

MINUTES of a MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL PLANNING AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 8th JANUARY 2024 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown (Chair), Bull, Cohen, Fox, French, Gray, Kimber, Lanxon, Pearce, Preece, Stephens, Styles and Thompson.

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk) and Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk).

Also in attendance: Councillor Julian Young.

Councillor Brown, Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular Councillors Gray, Kimber and Preece who had recently been elected to the Committee. He added that as it is now a large committee (14 out of 20 Councillors) Councillors should ensure that their comments are concise.

P/23/98) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Double and Hamilton.

Councillor Bull added that she might have to leave the meeting before 8pm.

P/23/99) Declarations of Interest

PA23/09281 – Land at Higher Trehiddle, Truro Road

Councillor Bull advised that she is a Trustee of the Arts Theatre a representative of which has been in discussions with the developer.

Councillor French advised that his wife is a Trustee of the Arts Theatre a representative of which has been in discussions with the developer.

The Clerk advised that Councillors Bull and French did not have a pecuniary interest and suggested that they could both speak at agenda item (v) but not take part in the discussion or voting on this item.

The Chair advised that in order to be helpful to the members of the public present, agenda item (v) would be brought forward to be considered first and then agenda item (vii) brought forward to be considered second.

The Chair advised that with regard to agenda item (v) he would ask the Town Clerk to introduce the item then ask Mr Marshall to speak and then allow the public to speak.

Councillor Lanxon arrived during the next item

P/23/100) Dispensations

None.

P/23/101) Minutes from the Meeting dated 4th December 2023

Councillor Thompson advised that at the last meeting he had asked why “Cornwall Council Highways Schemes” is not a standing agenda item and asked that this be recorded.

The Chair advised that he did not recall this comment and a proposal to add this to the minutes was lost 2 votes for, 3 votes against.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 4th December 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

P/23/102) Matters to note

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

Arising from a question, the Clerk confirmed that a response has been received from the Community Link Officer confirming that there was still provision for highways funding from the West Carclaze development, but the threshold for it to be released has not been reached and is not expected to be triggered for a number of years.

Mr Abe Simpson arrived to the meeting

P/23/103) Public participation

The Chair advised that the public would be permitted to speak in relation to each planning application as it is considered by the Committee.

P/23/104) Planning Applications

- v. **PA23/09281:** Land At Higher Trewhiddle Truro Road St Austell PL25 5FQ. Outline planning permission with all matters reserved for development of up to 150 residential dwellings and retail and community use.

The Chair welcomed Mr Marshall from Kinglsey Developments to the meeting.

The Clerk explained that an outline application seeking approval of the principle to provide up to 150 dwellings on the site previously earmarked for retail use had been received and that the planning officer, subject to satisfying himself that reasonable efforts to market the site for retail had been made, was likely to find the proposal acceptable infill development. He advised that Section 106 contributions for health, education, highways, affordable housing and open spaces would be negotiated by the officer if he is mindful to approve the application. He advised that recent correspondence with trustees of the Arts Centre had indicated that they did not want a vehicular or pedestrian link from the development site to their car park and that the Chamber of Commerce had submitted a strong objection to the application.

Mr Marshall thanked the Town Council for inviting him to the meeting and outlined the history of the site and the planning consent for a mixed use development ie

housing and retail food/non-food. Mr Marshall advised that Kingsley Developments fully understand the desire for retail on the site but that high level discussions with many potential retailers had resulted in no commitment due to a change in market forces and a shift to online shopping. Mr Marshall advised that the Planning Officer recognizes the commercial realities but has asked for more detail on their efforts to deliver retail on the site. He added that the pre-app advice supports the application. Mr Marshall advised that he would like to see links from the site to community facilities and schools and a retail/community use building at the entrance to the site.

Mr Marshall acknowledged concerns from the Arts Centre Trustees with regard to the creation of access between the Arts Centre and the site and that he would contact them in due course to agree an acceptable solution.

Mr Marshall concluded that although disappointed that they are unable to deliver retail, housing on the site is a logical extension to the urban fabric of St Austell.

The Chair thanked Mr Marshall for his presentation of the application.

