

**Planning (Regulatory) Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21 August  
at 11am on Microsoft Teams (virtual meeting)**

**Present:**

Cllr Colin Foulger (Chairman)  
Cllr Brian Long

Cllr Stephen Askew  
Cllr Roy Brame  
Cllr Mick Castle  
Cllr David Collis  
Cllr Danny Douglas

Cllr Brian Iles  
Cllr William Richmond  
Cllr Mike Sands  
Cllr Eric Seward  
Cllr Martin Storey

**Substitute Members attending**

Cllr Bev Spratt for Cllr Tony White

**Also in Attendance**

Hollie Adams  
Sandra Arrowsmith  
Richard Bearman  
Neil Campbell  
Jon Hanner

Cllr Brenda Jones  
Nick Johnson  
Angelina Lambert  
Clive Lewis MP  
Jane Linley

Daniel Osborne  
Roger Rivett  
Hugh Tempest-Radford  
Ingo Wagenknecht  
Keri Williams

Committee Officer, Norfolk County Council  
Registered speaker  
Registered speaker  
Principal Planner, Norfolk County Council  
Principal Engineer (Developer Services), Norfolk County Council  
Local Member for Lakenham  
Head of Planning, Norfolk County Council  
Principal Planner, Norfolk County Council  
Member of Parliament for Norwich South  
Team Lead (Planning & Environment), nplaw, Norfolk County Council  
Applicant's agent  
Registered speaker  
Registered speaker  
Registered speaker  
Registered speaker

**1. Apologies and Substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr White (Cllr Bev Spratt substituting)

**2. Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the Planning (Regulatory) Committee meeting held on 31 July 2020

were agreed as an accurate record

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 No declarations of interest were made.

### **4. Urgent Business**

- 4.1 There was no urgent business.

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

### **5. FUL/2019/0066 Norfolk County Council, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DH**

- 5.1 The Committee received the report seeking planning permission for Construction of a new car park to the perimeter of the Annex building of County Hall, upgrade including surface water drainage to the existing Annex car park and the installation of a single car park deck to the main County Hall car park.
- 5.2.1 Cllr Douglas wished to raise a motion to defer the item as he felt that not enough evidence had been received for the Committee to make a proper judgement on the application. He believed that the transport assessment and travel plan whether the development would be a sustainable development; he noted that the transport assessment and travel plan did not contain a correct or complete list of bus routes and felt it did not have adequate evidence within it to understand the impact of the development on sustainable transport in Norwich.
- 5.2.2 The Head of Planning confirmed that the application was validated in accordance with the local list, had been out for consultation and sent to all statutory consultees. The Head of Planning and the Team Lead (Planning & Environment), nplaw, advised that the Officer's presentation and comments from speakers should be heard and that motions by Members could be raised during debate.
- 5.3.1 The Committee heard a presentation from the Principal Planner; [see appendix A.](#)
- A formal holding direction had been received from the Secretary of State directing the Council not to grant planning permission without specific authorisation
  - The conditions requested from the historic environment team had been omitted from the report in error, but were now added
  - The raised parking deck was proposed to have a two-way access ramp
  - It was planned to remove a non-native laurel hedge at the annex car park and replace with acoustic fencing; the loss of the hedge would be mitigated with landscaping using native plant species elsewhere in the annex car park
  - Drainage improvements and resurfacing of the existing car park were included in the application; changes to drainage would prevent surface water entering the

aquifer, with water going to shallow soakaways instead

- Nightingale Cottages bordered the annex car park; it was proposed to remove the hedge at the border between these properties and the car park and install a 3m acoustic fence. Residents of these cottages had been consulted and not raised objections. The fence would maintain residents' privacy from the annex building
- The Environmental Health Officer had raised no concerns about the application

5.3.2 Members asked the Principal Planner questions about the presentation:

- The Principal Planner clarified that due to the thickness of the laurel hedge it was necessary to remove it in order to provide additional space for car parking at the Annex building; in mitigation, it was proposed that 365m<sup>2</sup> of native shrubbery would be planted elsewhere in the carpark
- Cllr Askew left the meeting at 11:31
- The Principal Planner confirmed there was existing disabled parking at the County Hall Annex at the closest point to the building; it was not proposed to provide additional disabled parking spaces

5.4.1 The Committee heard from registered speakers. Seven objectors, the agent of the applicant and the local Member had registered to speak:

5.4.2a Clive Lewis MP spoke in objection to the application:

- Mr Lewis MP noted objections to the application based on the ecological impact to the local environment. Post Covid-19, there were continuing changes to the way that County Hall staff worked. Many staff worked from home at the time of the meeting and it was not known how permanent these changes would be.
- Mr Lewis MP felt that making such a large spending commitment was premature in the circumstances and may be better spent elsewhere.
- Mr Lewis MP had concerns that the impact assessment on other areas of sustainable transport had not been provided and felt that this was needed to understand the impact of the application on other forms of transport. Norfolk County Council had given a commitment to decarbonise the environment in Norwich and Norfolk and he therefore felt that building a £2m carpark sent the wrong signal about decarbonisation and switching to sustainable transport.

