

Sonning Common Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in the Village Hall
Sonning Common on Monday 15 August 2011 at 19.00 hrs

Chairman: Mr Greenwood

Present: Miss Hunt, Mrs Lewis, Ms Noble, Mr Reynolds and Mr Kedge, Mr P Simms of The Henley
Standard and 27 residents (for item P12/45.01).

12/42 Apologies for absence: None

P12/43 Declarations of Interest: None

P12/44 Public Question Time: Seven members of the public offered the committee their views
and concerns about the application for outline planning permission for the development
of 80 homes at Lea Meadow.

P12/45 New Applications:

P45.01 P11/E1257 (considered at 19.00)

Two storey rear extension at 82 Kennylands Road Sonning Common RG4 9JT. The
Committee recommended that this be approved.

P45.02 P11/E1123/O

Residential development with new access on the Peppard Road (Including indicative
layout for 80 units) at Lea Meadow Sonning Common. The Committee recommended
unanimously that this application be refused. The Committee's letter to SODC Planning is
appended to these minutes.

P45.03 P11/E1315 (considered at 19.00)

Erection of first floor extension at Rosewood, Gallowstree Road, Peppard Common (in the
Parish of Rotherfield Peppard) RG9 5HS. The Committee expressed no strong views - this
is in the purview of a neighbouring Parish Council.

P12/46 Applications Granted: The following was noted:

P46.01 P11/E0903 Replacement of carport and workshop with garage and workshop. Conversion
of existing garage to a family room. Somerton Blounts Court Road Sonning Common RG4
9RS

P12/47 Applications Refused: The following was noted:

P47.01 P11/E0974 Installation of six anti ram-raid bollards to front forecourt.
Co-Op, 44 Wood Lane Sonning Common RG4 9SL

P12/48 Matters for future consideration: Parish Plan

Date of next Meeting: Monday 5 September 2011

Chairman.....

Dated

SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

VILLAGE HALL, WOOD LANE
SONNING COMMON, OXON, RG4 9SL

Planning Department
S O D C
Crowmarsh Gifford
Wallingford OX10 8NJ

16 August 2011

Dear Sirs

PLANNING APPLICATION: P11.E1123/O

Outline permission for the erection of 80 dwellings at Lea Meadow Sonning Common.

At our public meeting on 15 August 2011 the Planning Committee unanimously recommended refusal of the above application because the development proposals run counter to a number of the policies contained in the South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan 2011. Viz:

Policy H6

Except as specifically provided for under other plan policies, planning permission will not be granted for new houses:....

(iii) on the edge of settlements where the built-up area of the settlement would be extended.

5.24. Development on the edges of towns and villages, including consolidating ribbon development, will not normally be allowed because it would extend the built up area, encroach upon the surrounding countryside and spoil the landscape setting of the district's settlements, contrary to Policy C4.

This Council considers that the Lea Meadow development would consolidate ribbon development southwards in the triangle of land between Peppard Road, Kennylands Road and Westleigh Drive and encroach upon what is, together with the Herb Farm and Hagpits, an attractive piece of countryside.

Policy G4

The need to protect the countryside for its own sake is an important consideration when assessing proposals for development. Unless permitted by other policies in the plan, new built development in the countryside, in the open gaps between settlements and on the edge of settlements where the built-up area would be extended, will not normally be permitted, except for agriculture and forestry.

2. 14. This policy seeks to prevent development in the countryside, ribbon development on roads extending away from settlements and unplanned expansion of settlements beyond their existing built-up area....When considering proposals for development the Council will give high priority to retaining the open and rural character of the area, and the countryside generally.

There is a large open gap consisting of Hagpits the Herb Farm and Lea Meadow between the settlement of Essex Way and Bird Wood Court to the south, and the main village settlement to the north. This Council and many residents consider that the Lea Meadow development would go a long way to closing this very attractive rural gap. The provision of a 'ghost island' and associated street lighting and furniture for the new access point for this proposed development would further extend the urban street scene into a rural area.

Policy G6

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals which are not of a high quality and inclusive design, which fail to protect and reinforce local distinctiveness, or which are of a scale or type that is inappropriate to the site and its surroundings.

This Council and many residents consider that the development is too big and too dense and therefore out of keeping with its surroundings i.e. open countryside to the east, the Herb Farm to the north, woodland of Hagpits to the west and low density housing at Bird Wood Court and Essex Way to the south.

Policy C4

Development which would damage the attractive landscape setting of the settlements of the district will not be permitted. The effect of any proposal on important local landscape features which contribute to the visual and historic character and appearance of a settlement will be considered.

3.16 The relationship between settlements and their surrounding countryside is a significant element in the character of the area. The links and contrasts between towns and villages and their rural surroundings were often important historically, and the attractive juxtaposition of the two elements is the quintessence of English rural landscapes. The countryside around towns and villages is also highly valued, both visually and for informal recreation. The Council will seek to ensure that the landscape setting of settlements is protected from damaging development.

