

**Planning (Regulatory) Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21 July 2023  
at 11am in the Council Chamber, County Hall**

**Present:**

Cllr Brian Long (Chair)

Cllr Graham Carpenter (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Rob Colwell

Cllr Chris Dawson

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Cllr Paul Neale

Cllr William Richmond

Cllr Mike Sands

Cllr Martin Storey

Cllr Tony White

**Substitute Members Present:**

Cllr Robert Savage for Cllr Stephen Askew

**Also Present**

Hollie Adams

Eleanor Bannister

Chris Burgess

Ralph Cox

John Gough

Andrew Harriss

Isabel Horner

Nick Johnson

Kate Lawty

John Shaw

Committee Officer

Public Speaker

Subject Lead (Planning Team), nplaw

Principal Planner

Public Speaker

Planning Officer

Public Speaker

Head of Planning

Planning Officer

Developer Services Manager, Highways, Transport and Waste

**1 Apologies and Substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Stephen Askew (Cllr Robert Savage substituting), Cllr Matthew Reilly and Cllr Steve Riley

**2 Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes from the Planning (Regulatory) Committee meeting held on 30 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record with an amendment to note that Cllr Chris Dawson gave his apologies.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair noted that he was division Member for the application item 6 however this was not an interest requiring declaration.

#### **4 Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

#### **Applications referred to the Committee for determination.**

#### **5 FUL/2022/0055 - Land East of Plantation Road, Blofield**

- 5.1 The Committee received the report setting out a proposal for a new 420 place (2FE) Primary School with associated works including parking, hard play/hard standing and school playing field - Executive Director, Children's Services, Norfolk County Council.

The Planning Officer gave a presentation to the Committee:

- The location plan, site plan and a detailed site plan were shown. A shared access road would be provided to Plantation Road, permission for which was granted as part of the health centre planning approval.
- Land to the north of the site was outside of the village settlement limit.
- Planning history was set out in section 1 of the report
- Three trees on the site were protected by a tree protection order and would be retained.
- No footpath was proposed linking to Farman Way; a proposal for a footpath in this location was a subject of many objections to the application and had therefore been addressed in the report.
- The flat roof would allow for solar panels and associated equipment with a parapet wall to screen them from view
- Floor plans, elevation plans and site photos were shown
- Some trees would be removed to accommodate development; new trees would be planted in the northern and southwestern boundary and in the habitat areas on the site.
- Properties on Farman Way and Wyngates would be separated from the development by communal open space.

Committee members asked questions to the planning officer

- The Planning Officer confirmed that there would not be a bund along the border with the A47 as the A47 was in a dip, with tree planting, a footpath and hedges alongside the A47 providing a buffer.
- The Planning Officer confirmed that the school would be heated by solar panels and air source heat pumps. Other forms of heating were looked at and air source heat pump was the best option for the site. The Head of Planning clarified that the application complied with the relevant policies, and the method of heating was not a material matter for consideration.

- Traffic modelling for the entrance into the site was queried. The Developer Services Manager replied that a full assessment had been done of the entrance into the site. Mitigation measures were proposed such as junction improvements. For the level of use the facility was adequate and complied with the standards. Concerns were raised about the entry road being adequate for the number of users of the site however it was noted that it was a similar design to that used at other schools in the county.
- The Public Right of Way to the north of the site would not be affected by the development.
- It was confirmed that the land to the south of the site was due to be owned by the Parish Council and would not be sold to the school.
- The footpath to the east of the site was queried as an alternative access route to the school. The Planning Officer reported that this footpath was looked at as an alternative to upgrade however there were issues with getting permission for making upgrades. It would also not save time over walking through existing footpaths in the village.
- Access to the doctor's surgery would join from the shared access road to the school. A Committee member pointed out that on junctions, priority should be given to pedestrians rather than cars. The Developer Services Manager **agreed** to look at the priorities at this junction.