5.4.2b Members asked the following questions of Clive Lewis MP

- A Member noted that space would be needed to park electric cars in the future; Mr Lewis MP clarified that the future of sustainable transport would not be like for like; the battery resources to achieve a like for like position of electric cars for petrol or diesel cars were not available on the planet. Therefore, electric cars would only be part of the solution, and a sustainable transport system would need to include sustainable and effective bus, cycling and walking infrastructure. He also noted that up to a third of particulate matter came from vehicle tyres rather than the fuel.

5.4.3 Ingo Wagenknecht spoke in objection to the application:

- Mr Wagenknecht was in objection to the decked car park but not the drainage improvements; he felt the development would increase pollution for County Hall

staff and in the nearby environment

- Mr Wagenknecht cited historic issues regarding traffic congestion and delay of buses when visitors of Norwich City Football Club home games used the County Hall car park
- Mr Wagenknecht noted that the take up of office car park spacing could not be quantified until the County Council considered whether staff would return to County Hall after January 2021; he suggested that postponing the application for a year would allow the Council to come to a more calculated decision on the need for additional parking
- Mr Wagenknecht cited national polls which indicated that 30-50% of surveyed office staff did not want to return to their office environment at that time. Some companies had decided that a near normal environment would not return for the foreseeable future, and he therefore felt that Norfolk County Council should provide proactive support for staff to work from home such as connectivity assistance and electronic equipment for staff.
- The need for car parking at football games was unknown at that time and Mr Wagenknecht noted that this was also likely to impact on parking at County Hall
- Mr Wagenknecht believed that Norfolk County Council could not promote car sharing at that time due to safety issues raised by the pandemic; he felt there was an opportunity to promote more healthy modes of transport which would lessen congestion, pollution and ill-health.

5.4.4a Richard Bearman spoke in objection to the application

- Mr Bearman felt the increase in car parking capacity would lead to more traffic in the vicinity, increased congestion at the Martineau Lane/Bracondale roundabout, a more dangerous environment for pedestrians and cyclists and reduced air quality. Mr Bearman said there was scientific evidence that air pollution worsened Covid-19 and therefore he believed that the development posed a public health risk to nearby residents who would experience increased air pollution
- Mr Bearman noted that the increased home working of staff may be permanent and therefore he felt the development was short sighted
- Mr Bearman did not object to plans to resurface the existing carpark and improve surface water drainage. He also felt that pedestrian and cycling access at Harriet Court should be improved.

5.4.4b A Member asked Mr Bearman about the impact of staff living in rural areas of Norfolk accessing County Hall; Mr Bearman felt that if more people living near to County Hall were encouraged to use buses, walk or cycle, then this would free up additional spaces for those travelling from further distances.

5.4.5 Sandra Arrowsmith spoke in objection to the application:

- Ms Arrowsmith spoke on behalf of the residents of Conesford Drive and Churston Close and the Environmental Group that represented this community; these properties bordered the County Hall site
- Ms Arrowsmith's comments were about the proposed car park deck. Norfolk County Council had received at least 14 objections about the proposal from neighbours living near to County Hall; residents were frustrated as they felt the

project had little benefit, would cost lots of money and would have a negative impact on the environment.

- Ms Arrowsmith explained that the houses in Conesford Drive were of architectural interest and significance to Norwich. Residents with gardens backing onto the main car park feared that they would have a sight line directly over the construction. They felt the structure would be hugely intrusive to their properties and that their concerns had been dismissed.
- The residents of Churston Close had requested, but not been shown, an artist's impression of the structure as seen from their perspective; residents believed this was an important consideration which had been overlooked.
- Residents welcomed the proposal to plant trees, however noted they would take years to mature, and as they would be deciduous, would only provide screening for half the year.
- Ms Arrowsmith expressed concern from residents about the need to dig up the edge of the car park to erect the fencing and the impact of this on the local area.

