

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 12 June 2024

7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Lee Croxton (Chair)
Cllr Rajinder Atwal (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Gary Harding
Samir Jassal
Lyn Milner
Peter Scollard
Baljit Hayre

Note: Councillors: Gurdip Ram Bungar, Shane Mochrie-Cox and Jenny Wallace were also in attendance

Shazad Ghani	Head of Planning
Richard Hart	Team Leader (Development Management)
Kelly Joyce	Senior Planner
Ethan Bonthron	Career Grade Planner
Laura Caiels	Assistant Head of Legal Services
Karen Gingles	Committee Service Officer (Minutes)

8. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Deborah Croxton. Cllr Baljit Hayre attended as her substitute. Apologies for absence were also received from Cllr Ejaz Aslam and Cllr Metcalf.

9. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 31 January 2024 were signed by the Chair.

10. Declarations of Interest

11. Planning applications for determination by the Committee

Order of Agenda

The Chair stated that he would deal with the planning applications in the following order:

- 20240033 - Mary Ann Doyle House, Seymour Road Northfleet, Gravesend
- 20240267 - 5 Alanbrooke, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1NA
- 20240195 - 219 Wrotham Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7LL
- 20240019 - 11 - 13 Queen Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2EQ

- 20240149 - Lighthouse Vessel 21, St Andrews Quay, Royal Pier Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2BD

12. 20240033 - Mary Ann Doyle House, Seymour Road Northfleet, Gravesend

The Committee considered application 20240033 - Mary Ann Doyle House, Seymour Road Northfleet, Gravesend. The application was for change of use of the building and site from a hostel to a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO). There would be some internal alterations, but no external changes were proposed to the building. The HMO would accommodate 12 persons, with the current hostel meeting the needs of 12 homeless people.

The Head of Planning outlined key areas of the report:

- Members were given an overview of the site location which was surrounded by residential properties.
- There were no plans to change the front elevation of the property. External changes were limited to removing the smoking shelter and making a provision for cycle storage.
- The Committee were informed of the small internal changes proposed which included; a larger kitchen and more useable dining space. The current staff room would be replaced with a bedroom. It was proposed that room 10 on the second floor would be enlarged with rooms 11 and 12 subsumed into a single bedroom.
- There was no onsite parking provision. It was noted that the previous decision, relating to the property becoming a hostel, allowed for the property to be reverted back to a public house, if the ownership were to change. Parking levels for a public house could not be controlled and therefore could have a greater impact to local street parking to that of an HMO.
- A parking survey had been carried out by the applicant which illustrated unrestricted parking was available on the local road network, with sufficient capacity existing. With the cycle storage, public transport and close proximity to the town centre, the application was considered to be in a sustainable location and could not be refused on parking grounds.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions for clarification.

- Members asked for clarification regarding the difference between a hostel and an HMO. The Head of Planning explained that the Nuns had previously operated a hostel for the homeless, whereas an HMO would result in each bedroom being rented out to an individual, with the property managed very differently. The property was currently on the market and so it would be the responsibility of the new owners, to manage and upkeep of the HMO, should the application be approved.
- Members queried the cycle storage provision and whether additional waste had been considered within the application. The Head of Planning confirmed that the cycle storage was for 12 bicycles which was deemed adequate. The Waste department had not expressed any concern regarding the collection of waste for the 12 proposed residents.

The Chair noted that Councillor Peter Scollard joined the meeting at this point and advised that due to his late arrival he would be unable to vote on this particular application.

The Committee heard the views of 2 speakers in favour of the application and had their questions answered.

- Members queried why the street survey was undertaken on Monday and Saturday evenings rather than during the day when Perry Street was busy. The speaker explained that these were the usual times such surveys were conducted, with Google Street View providing evidence during daytime hours. From her experience many HMO residents did not own cars.

The Committee heard the views of the Ward Councillor for Coldharbour and Perry Street Councillor, Shane Mochrie-Cox.

In response The Head of Planning stated that in terms of the officer recommendation, this was based on a planning judgement, that involved the consideration of the Development Plan and material planning considerations. It was also noted that the new Design for Gravesham document had been adopted by the Council's Cabinet, as a supplementary planning document.