This Council and many residents firmly believe that the village needs to retain Lea Meadow as a small scale element of this quintessential balance. The proposed screen of trees and hedgerows will not mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development particularly in autumn and winter when the majority of the trees and hedges will lose their foliage.

Policy D11

Development will only be permitted if adequate on- or off-site infrastructure and other services and facilities made necessary by the development are available or will be provided to service it. The requirement for infrastructure and other services and facilities will be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development and will include, where appropriate, the provision of:

- (i) affordable housing in accordance with Policy H9;
- (ii) transport measures including infrastructure, public transport services, traffic management and measures for cyclists and pedestrians;
- (iii) education facilities;
- (v) facilities for the emergency services;
- (xi) surface water and foul drainage works;
- (xii) measures designed to mitigate the effects of the development on the environment.

Regard will be had to the cumulative impact of development and developers may be required to contribute jointly to necessary infrastructure improvements. Before planning permission is granted legal obligations must be completed between owners and/or developers and infrastructure providers, securing the provision of land and the payment of financial contributions to the providers to enable the provision and, where appropriate, the subsequent maintenance of essential infrastructure and facilities.

This village has an elderly population (45% over 65) many of whom need to use their cars to visit the village centre. Parking and traffic congestion in Wood Lane, the main shopping road, is already a serious problem. Wood Lane was not designed for the traffic (including a 30 minute bus service to and from Reading) now using it. The extra cars (150 +) generated by the Lea Meadow development would add to what is an acknowledged problem of congestion and parking. The only public parking area is behind the village hall - 14 places, plus an overflow that will take 8 cars. There is already serious difficulty for buses getting up and down Wood Lane.

The congestion in Grove Road and Lea Road at the start and end of the school day at Sonning Common Primary School is a serious problem, reaching gridlock on occasions. Our PCSOs are involved daily in attempting to manage the situation. Cars from Lea Meadow bringing children to the school would compound this problem.

Education facilities: Sonning Common Primary School is nearly full, with 362 pupils. Most classes are of 30 and there is no spare classroom space. The extra children from the Lea Meadow development would exacerbate the problem.

Health Care Services: The village Health Centre in Wood Lane has a large patient list and only its own parking for 16 places plus 2 for disabled patients and is already over utilised. The extra traffic volume in the area may result in more parking there by non-patients making life more difficult for those in need of medical attention.

Policy T1

Proposals for all types of development will, where appropriate:

- (i) provide for a safe and convenient access to the highway network;
- (ii) provide safe and convenient routes for cyclists and pedestrians;
- (iii) be accessible by public transport and have a safe walking route to nearby bus stops or new bus stops and appropriate infrastructure should be provided;
- (iv) be served by an adequate road network which can accommodate traffic without creating traffic hazards or damage to the environment;
- (v) where new roads, pedestrian routes, cycleways and street lighting are to be constructed as part of the development, be constructed to adoptable standards and be completed as soon as they are required to serve the development; and
- (vi) make adequate provision for those whose mobility is impaired.

8.9 The Council will not normally permit developments which are likely to result in an unacceptable level of traffic on the local highway network, or which would result in a detrimental effect on the amenities and environment of the area.

This Council believes that the proposed development precisely meets the 8.9 criteria for refusal. In addition, we are concerned about the safety of pedestrians of all ages, especially children and the elderly, using the footpath proposed to link the development with Kennylands and Peppard Roads particularly in the winter months.

Policy C6

In considering proposals for development, the maintenance and enhancement of the biodiversity resource of the district will be sought. Full account of the effects of development on wildlife will be taken. Where there is any significant loss in biodiversity as part of a proposed development, the creation and maintenance of new landscape features, habitats, habitat links and wildlife corridors of appropriate scale and kind will be required to ensure there is no net loss in biodiversity resources.

This Council believes that cutting down hedgerows for the entrance splays reduces the bio-diversity of this part of the site and reduces the visual amenity of the local scene.

Policy D6

The design and layout of development will be encouraged in ways which will reduce the opportunity for crime and will promote suitable means of improving the security of premises.

This Council believes that the proposed Community Orchard will become a focal point for low level criminality and vandalism and would provide excellent cover for nefarious activities.

Further information:

Sonning Common Community Plan results. The Community Plan is, in part, intended to inform local authorities of the needs and wishes of residents. Following a very high return rate of the questionnaires (over 75%) the replies indicated that 80% of those replying to the specific question did not want housing development, if it had to happen, on one large site. A number of small developments was preferred. The overwhelming view of the residents on this matter is clear.

If Planning Consent were to be given to this development, we would wish to negotiate seriously for significant payments to be made under Section 106 for the benefit of the whole of our community.

Yours faithfully

Barrie Greenwood
Chairman of the Parish Council Planning Committee