

Sonning Common Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in the Village Hall on 6 June 2012 at 19.00 hrs

Present: Mr Greenwood (Chairman), Ms Noble, Mrs Lewis, Miss Hunt, Mrs MacGowan and Mr Reynolds plus nine members of the public.

P13/030 Item deferred to next meeting.

P13/031 Apologies for absence: None

P13/032 Declarations of Interest: None

P13/033 Public Question Time: All discussion and questions directly concerned application P12/S0492, below.

P13/034 New Applications:

034.01 P12/S0492 Erection of two pairs of semi-detached houses parking and alterations to access. Erection of replacement garage to serve 23c Wood Lane. All on land to the rear of 23c Wood Lane Sonning Common. The applicant and architect attended and spoke in response to a number of strong objections raised by members of the public present. After extensive discussion the Committee was unanimous in recommending the REFUSAL of this application. The letter setting out their reasons is appended to these minutes.

034.02 P12/S0617 Single storey rear extension at 59 Orchard Avenue Sonning Common. The Committee recommended that this application be approved.

034.03 P12/S0723/HH Erection of rear conservatory at 3 Newfield Road Sonning Common. The Committee recommended that this application be approved.

P13/035 Applications Granted: None to report.

P13/036 Neighbourhood Planning update: Deferred.

P13/037 Matters for future consideration: None

Date of next Meeting: Monday 2 July 2012 at 19.30

Chairman Dated

PLANNING APPLICATION: P12/S0492 FUL

At our meeting on 6th June 2012 the Planning Committee unanimously recommended refusal of the above application because the development proposals breach the following planning policies contained in SOLP 11 :- H4, D1, D3, D5, T1, T2, T8, G2, G5 and G6.

Impact on the surrounding residential area

The proposed semi-detached houses are located in a rear garden or backland site and therefore are set well back from the line of existing properties on either side in Wood Lane. They also represent a smaller and denser development than the older detached houses with large mature rear gardens which characterise the residential properties of Wood Lane and neighbouring Grove Road. Thus we feel it is failing to protect the character of this part of the village and thus breaches SOLP 11 policies H4 (iii) (v) and G6.

We also believe that the proposed buildings themselves and the 6 double deep parking lots associated with them are intrusive and breach the principles of good design and local distinctiveness stated in Policies D1 (vi).

Impact on the character of the village centre

The main character features of this area are the three forecourts fronting retail and service businesses with their semi-circular raised flower beds and double drive through access points for parking and unloading goods. To facilitate access into the proposed development the wall built to separate the access road will close off the adjacent route into the forecourt from Wood Lane. This and the new parking arrangements of 3 bays for the forecourt will require the removal of the flower bed. This is a radical re-design which is very poor and out of keeping with current decades old character of this and other forecourts – a very significant feature of the village centre. It therefore breaches Policy D, in particular D1 (ix). The adverse effect of this re-design could impact on the current location of the bus stop and shelter which is close to the proposed roadway into the development, thus breaching D5 (i).

The loss of this flower bed would take away a visual amenity from the village and its residents and so breaches Policy D3 (outdoor amenity). Thus, looking at the impact this proposal would have on the old established central area of Sonning Common we believe it is detrimental and will change its character and therefore breaches Policy G2.

Access, Parking and Highway Issues

The single lane access into the development from the very busy village centre will be bounded by a wall built out from 23C Wood Lane to the highway pavement. Next to this access is a bus stop and on road parking on both sides along Wood Lane. The restricted movement of vehicles in and out of the new access point will compromise the flow of traffic along Wood Lane and will also increase the danger to vehicles and pedestrians passing by. The potential for creating further difficulties for our bus service into Reading (Vitality 2) negotiating parked vehicles and the extra traffic generated by this development is of great concern to us as the bus company has already changed routes to circumvent similar difficulties elsewhere in the village centre. The bus route along Wood Lane is vital for access to Reading for our residents young and old.

Pedestrian access to and from the development will be along the narrow road with no room for pavements. Access from the flat above 23c will be directly from the door into the access road. Both are obvious and serious safety issues.

Emergency vehicles access to the development will be difficult or perhaps impossible if poorly parked vehicles get in the way and/or by the narrow and restrictive access.

Therefore the proposal breaches T1 (i) (ii) (iv) and H (iv).

The Forecourt

The redesign of the forecourt is poor and will compromise safety, ease of access and parking. It will also effectively reduce parking for most users of the shops. Blocking off the second access and reducing parking for able bodied users from 6 or 7 cars down to 3 will have several detrimental effects. Firstly

cars and delivery vehicles will either have to reverse into or out of the forecourt because of limited space and access. This increases the risk of accidents, the blocking in of vehicles and more congestion and on road parking in this part of Wood Lane.

The double deep parking within the site for 6 vehicles will increase pressure on parking on road outside the development, as it is difficult to see that arrangement being able to cope with 6 vehicles and their ability to move into and out of those parking spaces at will.

Thus the proposal breaches Policies T1 (i) T2 (i) and T8 (i).

Finally approval of this proposal would surely create a precedent leading to similar proposals both to the NE and SW of the 23c Wood Lane site and as a consequence seriously damaging the viability of the (central) retail, service and commercial centre of Sonning Common and indeed of the sustainability and well being of village residents, retailers and out of the village users alike.

We believe this breaches Policy G5 (best use of land in built up areas), CF3 (overall role & attractiveness of the shopping area) and the NPPF – clauses 70 (re planning decisions) 28, 37 and 40 (relating to protection of retail areas, parking and sustainable development).

Yours faithfully

GB Greenwood
Chairman of Planning Committee