#### 5.4.6 Keri Williams spoke in objection to the application

- Mr Williams spoke on behalf of the Bracondale residents' association
- Mr Williams noted that, as the Strategic Transport Authority, Norfolk County Council had the responsibility to lead the way to low-carbon sustainable transport. He believed that the proposed development did not promote this and providing more car parking at County Hall was outdated, wasteful of resources and would generate more trips by car.
- Mr Williams noted that the Covid-19 crisis had shown that more staff could work effectively from home wholly or partly, and therefore felt this outweighed the effect of moving staff to County Hall from other offices, undermining justification for the development. He pointed out that many companies were re-assessing the need for having offices.
- Mr Williams felt that County Hall was ideally placed for staff to use buses, cycling or walking, and resources should be used to improve bus routes instead.

#### 5.4.7 Hugh Tempest-Radford spoke in objection to the application:

- Mr Tempest-Radford spoke on behalf of the Bracondale Residents' Association
- Mr Tempest-Radford explained that the County Hall site was part of a remaining 13 hectares of Humphry Repton's landscaped parkland and gardens commissioned in the nineteenth century by Philip Meadows Martineau. He believed that the recently constructed 226-space pay-on-foot car park on the south-eastern side of County Hall had damaged the historic parkland by encroaching on it and that permission had not been sought for this.
- Mr Tempest-Radford felt that the proposed construction of the decked car parking so close to residential properties was unnecessary and a waste of scarce tax payer resources
- Mr Tempest-Radford shared results from an informal survey carried out since June 2020 which showed that between 50 and 65 vehicles used the County Hall carpark daily, Monday to Friday. Norfolk County Council stated that 2800 staff worked at County Hall of whom one third, approximately 900, lived within 3 miles of County Hall. Mr Tempest-Radford suggested those living within 3 miles of County Hall should be encouraged to use public transport or cycle rather than

use cars. He also noted that due to working conditions changes caused by Covid-19, many of these staff were likely working from home.

- In response to a Freedom of Information Request, Norfolk County Council Information Compliance Team stated in March 2020: 'Staff working at County Hall are individually currently unable to park at County Hall two days per week and are encouraged to adopt Smarter Working Practices, such as remote working and to reduce travel by web conferencing.'

5.4.8a Mr Roger Rivett spoke in objection to the application

- Mr Rivett lived in Bracondale and felt the application should be delayed to allow the applicant to reconsider its position. He felt the Planning Committee had a conflict of interest in considering the application and that the application should be referred to the Secretary of State for adjudication. Mr Rivett felt that it was against the principles of Natural Justice and Good Governance for the Council to decide its own application in a 'hotly contested' matter
- Mr Rivett did not believe that the application had been in circulation long enough for proper consideration, discussion or appraisal, and that objections raised to the application should be properly debated before a decision was arrived at
- Mr Rivett did not agree that the experience of the West Norfolk Incinerator and loss of £30m was not relevant to this application but instead believed that this showed that the Planning Department and Council had overlooked the impact of this event; he felt that experience from the West Norfolk Incinerator was relevant to Good Governance of Norfolk County Council.
- Mr Rivett recognised the need for the Council to reduce its annual running costs and increase productivity and recognised the need to move to a low carbon economy; he felt that balancing these objectives needed independent assessment.
- Mr Rivett believed that approval of the application would lead to campaigns against the decision and urged the Committee to adjourn the decision.

5.4.8b In response to Mr Rivett's comments concerning the fact that County and District Councils decide their own applications the Team Lead (Planning & Environment), nplaw, clarified that this was the only available method permitted by the Town and Country Planning Act. The Council could not refer the application to the Secretary of State, however in this case, the Secretary of State had made a holding direction relating to the application meaning the Committee could not grant permission today. Planning permission could not be granted, should the Committee decide it was minded to grant permission, until the Secretary of state released the holding direction, or a call-in direction was made. If a call-in direction was made the decision whether to grant planning permission would be made by the Secretary of State.

5.4.9a Dan Osborne spoke on behalf of the applicant

- The car park in County Hall was under pressure from the number of staff and visitors using the site daily; at the time of reporting there were 1160 spaces for staff and visitors which was not sufficient
- The transport plan encouraged staff and visitors to walk, cycle or use the bus
- 309 staff and visitors were due to move to County Hall from Carrow House in 2021; these staff currently had 136 spaces allocated to them at Carrow House so

the development of 128 spaces would see a net reduction in carparking

- In 2020, Covid-19 had affected working practice. This had had a temporary and dramatic impact on parking at County Hall, but this would not be maintained in the medium term, as changes to working would be offset by increases in tenants using the site; the need for parking would always remain and therefore the proposal would provide the infrastructure to receive additional staff
- The decked structure was a last resort, other options had been considered but these would have taken up more space and would not have had a good ecological impact. Maximisation of space around the Annex building had a low ecological impact. No other space was available on site, so the additional carpark deck was proposed; it had been designed as far away from neighbouring properties' boundaries as possible. The steel frame would have wood cladding to integrate with the surroundings.
- Installing foundations of the structure would create the most noise but this construction would be limited to one week.

