

**Planning Regulatory Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Friday 25 April 2014
at 10am in the Edwards Room, County Hall**

Present:

Mr B Bremner, Chairman

Mr S Agnew
Mr A Dearnley
Mr N Dixon
Mr C Foulger
Mr A Grey
Mr A Gunson
Mr B Hannah

Mr B Iles
Ms A Kemp
Mr B Long
Mr W Richmond
Mrs M Somerville
Mr M Storey

1 Apologies and Substitution

Apologies for absence were received from Mr S Askew (Mr W Richmond substituted); Mrs J Brociek-Coulton and Mr J Joyce.

2 Minutes from the meeting held on 21 March 2014.

The minutes from the Planning (Regulatory) Committee meeting held on 21 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record by the Committee and signed by the Chairman, subject to the list of names included at paragraph 5.4 of the minutes being amended to read Mr N **Dixon**.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

Applications referred to the Committee for Determination

Reports by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development

5 North Norfolk: C/1/2013/1012: Holt Road, East Beckham, Sheringham, Norfolk. Excavation, processing, bagging and sale of sand and gravel: Gresham Gravel Ltd.

5.1 During the presentation of the report, the following points were noted:

- The Highways Authority had raised no objection to the application. The applicant had consulted the Highways Authority about developing a ghost island traffic management scheme to enable traffic turning right from King's Lynn into the site to move to the centre of the road, allowing other traffic using the A148 to flow freely.
- The Highways Authority had confirmed that the proposed traffic management arrangements which had been developed with the applicant were a satisfactory solution to traffic management issues.
- Objections to the application had been received from three Parish Councils, with a further three objections from neighbouring residents. Those objections had been made on the grounds of the harm that could be caused to their amenity from noise and dust as well as on ecological grounds.
- Following consultation with the Environmental Health Officer, North Norfolk District Council, it had been confirmed that there would be no material harm from noise or dust provided the relevant conditions and control arrangements were put in place.
- The landscape and visual impact had been considered acceptable in that no harm would be caused to Sheringham Park or other nearby areas of outstanding beauty.
- The application complied with the policies within the development framework and had been recommended for approval.

5.2 In response to questions by the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The Highways Engineer confirmed that the authority had fully considered the surrounding area and the proposed ghost island to provide a right turn into the site would allow the free flow of traffic along the A148, which was a corridor of movement and was deemed a satisfactory scheme from the highways point of view. It was estimated the ghost island right-turn lane scheme would indicatively cost in the region of £300k.
- Members expressed considerable concern about the obstruction caused by HGV vehicles waiting to turn right into the site and felt that these vehicles would obstruct the view of traffic turning from the Upper Sheringham road onto the A148. The Highway Engineer explained that the proposed access was in the optimum location between the two existing junctions to the east and west of the site. The Highway Engineer outlined that the proposed access and ghost island had been approved by Norfolk County Council Safety Audit Team.

- A request was made for a roundabout junction to be installed as part of the application process, and the Committee was advised by the Planning Services Manager that the Highways Authority had been consulted and advised that the proposal for including a right turn lane would be sufficient to resolve any highways issues arising from the proposal.
- Extraction works at the site would be carried out in a phased manner, with each phase being restored when the next phase commenced.
- The applicant had opted to restore the site to provide biodiversity gain by screening and covering the restored land with native woodland in keeping with the local environment. As the Norfolk County Council Core Strategy strongly encouraged conservation, it had welcomed the proposed restoration. Members were advised that the site was relatively small, and was not the highest grade agricultural land, although it was also noted that grade 3 or grade 4 agricultural land could be productive by planting appropriate crops and should not be discounted from consideration.
- The section of the A148 included within the application was subject to a 50mph speed limit and the ghost island proposal had been approved by the Highways Authority. The traffic island would require a marginal width increase to the road, with an extension to the ladder hatch. The possibility of vehicles using the hatched turning area to overtake other vehicles was discussed and it was noted that it would not be possible to prevent traffic manoeuvres of this nature.
- The Highway Engineer outlined that the proposed site entrance had been designed to ensure 215m visibility splays, from a 4.5m set back, could be achieved in line with design standards.
- There had been two recorded accidents on the A148 at its junction with the A1082 in the past five years, therefore the road was not considered to be a cluster accident site. It was reiterated that the application had been assessed by the Highways Authority safety audit team which had deemed the proposed ghost island scheme satisfactory.
- A specific lane to allow traffic turning left onto the highway from the site entrance to allow it to reach speed before joining the road was not considered necessary, as the 215m visibility stipulation was considered sufficient to allow these vehicles to safely join the highway.
- Once the site became operational, there would be approximately 40 two-way HGV vehicle movements per day. To put this into perspective, a traffic count had been conducted along that stretch of road which had ascertained that there were approximately 5100 vehicle movements daily, in each direction.
- As outlined in the report, it had not been proposed to provide renewable energy features as part of this development. Part of the site was being used as a solar farm

to offset carbon emissions.