## 5.2 The committee heard from registered speakers.

### 5.3.1 Eleanor Bannister spoke as representative of Blofield Parish Council:

- Blofield Parish Council did not currently own the land south of the proposed new school.
- The Parish Council supported the need for a new school in Blofield to accommodate the increase in children coming to the village from housing proposed to be built in Blofield and the surrounding villages.
- As part of the land transfer to allow the school to be built, the Parish Council asked for Norfolk County Council Highways to ensure that the offsite highway improvements did not impinge on the plans of the Parish Council for the old school site. These included a new access from Plantation Road to the proposed community hub. The community hub would include play areas, outdoor gym equipment and a new carpark, potentially for use for school drop off and pick up and as overflow for the extended doctors surgery. These plans positively impacted residents of Blofield, addressed issues raised in the 2019 community consultation and reflected the Blofield Neighbourhood Plan
- The Parish Council asked that Children's Services start work on the playing field at the school site as early as possible in the build schedule so that it would be ready for use when the school opened, and help avoid delays to the works planned by the Parish Council in the creation of the new community play park
- at the Parish Council meeting of 22 May 2023, it was noted that the Parish Council had safety concerns in relation to a secondary pedestrian access to the school site: "as the intended landowner (of the remaining community space) Blofield Parish Council cannot give permission for a secondary path from Wyngates / Farman way, given it has serious safety concerns about the

\*These minutes were amended at the meeting of 29 September 2023. Please view the minutes of that meeting to see the amendment made.

surrounding roads which would lead to the path”. The safety concerns were noted in the Parish Council Meeting minutes of 5 April 2023.

5.3.2 Isabel Horner from Children’s Services spoke on behalf of the applicant:

- Children’s Services had worked with the community and stakeholders on the development, including the district and parish council and the doctor’s surgery, to consider how the new school could be developed in the context of the community.
- Highways works would be carried out offsite to address additional traffic. It was hoped that the parish council’s plans to re-use the old school site and carpark would help manage additional traffic and help parents park safely.
- The concerns raised by the Committee at the previous meeting about the use of flat roofs were raised. The school had been designed in accordance with best practice in school design and the Department for Education’s design specifications. The flat roof would allow for full use of the area for PV (photovoltaic) panels, whereas a pitched roof would only provide space for 50% of such provision. The flat roof would also allow for safe access to the roof to repair and replace the PV panels and support a critical mass cooling strategy to help cope with increasing temperatures in coming years.
- There was no evidence of insufficient nursery places in the area, so a nursery had not been included in the design however there was space on the site to provide one in future if needed.

5.3.3 Committee Members asked questions to the speakers

- A Committee Member asked if it would be possible to include basketball markings on the multi-use games area. Isabel Horner **agreed** to discuss with the school whether this would be useful for them.
- It was confirmed that the space for a possible nursery was for a 52-place nursery, which was the standard size.
- Some Committee Members raised their concerns about flat roofs stating they felt it did not fit in with the character of the area, may reduce effectiveness of the PV panels, be more difficult to repair and have a shorter lifespan. Isabel Horner replied that the PV were mounted on brackets at various angles to reflect the sun at various times of day. The building had a minimum life of 60 years, and the roof had a minimum life of 20 years. The supports under the roof would be made of concrete.
- A query was raised about the location of the fire assembly point, being in a location with no easy access to the site. The Planning Officer confirmed that it was in accordance with fire regulations.
- The Planning officer confirmed that there were some conditions that would need discharging but no pre-commencement conditions. Statutory consultees would be liaised with if they had raised concerns related to the conditions.

5.4 The Committee moved to debate

- *\*Some Committee Members raised their concerns about the appearance and aesthetics of the school not in not being in A-Committee Member felt that the design of the school was not in keeping of the area. The Chair agreed that it was possible to develop inspirational school building designs however this would be costly.*

- A Committee Member queried whether a condition could be placed on the application for an emergency gate to be installed on the south side of the site. The Planning Officer advised that this would be a matter for the applicant to change by an amended plan if it was deemed necessary; the Head of Planning pointed out that the fire service was consulted about the application and did not raise any concerns with fire safety in the application. He suggested that planning officers could write to the fire service and see if they wanted to make a return visit.
- A Committee member raised concerns over the right of way given to cars instead of pedestrians on the shared access road to the school. It was noted that this access road had been granted permission as part of the already granted doctor's surgery planning permission and the approved details were not part of this application. The Head of Planning added that highways had looked at this access road and confirmed it was safe, with full knowledge of the users of both sites.
- Cllr Paul Neale proposed to defer the application. With no seconder, this proposal was lost.