#### 5.4.9b Members asked questions of Mr Osborne

- A Member asked if surveys were carried out to identify if the existing car park could be reconfigured to provide additional parking; Mr Osborne confirmed that other areas within the car park were looked at but due to restrictions on space and by the Highways team (in relation to the need to avoid queuing onto the adjacent roundabout) it was not possible to reconfigure the car park to provide the spaces. Extending the pay and display car park was considered but this was not possible due to issues of access and extending onto undeveloped land. Cllr Sands requested information on the work carried out to review the space available in the car park.
- A Member noted that 185 cars had used the car park the previous week and asked how many staff would work out of County Hall moving forward; Mr Osborne confirmed that Covid-19 was affecting the users of County Hall but there was a target of 75% occupancy of County Hall; due to heating and other costs it was not viable for the building to be below this level of occupancy. If this was not achieved more tenants would be brought into the building.
- A Member asked if any electric car charging points were included as part of the application; Mr Osborne confirmed that there was a separate project looking at electric car charging points.

#### 5.4.10 Cllr Brenda Jones spoke as Local Member for Lakenham:

- Cllr Jones noted that since the Covid-19 pandemic the Council were evaluating working practices and the need for car parking spaces at County Hall. She believed that it would be one or two years before a normal position was returned to and therefore the application was based on an outdated assessment of need; only 7% of County Hall's total occupancy signed in in the previous week.
- The Council was committed to promoting sustainable transport and Cllr Jones believed that they should not commit £2m expenditure to a car park if the spaces were not needed moving forward, but should instead work with staff, local residents and Members to understand local transport needs
- Cllr Long noted from Cllr Jones's statement that the NCC Labour Group appeared to be opposed to the development and queried if the Labour Members

who were in attendance were pre-determined in relation to the planning application. Cllr Jones noted that Labour Members on the Committee recognised there was a difference between what was legal and right and would look at the facts when coming to a decision on the matter.

5.5 Members moved on to debate:

- Some Members were concerned that the application was premature when the impact of working practices on the need for carparking was unknown
- It was noted that a Government White Paper on Local Government reorganisation was expected in September 2020 and this could also have an impact on the need for office space at County Hall and therefore parking
- The opportunity to create a strong link between the Harford Park and Ride and County Hall was suggested, and it was noted that longer term changes in driving and working patterns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic may have an impact on the application
- The Vice Chair noted that the Committee were not present to scrutinise Council Policy but to perform a regulatory function. He noted that under normal circumstances, representatives from District Councils and Organisations from across the County were required to attend meetings at County Hall and on a number of occasions they had experienced difficulties in parking. He also noted that under normal operating conditions, some members of County Council staff were required to travel out across the County to meet with clients and return to County hall.
- Cllr Douglas noted that Members of the Committee should only give consideration to planning concerns; he noted paragraph 2.3 of the emerging Greater Norwich Plan, and that the travel assessment did not provide sufficient evidence to enable the Committee to decide whether there would be compliance with chapter 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was, he felt, a material consideration
- The Team Lead (Planning & Environment), nplaw, explained that due to the holding direction, planning permission could not be granted until the Secretary of state released the holding direction, or a call-in direction was made. If a call-in direction was made the decision would be taken by the Secretary of State whether or not to grant planning permission. Therefore, if Members were minded to approve the application, they would need to delegate authority to the Head of Planning to grant planning permission once the holding direction was released.

5.6

Cllr Danny Douglas, seconded by Cllr David Collis, proposed deferring the application. With 8 votes against and 4 votes for, the proposal to defer the application was **lost**.

5.7

Cllr Mick Castle, seconded by Cllr Brian Iles, proposed agreeing the Officer recommendations; with 8 votes for and 4 votes against, the proposal to agree the officer recommendations was **passed**.

5.8

The Committee **RESOLVED** to

- I. Grant planning permission in principle, subject to any call in by the Secretary of State.



- II. Subject to any call in by the Secretary of State, grant planning permission subject to the conditions outlined in section 11 and bullet point 2 of the Planning (regulatory) Committee Update report.
- III. Delegate powers to officers to 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.
- IV. Delegate powers to officers to deal with any non-material amendments to the application that may be submitted.

The meeting ended at 13.15

**Chairman**



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