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MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2023

Present:

Councillor Roe (in the Chair)

Councillors

Baker	Farrell	Jackson
P Brookes	Flanagan	

In Attendance:

Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Support Manager
Ian Curtis, Legal Officer
Susan Parker, Head of Development Management

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Councillor Sloman who was elsewhere on official Council business.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2023

The Committee considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 14 November 2023.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 14 November 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 PLANNING/ENFORCEMENT APPEALS LODGED AND DETERMINED

The Planning Committee considered a report on Planning/Enforcement Appeals lodged and determined since the last meeting on 14 November 2023.

The Committee noted the details of the six appeals lodged, two against the issuing of Enforcement Notices and four against refusal of Planning Permission since the last meeting.

The Committee also noted the details of the three planning appeals determined as outlined in the report, in all cases the appeals were dismissed.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the update.

MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2023

4 PLANNING APPLICATION AND APPEALS PERFORMANCE

The Committee received a report to update it on the Council's performance in relation to Government targets for the second quarter of the 2023-24 financial year.

The Committee was reminded that the government set target remained for 60% of major applications to be determined within 13 weeks or an agreed extension and for 70% of non-major applications to be determined within 8 weeks or an agreed extension.

The Committee noted the Council's performance for the second quarter of financial year 2023/24 was 80% of major applications determined within 13 weeks or an agreed extension and 79.9% of non-major applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed extension. The Committee noted that the performance had exceeded the target for major applications and for non-major applications. This performance therefore also represented an improvement on the performance at quarter 1.

Resolved:

To note the report.

5 APPLICATION NUMBER 22/0512 - MEXFORD HOUSE, MEXFORD AVENUE, BLACKPOOL

The Committee considered planning application 22/0512 for external alterations to include installation of new windows to various elevations, removal of existing entrance and demolition of existing out buildings and use as altered as 78 (amended from 87) self-contained flats with associated parking, cycle store and landscaping.

Ms Susan Parker, Head of Development Management, outlined the report and highlighted the amended plans which had been received since first submission reducing the proposed number of apartments from 87 to 78. Ms Parker outlined that following continued negotiations, further amended floorplans had been submitted as detailed in the update note which significantly improved the layout of 15 of the flats with it being noted that another 6 could not be changed due to internal constraints.

Ms Parker explained that as outlined in the officer report and Update Note, the units all would meet minimum national standards in terms of overall size and bedroom sizes. However, virtually all would all fall short of the minimum communal space standards set out in the Council's New Homes from Old Places standards. Ms Parker outlined to the Committee that while this situation was not ideal it would be difficult to resolve without further reducing unit numbers, which would further impact on viability. The building itself presented challenges as the internal layout would have to work within those parameters.

Ms Parker emphasised the site had been vacant for a considerable amount of time and it was not desirable in planning terms to return to use as office accommodation. She reminded members that the redevelopment of an existing building on a brownfield site would be an inherently sustainable option over new build on a greenfield site and this weighed in favour of the scheme in the planning balance.

MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2023

Ms Parker explained that on the one hand the issue of planning obligations would be relatively straightforward as the site would not be liable for any affordable housing provision or local education contributions. There were, however, requirements for health, public open space and the upgrade of two bus stops to encourage sustainable travel. The nature of the scheme made it difficult to define viability and there remained a disagreement between the parties. However, it had been suggested in this case that an overage mechanism be applied. An overage mechanism would essentially enable planning obligations to be paid in the event that the scheme made more money than is expected.

The applicant's agent, Ms Deborah Smith, spoke in support of the application. Ms Smith highlighted the sustainability of repurposing an existing building to meet a housing need. Ms Smith outlined some of the challenges that had come with the project and that previous scheme had not come forward due to those issues. Ms Smith outlined that the applicant would accept an overage mechanism as a way forward as it would overcome the disagreement between parties as to viability.

The Committee considered carefully the application. Members expressed positive support for the principle of repurposing office accommodation that was no longer required given the sustainability advantages. While some members expressed concerns regarding the size and layout of the accommodation overall it was agreed that this needed to be balanced with what could be practically achieved within the parameters of the existing buildings. The Committee accepted the principle of an overage agreement as a way forward give the difference of opinion on the scheme's viability and the unusual nature of the development.

The Committee considered that on balance it agreed with the recommendation that the concerns would outweighed by the contribution of the scheme towards meeting the Blackpool's housing needs and by the benefits of bringing this long-vacant and increasingly derelict site and building back into beneficial use. The proposed development constituted sustainable development and no material planning considerations have been identified that would outweigh this view

Resolved:

To support the proposal and delegate the application for approval by the Head of Development Management subject to the following:

- The conditions listed in the officer report and as amended by the Update Note albeit with flexibility for the Head of Development Management to amend these conditions as appropriate if the relevant information to meet the requirements of the condition is submitted prior to determination. If any conditions need to be added or deleted as a result of the submission of additional information, this would be after consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee
- To delegate to the Head of Development Manager to agree further improvements to the elevation treatments, internal layouts, positions of bin and bike stores and other equivalent details as appropriate.

MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2023

- The signing of a S106 agreement to provide an overage mechanism to secure necessary planning obligations insofar as this is possible in the future.

6 APPLICATION NUMBER 22/0479 - LAND AT HAWKING PLACE, BLACKPOOL

The Planning Committee considered application 22/0479 for the retention of an industrial building of three units, and erection of 2 industrial buildings to provide 5 units, all for use within Class E(g)(ii) and/or B8 with associated landscaping, parking, infrastructure and access from Hawking Place at land at Hawking Place.

Ms Susan Parker, Head of Development Management, introduced the application to the Committee. Ms Parker explained that the application related to a development for a range of potential industrial uses within an area designated with the Local Plan for employment development and so the proposal is acceptable in principle. Ms Parker highlighted the difficulties in identifying suitable sites for employment land within the development of the Local Plan which had resulted in the Council using 14 hectares within the area of Fylde Council to meet its allocation so it was imperative that the best use was made of suitable sustainable sites within Blackpool where there were no identified impacts on residential amenity.

Ms Parker submitted that while there was an objection received from a neighbouring business Royal Mail, these issues related to highways works related to works done to Hawking Place without planning or highway approval. The Council's highways department had worked closely with the applicant and this situation had now been resolved. Ms Parker then explained that the application had been referred to the Committee following consultation with the Chairman of the Committee due to concerns related to the failure of the scheme to meet Policy CS10 which required all schemes over 1,000 sq metres to achieve a very good rating on BREEAM requirements. Ms Parker advised that, given a range of alternative energy and water saving measures were proposed, it was considered acceptable. Ms Parker highlighted that the development had yet to have confirmed end user and was at a present a speculative one- therefore it would be particularly challenging to meet the BREEAM requirements therefore the alternative proposal was considered a suitable way forward.

The Committee considered the application and concluded that it would represent sustainable development and deliver much needed employment development in the north of Blackpool.

Members expressed some concerns that the objections submitted by the Head of Parks had not been addressed. Ms Parker explained her view that given they related to the suitability of the initial tree planting scheme could be addressed. The Committee therefore concluded that it should approve the application in principle subject to the identified issues being addressed.

Resolved:

To support the application and delegate approval to the Head of Development Management subject to it either being confirmed that the landscaping information submitted is agreed by the Head of Parks and Greens, or acceptable amended

MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2023

landscaping information being submitted and the relevant conditions updated accordingly.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Planning Committee noted the date of the next meeting as 30 January 2024.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 6.45 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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