5.4.1 With 10 votes for and 1 against, the Committee **AGREED** that the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services be authorised to:

1. Grant planning permission subject to the conditions outlined in section 11;
2. Discharge conditions where those detailed above require the submission and implementation of a scheme, or further details, either before development commences, or within a specified date of planning permission being granted;
3. Delegate powers to officers to deal with any non-material amendments to the application that may be submitted.

**6. FUL/2021/0007: Land at Oak Field, Watlington Road, Nr Tottenhill Row, Nr Watlington, Kings Lynn, Norfolk: Extraction of sand, gravel and clay and subsequent importation of inert material to achieve a beneficial restoration of the site, together with operation of an inert waste recycling facility and continued use of the plant site; Construction of additional silt lagoon and subsequent removal of sand and gravel (part retrospective) amended description of proposal: Mick George Ltd**

6.1.1 The Committee received the report setting out a proposal for extraction of sand, gravel and clay and subsequent importation of inert material to achieve a beneficial restoration of the site, together with operation of an inert waste recycling facility and continued use of the plant site, construction of additional silt lagoon and subsequent removal of sand and gravel (part retrospective).

6.1.2 The Planning Officer gave a presentation to the Committee:

- The site plan, proposed working scheme, proposed restoration scheme and site photos were shown.
- Mature trees were on the site which would be protected and maintained through working and restoration. One oak tree on the eastern edge of phase 2 would be removed, which was deemed of poor quality.

- Power lines crossing the site may need relocating if operations nearby affected safe working clearances or stability of the structures.
- A two-metre-high screening bund was proposed along the eastern and southern boundaries of phase 5.
- The existing processing site would also host the waste recycling facility. The Environmental Agency and Environmental Health Officer had not raised concerns over noise from the site.
- Construction of the silt lagoon had started.
- The HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) management plan was proposed in line with the existing HGV management plan for the site, which requires, with exception of local deliveries and occasions when the junction of Watlington Road with the A10 is closed to traffic, for all HGVs arriving and departing the site to travel directly along Watlington Road to and from the A10.

#### 6.1.3 Committee Members asked questions to the Planning Officer:

- The application provides for commencement of mineral extraction from 7am daily, Mondays to Saturdays. The Planning Officer clarified that this was a common starting time for mineral workings; there would be a 2-metre high bund along the southern and eastern boundaries of phase 5 for acoustic screening and the Environmental Health Officer did not object on the grounds of noise.
- The Head of Planning confirmed that conditions on start times of work could be put on an application if they were reasonable, however, given the feedback from the Environmental Health Officer he believed that works beginning at 7am as planned was reasonable.
- A Committee Member queried if the quarry would impact on breeding programmes at Watatunga Wildlife Reserve. The Chair, who was local member in this area, had not received concerns about the quarry impacting on Watatunga Wildlife Reserve. The Planning Officer also noted that the quarry and Watatunga Wildlife Reserve were in the same land ownership, therefore the landowner was aware of the impact on the wildlife site.
- The Crusher would only be operated within the plant site.

#### 6.2 The Committee heard from registered speakers:

##### 6.2.1 John Gough from MG Planning spoke on behalf of the applicant:

- The application would allow for extraction of 750,000 tonnes of sand and gravel from the site, as identified in the emerging local plan.
- The application would allow for sequential importation of inert waste from a variety of sites allowing a beneficial end use of the site.
- Restoration would provide linked biodiversity habitats, and conservation headlands and grasslands would strengthen wildlife corridors on this site.
- The site was remote from residential dwellings and no local residents or statutory consultees had raised objections.
- Crushing activity had been raised as a concern by the parish council but this had been carried out on site prior to this application with no objections raised to date.

- The conditions on the application were right to ensure that the impact on local residents was mitigated and that areas of historical and environmental interest would be protected.
- The excavation process was quite quiet, involving one machine loading a dump truck. The mineral processing would be carried out further north.

6.3 The Committee moved to debate:

- It was confirmed that the working and restoration timescale was 11 years and reflective of the current working arrangements at the site.

6.4 The Committee **AGREED** that the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services be authorised to:

1. Grant planning permission subject to a legal agreement in respect of off-site groundwater monitoring and mitigation, and the conditions outlined in section 11;
2. Discharge conditions where those detailed above require the submission and implementation of a scheme, or further details, either before development commences, or within a specified date of planning permission being granted;
3. Delegate powers to officers to deal with any non-material amendments to the application that may be submitted.

The meeting ended at 12:27

**Chairman**



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