's New Forest District Councillors. Cllr Ann Sevier and Cllr Annie Bellows have told us that they cannot speak in support of this town's objections to these developments because they are members of the planning committee and that would be predetermination.

"Local concerns must be adequately made known or the planning system is failing. The most effective and suitable way for concerns to be heard is through the local elected representatives, those two district Councillors. Lobbying is a normal part of the planning process. Residents affected by an application can usually approach their ward members and ask them to lobby colleagues with their objections. Local Government Association advice, however, is: It is advisable for planning committee members not to lobby other Councillors. Because both of our NFDC Councillors are committee members, we cannot get their support.

"Two Things: As these massive applications began to arrive, one of our district Councillors should have stepped down from the Planning Committee to represent the residents adequately. Secondly - more advice from the Local Government Association - Whenever Councillors speak on behalf of lobby groups at planning committee, they would be well advised to withdraw once they have spoken. So, they could speak on our behalf and then leave."

Cllr Sevier replied to say she has raised issues behind the scenes. Cllr Paton asked the Clerk to email FTC's comments on this application to every member of the NFDC Planning Committee.

Action: Clerk to email FTC comments to NFDC Planning Committee

The Chair read a statement from a member of public who was unable to attend the meeting – please see appendix.

Cllr Millar observed that a great number of objections had been submitted to NFDC by residents for well-considered planning reasons such as ecology and highways. Councillors noted that NFDC have granted the developer an extension of time until 14th September yet require FTC's comments by the day after this meeting (Thursday 18th August).

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Anstey and therefore RESOLVED: to recommend REFUSAL of planning application 21/10052 under PAR4 for the following reasons. All in favour.

1. The link road from the A338 must be built before this application can be started. This should be the most important condition. The existing roads will not be able to cope with all the construction traffic and vehicles from 342 additional dwellings unless a link road to the A338 is built first.
2. We disagree with the Highway Authority for raising no objection, as they do not report on the impact of traffic using (i) residential roads that carry school traffic, are used for school parking and have children walking to school or (ii) a single lane country road too narrow for cars to pass without pulling into residential drive entrances in order to reach the A338 to the north of the town.

In addition, previous Highways comments on the traffic assessments for the Bridge Street mini-roundabout junction appear to conflict with one another:

20/10522 comment

"The model results show that without the proposed development in 2024...the Bridge Street mini-roundabout would breach its capacity and is likely to experience delays and congestion as a result.... Any additional traffic would exacerbate this situation and add further delays, congestion and the likelihood of accidents to the highway network such that any additional impacts would be considered severe."

21/10052 comment

"The modelling forecasts that with the traffic development and committed development, the mini-roundabout B3078/Salisbury Street/B3078 Bridge Street junction would operate within capacity in both future years of 2025 and 2036."

3. With 342 new houses and no new employment land all traffic will have to travel through the already congested town roads to access employment. There is a lack of measures looking at sustainable transport.
4. The Council consider a traffic management plan necessary for this development.
5. The figures on the amount of recreation land do not add up. Most of the proposed open spaces are small areas spread around the site, rather than accessible ANRGs. The proposed areas don't compensate for the SANG being lost from the previous development to form the new roundabout and access road. Some areas noted as ANRG will not be able to be used all year round. The proposed new road separates the existing SANG, reducing both its utility for recreation and also for wildlife, eliminating the possibility of creating a wildlife corridor as recommended in the Nature Recovery Plan adopted by Fordingbridge Town Council. The fact that the provision of Formal Public Open Space can be avoided by way of a contribution detracts from the proposed scheme and is to the detriment of residents of the site. Appropriate Formal Public Open Space should be included within the scheme.
6. The impact on existing facilities such as healthcare and schools. The existing facilities struggle to provide services to existing residents and won't be able to cope with additional demands. There are no proposals to improve these facilities.
7. The ecological damage caused by developing this green space which has always been an important rural part of the town.
8. The impact on, and the reduction in, the quality of life of the residents of Fordingbridge due to construction work and additional traffic using roads through residential areas. There will be significant harm to quality of life for many residents.
9. The large number of conditions is not acceptable. The responses from some statutory consultees are dependent on many conditions being complied with, and most of these will be difficult to enforce. The Highway Authority require an hourly bus to be provided, but the adjacent roads are not suitable for buses. They also require a construction phase traffic management plan, but no roads are currently suitable for large lorries.