During a brief discussion with Members, Mr Marshall advised that Pentewan Valley Parish Council has indicated a willingness to get involved with a community facility on the site and that he is confident of delivering 25% affordable housing. Arising from a question, Mr Simpson advised that no end user has been found yet for a shop on the site.

The Chair invited members of the public to speak. During a lengthy discussion, the following issues were raised by the public:

- Evidence that the market has been thoroughly explored for retail on the site;
- Strong disappointment that retail will not be on the site as many house purchases had been made on the back of this;
- The need for retail;
- Whether a transport assessment of the impact additional houses would have on the road infrastructure had been undertaken

Mr Abe Simpson advised that he will provide evidence to the planners with regard to their extensive search for retailers for the site but could not guarantee that this will be put into the public domain. Mr Simpson added that promises were never made that retail would be built.

Mr Simpson and Mr Marshall advised that the highways impact is generally less with a residential development than retail and although not available yet, they fully expect Cornwall Council's Highways Officers to confirm that the proposal is acceptable. Mr Marshall added that a highways contribution is likely to be requested.

A view was expressed by a member of the public that St Austell is a dormitory town and that history has shown that mixed use development proposals have often resulted in large scale housing developments.

Mr Simpson advised that St Austell is no different from other major towns in Cornwall and that shops are closing in the city of Truro due to online shopping. Mr Simpson stressed that they had tried extremely hard to obtain retail for the site but the market and economy had not made this possible.

Further issues were highlighted by the public as follows:

- The impact on local schools
- Lack of infrastructure to the western side of St Austell
- Difficulty for non car drivers to access shops from the site
- Whether retail for the site could be considered when more of the Wainhomes site is built

Mr Simpson stressed that the modelling and demand has been assessed and an extra 400 homes in and around the site is not expected to make any difference to retail organisations' appetite to open new stores.

The Chair thanked Mr Marshall and the public for their contributions

The Chair asked Councillors Bull and French to make their statements and then withdraw from the meeting.

Councillor Bull reiterated the Arts Centre's request not to have a pedestrian or vehicular access to the Arts Centre from the site at this time but that a future option to have access to the Arts Centre from the site is preserved by the access land remaining in the current ownership and not being built out. Councillor Bull welcomed the proposal for a shop on the site and highlighted the need to focus on the design in due course.

Councillor French advised that he was broadly in support of the application but expressed concern with regard to access between the site and the Arts Centre due to potential security implications.

Councillors Bull and French reiterated their interest and left the meeting

The Chair invited Councillors to share their views.

Councillor Kimber expressed concern with regard to the impact on schools, doctors and dentists and outlined some conversations he had had with local providers and residents. He expressed overall support for the proposal, particularly the 25% affordable housing and a small shop.

Councillor Fox expressed her objection to the proposal on the grounds of:

- Lack of infrastructure and the already over-stretched dentists, doctors, schools
- Impact on the Air Quality Management Area
- Lack of jobs created
- Land contamination
- Objection from the Environment Agency

Councillor Styles cited his objection and expressed a view that the land could stay as it is and not be built on until such time as market forces change and retail can be brought forward.

Councillors Lanxon, Preece and Gray expressed their objection and raised the following as issues:

- Lack of infrastructure including sewerage
- Who the affordable housing would be for
- Although the site is in Pentewan Valley, St Austell Parish would be servicing the residents
- Support for the Chamber of Commerce
- Who would own any shop or community centre.

In answer to a question, Mr Simpson advised that he envisaged a community centre on the site being managed by a local authority and a shop on the site being in private ownership.

Councillor Pearce expressed her support for the proposal and stressed that shopping habits had changed so much that retail on the site as originally proposed is no longer realistic.

Councillor Thompson reiterated other Councillor concerns with regard to the lack of infrastructure in either Pentewan Valley Parish or St Austell Parish to service the homes and the need for a link road through the site.

The Clerk advised that the Planning Officer is mindful to approve the application and that Pentewan Valley Parish Council, where the site is located, has no objection. He advised that in planning terms, the site is deemed to be infill and under planning policy, there are no strong reasons to object to the application.

It was **RESOLVED** to object to this application by 5 votes for, 2 votes against on the grounds of:

- Adverse impact on the infrastructure in the area, eg. doctors, dentists and schools;
- Cumulative adverse impact on the poor air quality in the area which is a designated Air Quality Management Area.