The Committee were invited to make further comment:

- The Chair and Members commended the nuns for the great work they have carried out over many years to assist the homeless.
- Members noted that the HMO would meet local needs, and that parking in relation to the Public House was not controlled, therefore given the sustainability of the site and availability of on street parking, the lack of parking was not an issue.

RESOLVED that Planning PERMISSION was granted subject to conditions as set out within the report.

Note: Clare Wright (Agent) and sister Ann (Applicant) spoke in favour of the application.

13. 20240267 - 5 Alanbrooke, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1NA

The Chair announced that the Vice Chair Councillor Rajinder Atwal had called in the application and therefore would be forgoing his position as Vice Chair on the Committee for this application only. Although allowed to speak on the item, Councillor Atwal was not permitted to cast a vote to determine the application. Councillor Atwal moved from the top table and sat with the other Non-Board Members.

The Committee were presented with application 20240267 - 5 Alanbrooke, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1NA. The application was for the erection of a single storey rear extension, which had already been constructed. The proposed single storey extension of 5 Alanbrooke, in addition to the already generously extended dwelling, was considered to be excessive and harmed the character and appearance of the dwelling and surrounding area, and resulted in a cramped rear garden, that would fail to provide adequate amenity space for the size of property.

The Team Leader outlined key areas of the report:

- The application was to seek retention of the already constructed single story extension, which had been built against an existing 2 story extension. The 2-story extension had been granted permission in 2009.
- The addition of the single-story building had brought the overall footprint of the property a great deal closer to the existing outbuilding leaving a small garden space of 20 square metres and 2 metres in depth. Being a 4-bedroom property, the desired garden size would be 100 metres squares and 10 metres deep. Therefore, this was not an adequate amenity space.
- The applicant had advised that a resident suffered with health conditions that were assisted by the increase of vitamin D, which they gained from the glazed lantern in the single-story extension. Upon advising members of NHS advice, it was noted additional garden space would be of benefit to gain direct sunlight, with glazing actually absorbing the ultraviolet rays that would allow individuals to absorb vitamin D.

The Chair asked for clarification on what the outcome would be, if the Committee were minded to agree with the officer recommendation and refuse permission. The Head of Planning advised that the single-story extension would need to be demolished.

The Committee heard the views of a speaker in favour of the application and had their questions answered.

The Committee heard the views of the Ward Councillors for the Town Ward, Councillor Gurdip Ram Bungar and Councillor Jenny Wallace.

The Head of Planning provided Members with clarity, outlining that in 2019 the structure that was initially in place, where the extension now sat, had a corrugated roof which leaked so was removed and the single-story extension was built in its place sometime after. The extension was not considered to be lawful through the passage of time and therefore planning permission was needed. In regards to the health benefits of the lantern roof for vitamin D, the Head of Planning reiterated that when compared to the size of the extension, the lantern window only offered a relatively small area of light, with the UPV glazing absorbing the UV radiation.

The Committee heard the views of Councillor Rajinder Atwal who called in the application.

The Committee were invited to make further comment:

- Members queried if the extension was created in stages over time and whether this should have been picked up by planning enforcement at an earlier stage, to cause less disruption to the applicant. The Head of Planning pointed out that the Council did not have the responsibility to check all houses to ensure householders were following planning regulations, it was the responsibility of the homeowner. As soon as the Planning enforcement team were alerted to the issue, an investigation took place.
- Members considered the health needs of the occupants of the property and the benefit of the proposal to their health.

- Members acknowledged that if the application had been presented prior to the build, the Committee would take a different view, but were also sympathetic to the resident's health issues and reasons to want to keep the structure.
- Members queried if the specification of a 100 square metre garden for a 4-bedroom property was a national standard. The Team Leader explained that Garden size for a 4 bed was set by Gravesham residential layout guidelines which was an adopted document and a material planning consideration.

Following discussion, The Head of Planning informed the Committee of the enforcement process, if the Members were minded to agree with the officer recommendation of refusal. Highlighting that the applicant would have the right of appeal and the impact of the refusal would not be immediate.

The Chair reminded the Committee that there were rules that should be followed and that if the application had come before Members prior to it being built it was highly likely the application would not be permitted. Not enforcing the rules and approving the application could set a precedence moving forward. He added that the application should be looked at from a planning perspective rather than an emotional one, in order for the decision to be a lawful decision.

