

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Wednesday 29 May 2024

Present:-

Councillor Knott (Chair)

Councillors Patrick, Asvachin, Atkinson, Banyard, Bennett, Hughes, Hussain, Jobson, Miller, Mitchell, M, Pole and Rolstone

Apologies

Councillor Ketchin

Also Present

Director of City Development, Service Lead City Development and Democratic Services Officer (PMD)

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2014 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

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PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 24/0063/FUL - 70 ADMIRAL WAY, EXETER EX2 7GT

The Service Lead - City Development presented the application for solar panels on roof of dwelling and garage, advising that this was a relatively straightforward domestic alteration, which normally would not come to Committee but did so on this occasion because:-

- the property - along with its neighbours - had their permitted development rights removed through condition 15 of the original application; and
- the applicant was the spouse of an Exeter City Council member of staff, which requires going to committee for reasons of transparency.

He talked Members through his presentation, which included:-

- site location plan;
- aerial view;
- photographs of neighbouring properties;
- proposed site plan;
- proposed fixing layout;
- various other solar arrays in the area; and
- officer recommended conditions.

The recommendation was for approval subject to the conditions as set out in the report.

Councillor Mitchell asked what effect the approval of the proposal would have on the development rights of neighbouring properties. The Service Lead - City

Development clarified that any approval would only apply to the applicant's property and that neighbours would have to apply individually.

There were no other questions and Members opted to go straight to the vote. The Chair moved the recommendation for approval with conditions, which was seconded by Councillor Mitchell, voted upon and CARRIED.

RESOLVED that planning permission for solar panels on roof of dwelling and garage be approved subject to the conditions set out in the report.

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LIST OF DECISIONS MADE AND WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS

The report of the City Development Manager was submitted. In regard of 24/0263/DIS (Land Off Spruce Close And Celia Crescent Spruce Close Exeter), Councillor enquired about the nature of the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan. The Service Lead - City Development offered to contact her in the following days with a detailed answer.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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APPEALS REPORT

The schedule of appeal decisions and appeals lodged was submitted. The Director - City Development drew Members' attention to application No. 21/1014/FUL (68-72 Howell Road, St James) and highlighted:-

- how the appeal was granted;
- how the Inspector had noted that policy H5(b) of the Local Plan had remarked a lack of clear definitions around over concentration, area of the city and imbalance in the community.

He also advised that he had asked the Planning Team to delve into the Inspector's decision.

Councillor Mitchell thanked the officers involved for their work and made the following comments:-

- the community in St James was bewildered by the appeal decision;
- the concept of balance in the plan referred to buildings; and
- community balance was not the same as mixed communities.

Councillor Hughes relayed similar concerns from Pennsylvania residents and noted that the wording of the appeal decision seemed to suggest that it agreed with the original refusal whilst upholding the appeal.

Members made the following further comments:-

- purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) applications were always problematic;
- the new Local Plan provided an opportunity to agree on a precise definition of "balance";
- it was unclear whether limits set for student accommodation would apply to the entire city or to specific wards or even smaller areas;
- it was important not to create a divisive "us and them" rhetoric in any debate on student accommodation;
- it was worth investigating any best practice from similar cities;

- it would be helpful if future iterations of the supporting text were more thorough;
- imbalance could come from having an area where there was already an over concentration of students; and
- high concentration of student accommodation was sometimes perceived rather than factual.

Addressing the above comments, The Director - City Development :-

- provided clarity on the issue of costs and how the recent approval for PBSA at Beaufort House, to which reference had been made, had not been considered similar enough;
- agreed with a Member that the judgement could be viewed as setting a precedent and could make it more likely that other challenges would succeed;
- confirmed that it was unlikely that lawyers were involved in the appeal, seeing as a written representation had been submitted;
- called for a 'root and branch' approach to addressing over concentration;
- felt it was essential to consider the objectives of the city as a whole;
- stressed the need for a strong evidence based to justify any course of action;
- explained that the supporting text were not examined to the same extent as policies and also did not carry the same weight; and
- highlighted the need to weigh up the benefits of having students in Exeter.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.18 pm)

Chair

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