- Consideration had been given to locating the entrance to the site in Gibbett Lane, although this had been deemed unacceptable as significant highway improvements would be required. The Highway Engineer confirmed this had been abandoned due to the existing orientation of the junction, insufficient space to provide a right turn lane on the A148, insufficient visibility from Gibbet Lane and insufficient width on Gibbet Lane.

5.3 The Chairman welcomed Mr Mark Thompson, Small Fish Design Consultants, who addressed the Committee on behalf of the applicant, during which the following points were noted:

- Officers were thanked for their help and guidance through the application process.
- The applicant, Gresham Gravels Ltd, was a local business employing local staff and supporting local businesses. The company was keen to commence work at the site to supply the local construction industry with flint and cobbles to be used in the North Norfolk area for building works, including housing.
- Significant efforts had been included within the application to mitigate any adverse impacts on the local residents.
- The vehicle access to the site from the A148 had been assessed by the Highways Authority and been deemed suitable. When the application was initially drafted, Gibbett Lane had been the preferred site access option, although it had been ruled out following discussions with the Highways Authority.
- The reservoir near the application site was owned by Anglian Water.
- Any water used at the site to wash and separate the gravel from the sand and silt, would be mains water which would be recycled.
- Mr R Batt, Gresham Gravel was a keen advocate of the environment and was very keen to restore the site in an environmentally friendly manner.

Mr Thompson said he was pleased that the application had been recommended for approval and indicated he would be happy to answer questions from the Committee, during which the following points were noted:

- Gibbett Plantation was owned by Mr Batt. It was reiterated that when the application was first considered Gibbett Lane had been the preferred option for siting the entrance. After discussions with the Highway Authority, Gibbett Lane had been deemed unacceptable due to visibility and width issues and the significant highway improvements which would be required to allow for the provision of a staggered junction.

The Chairman thanked Mr Thompson for attending.

5.4 Cllr Michael Baker, Member for Holt Division which included the parish of East Beckham, addressed the Committee as the Local Member, in objection to the application, during which the following points were noted:

- The ghost island scheme did not provide a safe access along that route and other access options should be considered which would be more appropriate.
- There had been many more than two accidents along that stretch of the A148 during the last five years.
- Extraction of gravel at the site was not an issue, but the transportation of the gravel onto the highway was a very large concern as the A148 was a very well used route when travelling from King's Lynn to Cromer.
- Due to this road being extremely busy, a roundabout option should not be ignored and suggestions that a roundabout would cost five times more than the proposed ghost island and staggered junction were incorrect.
- Visibility along that stretch of road was poor at present and adding HGV lorries to the traffic levels would impede the visibility of traffic turning onto the A148 from the Cromer direction. Officers were asked to reconsider the safety issues along that road in order to solve the safety problems raised and that placing the staggered junction at the proposed location was a serious accident waiting to happen.

The Chairman thanked Mr Baker for attending.

5.5 The Planning Services Manager reiterated that the application needed to be considered as it had been submitted and the issue to be addressed was whether the HGV traffic impacts arising from the development was acceptable or not. It was not appropriate to require the development to resolve wider highways issues along this route.

As part of the application process, the Highways Authority had been consulted and had asked for a right turn lane to be installed which would allow the significant volumes of traffic to move freely. The Planning Services Manager added that the Committee needed to consider this application alone and that the access had been deemed safe by safety specialists and that there were no adverse highways implications resulting from this application.

The Planning Services Manager added that it was the Committee's decision to ensure that the planning application was concordant with the development plan and if there were any other material considerations which would direct them to refuse the application. He added that Officers advice was in the report and that there were no material considerations to suggest the Committee should refuse the application. He also added

that the application had been through the extensive site allocations process.

The Planning Services Manager also reiterated that extensive discussions about the optimum access to the site had taken place, with the resultant Highways Engineers advice being that the application included the best solution available.

- 5.6 Members requested some information and training about the Highways Authority policy relating to highways issues within planning applications and how officers reached decisions relating to highways issues. The Planning Services Manager agreed to feed back the comments from the meeting and added that training was on the training programme for the future.
- 5.6 Mr Dixon proposed, seconded by Mr Long that the Committee **DEFER** a decision on this application to allow further discussions to take place to try to resolve the highways issues. With 12 votes for, 2 votes against and 0 abstentions the motion was **CARRIED**.

The meeting ended at 11.20am

CHAIRMAN



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