

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Planning Committee held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 18 July 2024 from 7.30 - 8.08 pm.

Present: Councillors

Chris Whately-Smith, Chair
Philip Hearn
Chris Lloyd
Debbie Morris
Elinor Gazzard
Chris Mitchell
Harry Davies

Officers in Attendance:

Adam Ralton, Development Management Team Leader
Lauren Edwards, Senior Planning Officer
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer

PC35/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sara Bedford and Councillor Stephen King.

PC36/24 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 13 June 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the meeting.

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 20 June 2024 were also confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PC37/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Liberal Democrat Group declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 5. **24/0903/FUL – Construction of single storey front, side and rear extensions at Silver Birch Cottage, East Lane, Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire, WD5 0NY**, as the architect is a member of the authority and a member of the Liberal Democrat Group.

PC38/24 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

PC39/24 24/0903/FUL – Construction of single storey front, side and rear extensions at Silver Birch Cottage, East Lane, Abbots Langley.

Adam Ralton, Development Management Team Leader advised the Committee that a document has been circulated by the applicant to all Councillors regarding the application. Officers consider that the points raised in the document are all covered in the committee report.

The officer also provided an overview of the existing and proposed plans, highlighting the differences between them. The officer explained the various drawings that illustrate the planning history of the site, including previously approved extensions and the current proposals. Specific attention was given to the permitted developments, including a single storey rear and side extension. The officer emphasized the need for clarity regarding the proposed changes and their implications for the site.

In response to a request by Members, the officer informed the Committee that the floor area of the property with the proposed extension is 175 square meters. The officer also responded to another question raised by Members, explaining that the reason the elements may not all be able to be constructed at the same time is down to how the roofs of the individual elements of the planning permission scheme and the permitted development scheme interact. They interact in such a way that it wouldn't be possible to build both of them in accordance with the drawings that have been approved. It might mean that there would need to be an amendment made to those schemes before the roofs could be built and completed. Whilst on the floor plan the roofs don't touch, there is interaction above the floor.

The applicant, Mr. Bishop spoke in support of the application.

The Committee requested that officers address the points raised by the applicant.

Adam Ralton, Development Management Team Leader explained that the concern the officers have is the total size and volume of the extensions that's being built cumulatively. The difference between a flat roof extension to the rear and a much larger, bulkier structure with a large roof. It can be seen on the drawings the difference the roof makes on the rear elevations. That is one part of the additional massing and the volume that officers have concerns with.

The officer further explained that officers are not suggesting box dormers and rubber roof cappings, but they might be something that would be achievable if that complies with the conditions in the permitted development order. Ultimately, whilst there have been a number of applications that have been approved, that allow a particular footprint and massing, officers' concern is the massing of the extensions overall.

Members of the Committee argued that multiple planning applications should not be combined to circumvent existing regulations, and the overall development's acceptability should be evaluated based on its impact on the green belt's openness rather than strict adherence to outdated metrics. Members concluded that, given the lack of direct neighbours to the property, the proposed extension would not harm the green belt's openness.

Members requested clarification on the square meterage information of the areas that are being proposed, and the officer clarified that it was 17 square meters.

The officer advised the Committee that if Members were minded to overturn the recommendation and grant planning permission, officers would suggest three conditions to be added, which are standard and would go on any planning permission. The first condition to set out that materials should match the existing building, the second condition to set out that the development starts within three years, and the third condition to set out that the development should be done in accordance with the current plans.

Members requested that informatives should also be added on working hours and the size of vehicles driving to and from the property.

The officer advised that they do not consider that it would be reasonable to restrict the size of vehicles driving to and from the property because it would be difficult to know what size they can be restricted to.

Members of the Committee summarised that the reason for overturning the officer recommendation for refusal was that the current application has a lesser impact on the green belt compared to permitted development schemes.

Councillor Philip Hearn proposed an alternative recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being 6 For, 1 Against, 0 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

That PLANNING PERMISSION is APPROVED subject to conditions.

PC40/24 Retrospective: Installation of rooflight and alterations to fenestration at 6 HOLBEIN GATE, NORTHWOOD

Lauren Edwards, Senior Planning Officer provided the following update:

The report contains two typos; the first one being at 3.2 of the report, where it states that there are two first floor flank windows in situ. That should say that there are two first floor flank windows in situ, within each flank, making a total of four. The second typo relates to Condition 1 (C1), where the officer referred to 100 meters, it should refer to 100 millimetres. The last update is, following the publication of the report, on the basis of the amended plans that were received, Batchworth Community Council have withdrawn their objection.

Members raised concerns regarding the window over the staircase, and the fact that it has a handle and can be opened fully, and questioned whether a restrictor could be installed on it.

The officer explained that the recommendation is that the window can stay as it is, and although it is directly over the drop of the stairs, unless there was some form of platform placed over the drop, a person could not open the window, and there is potentially not another location for the stairs to be transferred to in the future. Therefore, officers don't think that it would be reasonable for them to require that the applicant replace the window, so as to put a restrictor on, but if Members think it would be necessary, then it could be explored.

In response to questions raised by Members regarding the window height and protecting neighbouring amenity, the officer confirmed that the stairwell window is definitely 1.7 meters above the floor, as it is over the ground floor turn of the stairs. The windows, as they are in situ, have openable parts less than 1.7 meters. Hence, the amended plan to seek they be changed such that their openable parts are bottom tilt and then together with the catch would mean views could not be afforded up and over the window. The officer further explained that they believe that there is no feasible alternative for the staircase's location, implying that the room in question is unlikely to become habitable. The officer also mentioned the possibility of installing a restrictor on the window but consider it unreasonable to replace the window, given the circumstances of the planning application and the need to address other windows as well.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved, seconded by Councillor Harry Davies that subject to conditions RETROSPECTIVE PLANNING PERMISSION IS GRANTED.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being 6 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to conditions, RETROSPECTIVE PLANNING PERMISSION IS GRANTED.

PC41/24 OTHER BUSINESS - if approved under item 3 above

There were no items of other business.

CHAIRMAN