Councillors Bull and French returned to the meeting

- vii. **PA23/09674:** Western House, Eliot Gardens, St Austell, Cornwall.
Conversion of redundant plant room/store cupboard into studio apartment.

Mr Simon Jones, agent for the applicant, advised that the proposal is to formalise the conversion of a redundant plant room into a small studio apartment. He added that there is a young person living in the premises at the present time and that a noise nuisance complaint from the neighbour is being monitored by Cornwall Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to make no objection to this application subject to suitable sound proofing measures being put in place.

Councillor Young left the meeting

- i. **PA23/01370/PREAPP:** Former Carclaze Community Infant School Carclaze Road St Austell Cornwall PL25 3AG. Pre application advice to keep the remaining facade and create 8 open market residential flats. On the top playground it is intended to provide 4 further residential flats that we propose to be affordable. Each of the flats will have access to one allocated parking space per property and there will be additional visitors spaces also.

Ms Oxenham, a member of the public, expressed her disappointment with the proposal put forward and outlined her involvement with the site historically when she was a Councillor.

Members expressed their disappointment with regard to the proposals as previous discussions with Cornwall Council had indicated that development of the site would include 100% affordable housing and 3-4 parking spaces for the community/Carclaze Chapel on the top playground. Members also felt strongly that the Silvanus Trevail façade of the building should be retained.

The Town Council **RESOLVED** to remind Cornwall Council of its previous commitments and stress its strong opposition to the proposals on the grounds of:

- Lack of 100% affordable housing in the proposal
 - No provision for parking for the community/Carclaze Chapel
 - No commitment to retain the Silvanus Trevail facade of the building
- ii. **PA23/06966:** Land Adjacent To 50 Phernyssick Road St Austell Cornwall PL25 3TU. Proposed new dwelling and associated works.

Members recalled that they had recommended refusal of a previous planning application for this site and expressed the view that many of the reasons for objection remained valid for the current application.

It was **RESOLVED** to object to this application on the grounds of:

- Land contamination issues
 - Land drainage/sewerage issues
 - Overlooking/loss of privacy
 - Overbearing
 - Overdevelopment
- iii. **PA23/08004:** Air Quality Monitoring Station Highfield Avenue Open Space East Highfield Avenue St Austell. Installation of new air quality monitoring station.

It was **RESOLVED** to make no objection to this application.

Councillor French left the meeting

- iv. **PA23/09170:** Gwethnoc Parc 24 Truro Road St Austell Cornwall. Re-model and creation of new bedrooms.

It was **RESOLVED** to make no objection subject to suitable light and ventilation for the additional bedrooms in the basement.

- vi. **PA23/09590:** 2 Menear Road St Austell Cornwall PL25 3DE. Extension and alteration of existing dwelling and associated works.

It was **RESOLVED** to make no objection to this application.

Councillor Bull left the meeting

- viii. **PA23/09709:** 68 College Green St Austell Cornwall PL25 5EX. Application for tree works in a Conservation Area (CA): Coppice of an Ash tree and dismantle of 3 Ash trees.

It was **RESOLVED** to object to this application and support the Tree Officer's recommendations.

- ix. **PA23/09908:** 12 Gover Road St Austell Cornwall PL25 5ND. Works to Trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) - G1 Group of Ash trees - Repollard/pollard to 7m in height.

It was **RESOLVED** to object to this application and support the Tree Officer's recommendations.

- x. **PA23/10260:** 12 North Hill Park, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4BJ. Works to a tree in a Conservation Area for Red Beech (*Nothofagus fusca*) – fell. Tree has a reduced canopy and visible dieback in crown due to damage to exposed roots in garden. Replant with *Nothofagus fusca* sapling once works have been carried out.

It was **RESOLVED** to object to this application on the grounds of no justification for the works by way of a tree expert report.

At 8.10pm the Chair suggested that any urgent business in the remaining items should be considered at the Town Council meeting on Monday 29th January 2024. The Committee agreed with this suggestion.

P/23/105) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the dates of the next meetings of the Planning and Regeneration Committee are Monday 5th February 2024 and Monday 4th March 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.11pm.