Following a vote, the meeting was adjourned for a short period in order to allow the Assistant Head of Legal Services time to refer to the Council's constitution.

With 2 Members voting in favour and 4 abstaining, the Assistant Head of Legal Services stated that in accordance with the planning protocol, the majority vote should be carried. As abstentions were not included in the vote, as a result the officer recommendation was approved

RESOLVED that the application to be REFUSED Planning Permission due to the grounds set out in the report.

Note: Madan Sidhu (Applicant) spoke in favour of the application.

14. 20240195 - 219 Wrotham Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7LL

The Committee considered application 20240195 - 219 Wrotham Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7LL. The application was for the change of use from a Class C3(A) dwellinghouse to a Class C2 Children's Residential Care Home for 3no. children.

The Career Grade Planner outlined key areas of the report:

- Members were given a run through of the layout of the property and outside space, no extension was proposed as part of the application.
- The proposed change of use provided acceptable living conditions for future occupiers in accordance with local and national layout guidelines.
- The proposed care home would accommodate 3 children and 2 carers at any one time, with the carers working shift patterns to provide 24-hour care.

- Subject to the resolution of Planning Committee, a planning condition was proposed for a written management scheme to ensure noise and anti-social behaviour are controlled and managed.
- The property benefitted from a dropped kerb and drive to accommodate 2 vehicles, which met the requirements of the proposed scheme.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions for clarification.

- Members queried whether the property had a rear access. The Career Grade Planner advised the property had a side access only.

The Committee heard the views of a speaker in favour of the application and had their questions answered.

- Members were curious how the care home planned to engage with the local residents. The speaker advised that the aim would be to run social activities involving neighbours, as was the case at a current care home they operated elsewhere.
- Members queried on where staff would be sleeping. The speaker confirmed that the staff members would have their permanent residence elsewhere and would not sleep at the property, the intention is to provide 24hour care to the children, with one day shift and one night shift, of two employees per shift.
- The Committee asked the speaker how she would respond to the objections received from local residents. The speaker advised that the children's home was monitored by Ofsted and had robust procedures in place to ensure children were suited to the environment of the property. This was not only in the interest of the local community, but also in the interests of the children themselves.
- Members asked for clarification on the organisation behind the care home and whether the need for a care home was a material planning consideration. The Head of Planning confirmed that the need, as with the need for any specific group was a material planning consideration, as any need would be for the local area. The Speaker confirmed the organisation managing the care home was called Elite Children's Care Group.

The Chair noted that no Ward Councillors were present to speak on behalf of the residents to present a broader picture of the application.

The Committee were invited to make further comment:

- Members noted on page 20 of the report the need to have CCTV installed and queried at what stage this would be implemented. The Career Grade Planner advised this was a request from Kent Police and would be attached to the permission as an informative.
- The Committee debated the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties and occupants and considered the needs of children needing care. It was noted that the whilst the proposal was for a C2 use, the impacts to the local area and neighbours would be similar to those of the existing C3 use, and that the property would provide a welcoming and secure family home and a good environment for the children.

RESOLVED that Planning PERMISSION is granted subject to conditions as set out within the report.

Note: Mrs Janine Stankiewicz (Applicant) spoke in favour of the application.

15. 20240019 - 11 - 13 Queen Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2EQ

The Committee considered application 20240019 - 11 - 13 Queen Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2EQ. The application was for a roof extension and rear infill extension to provide two new residential units within the town centre.

The Chair announced that Board Member Councillor Lyn Milner would be speaking only as Ward Councillor for the application. She would therefore forego her right to vote or comment as a Committee Member for this item. Councillor Milner moved from the Planning Committee Member table and sat with the other Non-Board Members.