10. Phosphate mitigation needs further explanation, especially if decommissioning of the Bickton trout farm has already started. What was the level of phosphates from the Trout farm previously versus what will be the level of phosphates from all the developments? Was the farm already being decommissioned prior to purchase by Penny Farthing homes? Allowing additional phosphates (mitigated elsewhere) is to the detriment of the local area.
11. The capacity of the sewerage system needs further explanation. There appears to be no overall strategy to improve the sewerage works. The proximity of the proposed new pumping station to existing properties in Sharpley Close was considered to be very close.

Cllr Jackson stated that Fordingbridge has been allocated a higher percentage of new dwellings than other towns in the New Forest.

Cllr Wilson asked Cllr Sevier what the NFDC policy on management companies adopting land is and recommended that for democratic reasons, a preferred hierarchy be published. Cllr Sevier said that a policy which instructs the landowner could not be written. Cllr Wilson replied that other Councils have published a preferred hierarchy of adoption and said she would email a copy of another Council's SPD on Open Space. Cllr Jackson reported that developers want to give land to FTC.

Action: Cllr Wilson to email Cllr Sevier a copy of an SPD on Open Space.

Cllr Paton thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said that discussions with NFDC would continue.

4. To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 14th September 2022

The meeting closed at 20.36pm.

APPENDIX

Comment from a member of public on discussion by Fordingbridge Town Council on 17th August 2022 re SS17 – Land West of Whitsbury road.

Outline planning permission is being applied for a development for which we have no detailed information to make a judgement as to whether it has merit or not. There are no detailed designs for the houses, no information on their energy efficiency or carbon neutral status.

- The phasing plan submitted by PF homes are as follows:
- Phase 1 – Augustus park (completed)
- Phase 2 – Tinkers Cross
- Phase 3 – Land at Burgate adjoining Augustus park
- Phase 4 – Land at burgate to east of Phase 3
- Phase 5 – Land at burgate north of Phase 4
- Phase 6 – Land West of Whitsbury Road SS17

It will take decades for all these developments to come on stream and could be up to 30 years before Phase 6 is built. This planning permission is for a highly disruptive roundabout and road that will be going nowhere for many years. This makes absolutely no logical sense. This application should be thrown out until the previous phases have been built and then detailed planning permission for the whole site should be applied for.

When Augustus Park was developed, PF homes had an obligation to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS). This was done on the west side of Whitsbury Road and is very well used by locals. This road not only takes out a substantial chunk of this SANGS but separates it, reducing both its utility for recreation and also for wildlife, eliminating the possibility of creating a wildlife corridor as recommended in the Nature Recovery Plan. Who owns this area of SANGS? PF is recommending using a section of woodland on SS17 instead, but this does not increase the amount of land available for recreation as it is already well used by Fordingbridge residents for walks.

It is interesting to note in its letter to the Town Council that in purchasing Bickton Mill Trout farm and decommissioning it, that gives them free licence to pollute the Avon with Phosphates from all of their housing developments. Astonishing – this is like putting out a fire in one forest so that you can start another in a different forest. There is very little information on this and it should be investigated further ie – what was the level of phosphates from the Trout farm previously vs what will be the level of phosphates from all the developments. Was the farm already being decommissioned prior to purchase by PF homes? It raises many questions and smacks of sleight of hand.

What will the access route be for road construction traffic to Whitsbury road from the A338? The alternatives are Fryern Court road, Salisbury Road/Alexandra road or Green Lane (northwards only). All of these will be highly disruptive to the town.

It appears that this decision will be made at the NFDC planning committee on 14th September. I would suggest that there are very many questions about this proposal and in the context of the other strategic sites that the Town Council should refuse it.