

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 21 November 2023 at Council Chamber, Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its next meeting.

**Members Present:**

Ernest Mallett MBE  
Victor Lewanski  
Scott Lewis  
Catherine Powell  
Jeremy Webster  
Edward Hawkins (Chairman)  
John Robini  
Richard Tear (Vice-Chairman)  
Jonathan Hulley

**Apologies:**

Jeffrey Gray

**71/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies for absence were received from Jeffrey Gray.

**72/23 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING [Item 2]**

The Minutes were APPROVED as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

**73/23 PETITIONS [Item 3]**

There were none.

**74/23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME [Item 4]**

There were none.

**75/23 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME [Item 5]**

There were none.

**76/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 6]**

There were none.

**77/23 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSAL EL2023/1953 - LAND SOUTH-WEST OF WATERSIDE DRIVE, WALTON ON THAMES, SURREY [Item 7]**

**Officers:**

Janine Wright, Principal Planning Officer

James Lehane, Principal Transport Development Planning Officer

**Officer Introduction:**

1. The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report and update sheet and then provided Members with a brief overview. Members noted that the report was for the construction of a new special educational needs school, including sport courts and pitches, vehicle parking, landscaping and new vehicular and pedestrian access from Waterside Drive. Full details of the application could be found within the report.

**Speakers:**

Alex Burrows spoke in support of the application and made the following comments:

1. Stated that she was the new head teacher designate for Hopescourt School and a member of the local community.
2. That the community was in desperate need for a school that could meet the needs of local children with additional needs and disabilities.
3. That there was an acute shortage of schools for autistic children and children with complex communication and interaction needs.
4. That her daughter had attended over six schools due to unmet needs which resulted in periods of significant challenges related to mental health and wellbeing.
5. That she had spoken to a number of families who could not find a suitable school place for their autistic son or daughter.
6. That many children in the community travelled more than five miles each way between home and school. Many of those children had sensory needs that made their journeys particularly challenging.
7. Provided an example of a child with autism who had been out of school for over a year.
8. That children with autism were frequently bullied, isolated and, in some cases, were in a mental health crisis.
9. That bespoke designed schools like Hopescourt School could provide direct access to open spaces, areas for sensory therapy and space and resource for flexible teaching.
10. That the building had been designed with natural surroundings and autistic children in mind.
11. That change and political support for autistic children was drastically needed.
12. That Hopescourt School would support children with their journey into adulthood and meaningful employment.

The Vice-Chairman asked for clarification on whether the head teacher was involved with the planning of the site from an early stage. The speaker explained that she was recruited last May so was not involved from an early stage.

The Local Member, Rachael I Lake, made the following comments:

1. That there had been many complaints due to the short time given to read the details of the application.
2. That the need for a special educational needs school was close to her heart.
3. That Surrey County Council had to be seen giving the best possible opportunities for residents, the environment and children.
4. That she believed that there was an alternative site available for the school.
5. That Members should not overlook the fact that the site was in the green belt just because there were special circumstances for the application.
6. That the openness of the green belt was one of the top priorities.
7. Suggested to Members that the application be postponed and that the building design be reversed so that it could run alongside the green belt boundary.
8. That the site had issues with drainage.

A Member asked for clarification on the Local Member's comments on reversing the building. The Local Member explained that she had received advice from external Planning colleagues that it would not be difficult to reverse the building and follow the same pattern as Heathside Walton-on-Thames.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. Officers explained that Members should consider the application in front of them and that any alternative designs should not be relevant to the committee. Members also noted that the whole site was in the green belt. Members further noted that, due to the nearby gas pipeline, there were likely physical constraints which dictated the design of the building.
2. A Member said that they supported the application and did not agree with the objection from Elmbridge Borough Council.
3. A Member asked for an overview of the traffic flow and parking details of the application. Officers explained that, due to the nature of the school, it was accepted that a vast majority of people would arrive by motor vehicles and so the approach for the site was fairly typical for Special Educational Need (SEN) schools and involved a staggered arrival with stacking arrangements within the site. A Parking Management Plan was required to monitor the situation and react if necessary. The officer confirmed that they were satisfied with the evidence provided that there would be no reason to expect that there would be an uplift in vehicles parking on the public highway.
4. A Member stated that they were concerned with the flooding potential of the site and especially near the proposed car parking area. Following discussion, officers confirmed that they were satisfied that the conditions imposed would ensure that there was no flooding on the site as sustainable drainage measures would be in place.
5. Members noted that alternative sites were considered and that the proposed site was considered to be the most appropriate.
6. Officers highlighted that Condition 29 covered all the retention of the trees, landscaping and hard standing schemes.
7. Officers stated that operating costs for the proposed site should not be a consideration of the Planning and Regulatory Committee.

8. A Member asked for detail on the regulations in place to allow a site to be built on the green belt. Officers explained that the National Planning Policy Framework set out national policy around green belt and that the proposed site was considered to be a form of inappropriate development however officers believed that there were 'very special circumstances' due to the 'need' for the development and the community and educational benefits.
9. Members requested that Condition 15 was amended to include a requirement to do up to date infiltration testing which was agreed.
10. Members noted that the site was Flood Zone 1 and that discussion were had with the lead local flood authority who had raised no objections.
11. In regard to condition 29(a), a Member asked that reference to the mature trees on site be included which was agreed.
12. The Chairman moved the recommendation which was unanimously agreed.

**Actions / Further information to be provided:**

None.

**Resolved:**

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, planning application ref: EL2023/1953 be referred to the Secretary of State under paragraph 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021, and in the absence of any direction by the Secretary of State, BE PERMITTED subject to the amended conditions and informatives set out within the report and update sheet.

**78/23 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSAL SP23/00557/SCC - FORMER SUNBURY FIRE STATION, STAINES ROAD WEST SUNBURY ON THAMES TW16 7BG [Item 8]**

**Officers:**

Chris Turner, Senior Planning Officer

**Officer Introduction:**

1. The Senior Planning Officer introduced the report and provided Members with a brief overview. Members noted that the report was for redevelopment of the former Sunbury Fire station site for a mixed use hub building incorporating Class E and Class F1 uses including library plus 12no. supported independent living units (use class C3). Full details of the application could be found within the report.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. Officers explained to Members that the Local Plan in Spelthorne was used by officers to determine the planning application however it was the decision maker's responsibility to determine what conditions should apply. Members further noted that the application being considered was a full application.

2. A Member thanked officers for organising a site visit.
3. Officers stated that there was no proposal to implement a pedestrian crossing near the site. A Member said that it was disappointing that a pedestrian crossing had not been proposed.
4. A Member asked whether officers were satisfied with the scale of the proposed building and whether options to include additional storeys. Officers explained that the application was determined as submitted and that they were unable to consider alternative designs. Further to this, another Member stated that they felt the site was under developed as there was an opportunity to increase the scale.
5. The Chairman moved the recommendation which received unanimous support.

**Actions / Further information to be provided:**

None.

**Resolved:**

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, application no. SP23/00557/SCC be PERMITTED subject to the conditions within the report and update sheet.

**79/23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 9]**

The date of the next meeting was noted.

Meeting closed at 11.35 am

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**Chairman**