The Career Grade Planner outlined key areas of the report:

- The property was located in the High Street and Queen Street conservation areas and was currently a mix of commercial use to the ground floor and residential on the ground and first floors.
- Planning conditions were recommended to improve the rear external space. A soft landscaping condition had been recommended for a rear garden area to increase biodiversity net gain.
- The proposed roof extension did not result in a significant increase in height with the building maintaining its low profile, highlighted as a key feature in the conservation area appraisal.
- Members attention was drawn to section 5.5 in the report which outlined the Conservation Officer's report. The Conservation Officer had raised not objections subject to conditions relating to material and joinery details.
- The development would provide 2 new dwellings with the commercial outlet retained to the ground floor.
- Members were shown a slide of the existing access alleyway which was 0.9 metres wide. Following concerns, conditions had been recommended for lighting and hard landscaping, which would be approved in writing by the local planning authority to improve the entrance way.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions for clarification:

- Clarification was sought regarding the plans relating to the roof layout, as the satellite view the roof appeared to be divided in to two sections. The Head of Planning confirmed that the entire pitched roof would be removed along with the brick wall between, leaving the new mansard roof.
- Members raised concern regarding the size of the entrance alley way. The Head of Planning confirmed that the minimum requirement for Building regulations was 0.9 metres, so the width would qualify as adequate.

The Committee heard the views of the Ward Councillors for Town Ward Councillor Jenny Wallace and Councillor Lyn Milner.

- It was felt that a site inspection should be conducted before the application was determined, due to width and condition of the alley. It was also noted that there was no obvious fire exit from the top down. The Head of Planning stated that the fire regulations would not be a matter for Planning but was part of Building Regulations.

The Chair agreed there would be a benefit for a site visit and the Committee were in agreement.

RESOLVED that the application be deferred for a site visit.

16. 20240149 - Lighthouse Vessel 21, St Andrews Quay, Royal Pier Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2BD

The Committee considered application 20240149 - Lighthouse Vessel 21, St Andrews Quay, Royal Pier Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2BD. The application was for (revised description set out in the presentation), the use of the foreshore of the River Thames for the permanent mooring of a vessel to provide facilities for learning and non-residential institutional uses.

The Senior Planner outlined key areas of the report:

- The Committee were informed that the application would provide a cultural hub, incorporating a heritage facility, art and performance space on an ad hoc basis.
- The proposed development would mean the continued use that had been operating at the site since 2017.
- The proposal incorporated the area of land which is wider than the LV21, which could facilitate the movement of the vessel further to the west or east if needed. Only one vessel would be permanently moored at the application site.
- The application was accompanied by a Planning Statement, a Heritage Statement and a Flood Risk Assessment. An ecological impact assessment of the proposal on priority habitat was awaited.
- The proposal would improve cultural and tourism facilities in the town centre by retaining the LV21 in its current location and would link with Gravesend's maritime heritage.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions for clarification:

- Members queried if the vessel had been moored on a temporary basis since 2017. The Head of Planning confirmed the vessel had been moored for a considerable length of time on a temporary basis and the application would regulate the LV21's position in the location.
- Members noted that some residents along the riverside felt that the lightship blocked the view of the river. The Head of Planning responded that due to the nature of a working river there would be boats along the riverside.

The Committee heard the views of 2 speakers in favour of the application and had their questions answered:

- Members queried what would be the likely outcome should the permission not be granted. The speaker advised that there could be a risk of the LV21 moving on to a permanent mooring elsewhere.
- Members asked for clarity regarding the number of visitors since 2017. The speaker did not have an exact figure of the numbers the boat attracted, however the LV21 had been part of the borough's Light Festival which had attracted over 31,000 visitors since it began, showing that the vessel is an important part of the cultural offering for Gravesham, bringing the riverside to the forefront.
- Members queried whether the permanent mooring could inflict damage to the flood defence wall. The Head of Planning informed the Committee that there were various agreements in place that the applicant/boat owner would have to enter into with the PLA to safeguard the location and moorings. This was not a matter for Planning Committee, as would be dealt with by external organisations and regimes.
- Members of the Committee noted that the LV21 was a great edition to the riverside, attracting visitors and enhancing the culture and heritage along the riverside at St Andrew's gardens.
- Members discussed the impact of the boat on the immediate area and local residents and considered the accessibility of the vessel to all users. It was noted that although not accessible for all users inside the ship, there were often activities held to allow a variety of users to take part in cultural and art events.

RESOLVED that the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair is given delegated authority to issue the planning PERMISSION subject to conditions and informatives and the resolution of outstanding matters as set out in within the recommendation of the supplementary report

Note: Hannah Young (Agent) and Mark Whitehouse (Gravesham Grapevine) spoke in favour of the application.

17. Planning applications determined under delegated powers by the Director (Environment)

A schedule showing applications determined by the Director (Environment) under delegated powers had been published on the Council's website.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9:38pm