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MINUTES

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: **Monday, 11th November 2024**

Place: **Council Chamber, Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE**

Present: Councillors

P.	Barlow	(Chairman)
J.C.	Coleman	(Vice Chairman)
E.	Adelaja	
L.	Headley	
R.	Ramage	
G.	Kennedy	(Planning Officer)
S.	Puckey	
L.	Bamigbele	(PA to the Council)

Councillor Jack Robertson was also in attendance and one member of the public.

161. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Martin and Councillor J. M Coleman. Councillor Williams was absent.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

162. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning and Transport Committee held 29th October 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

163. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

164. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The member of the public mentioned an interest in Minutes 170, 171, 173 and 174. No other comment was made.

165. PLANNING OFFICER'S REPORT

Members were reminded that the application for the retail site opposite the Pottery Kiln, which would include McDonalds and Costa, would be considered by the District Council's Planning Committee on 12th November 2024. Councillors were further advised that they could listen to the meeting remotely.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

166. PART 1 APPLICATIONS

There were no Part 1 applications.

167. PART 2 APPLICATIONS

24/01976/FUL

Land at Bairds Maltings, Station Road, Witham

Installation of a Biomass Energy Centre with Fuel Store and Ancillary Equipment.

Members discussed the application at length, acknowledging that it was important to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages carefully.

Members agreed that they had no problem with the building infrastructure itself as it was in an industrial area and noted that the proximity to the A12 would mean that the town centre would not be impacted by any additional transport. However, concerns were raised about the true environmental impact and health implications for residents. This area of Witham, with the traffic bottleneck at the railway bridge, already has the worst air quality in the district and biomass boilers have the potential to increase the particulates in the air and degrade air quality further. There was also concern that the fuel itself would be harvested and imported from Canada on a container ship and transported by road, both of which undermine the claim of carbon neutrality. The products of combustion and disposal would add a further environmental impact. Members agreed that they would prefer it if a modern gas boiler were considered. Environmental concerns are becoming more important with regard to material considerations in the Local Plan Review and NPPF.

Safety concerns were also raised by Members, particularly given the proposed Energy Centre's proximity to housing, as there had been a serious fire at a biomass plant in Tilbury in 2012.

Councillors agreed that the maltings was an important employer in the town but noted the increase in jobs provided by the new Energy Centre would be negligible.

RECOMMEND REFUSAL on the grounds of the detrimental environmental and health implications for

residents and the environmental impact of the end-to-end transport chain.

24/02295/LBC

19 Home Bridge Court, Hatfield Road, Witham

Retention of a recently installed wood burner and flue.

Members were advised that while the dwelling was part of the grade II listed Bridge Hospital site, this residence was built in 1934 and that there were a number of vents already installed in roofs of different properties when the hospital was converted to residences.

Members noted the colour of the flue was black and therefore in keeping with the surroundings and that it was shielded from the road.

NO OBJECTION subject to the advice of the Listed Buildings Officer.

24/02316/TPOCON

31 Collingwood Road, Witham

Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area: 1 no. Common Hawthorn – Fell tree to ground level

Members were advised that the Tree Warden had made a site visit and confirmed that the tree was a poor specimen and would have no objection to the tree being felled.

NO OBJECTION subject to the advice of the District Council's Landscape Officer and an appropriate mature replacement tree being planted.

168. REVISED PLANS

There were no revised plans.

169. DECISIONS

The decisions on Planning Applications pertaining to Witham were received.

RESOLVED That the decisions be received and noted.

170. TACKLING SPEEDING WITHAM/20s PLENTY

Members had looked at the Essex County Council guidance for Vehicle Activated Signs and details of the different types of signs and how they were powered. Members were reminded that the proposed site was on Hatfield Road within 70 metres of the 30mph sign as per regulation. Members were further advised that it was unclear whether the sign would be able to be moved by the Operations Team on insurance grounds but that this was being investigated.

Members evaluated the merits of each sign and stated that they would prefer it to be movable if possible, potentially by a 3rd party contractor if the Operations Team were not insured to do so.

RESOLVED That further investigations are made with regards the cost and feasibility of installing a flashing 30 Slow Down sign on Hatfield Road.

171. PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE BUDGET 2025/2026

The proposed budget for the Planning and Transport Committee for 2025/2026 was received. It was noted that the Police had bought a Tru Cam so purchase by the Council was unnecessary. It was hoped that a Vehicle Activated Sign could be purchased this financial year.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget be received and approved.

172. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL – DESIGN CODE CONSULTATION

Members were informed that the Braintree District Council consultation on its Design Code for the new Local Plan would run for a six-week period from 4th November 2024 with a deadline of 16th December. Members were advised of the questions involved and Councillors agreed that they would each like to respond individually.

RESOLVED That the all Council Members be sent the link to allow them to respond individually

173. OWNERSHIP OF FOOTPATHS

Councillor Adelaja left the Chamber at 7.15pm

Members were informed of the problems on footpaths on the Maltings Lane estate, particularly the one running around the football pitch, which was badly over-grown. Members agreed that this was an ongoing issue and that ownership of the footpaths needed resolving.

RESOLVED That South Ward Members of Braintree District Councillors be asked to seek clarity as to ownership of footpaths on the Maltings Lane estate.

174. PROPOSED CHANGES TO PARKING IN NEWLAND STREET

A report was received regarding the proposed changes to the free one-hour parking bays in Newland Street by the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP). Members were advised that they only had 7 days to respond and it was also noted that Braintree District Council would be conducting a scrutiny review of NEPP in the near future.

Councillor Adelaja returned to the Chamber at 7.17 p.m.

Members discussed the proposed changes and noted that of NEPP's priority areas, the fourth was not to adversely affect trade ("improving access to services and the economic vitality and vibrancy of town centres and high streets.") and yet it appeared that NEPP had done no work to prove that the proposal would meet this key policy and therefore justify the change. On the contrary Members felt strongly that the proposal would be detrimental to local business at a time when the High Street was struggling and it would prevent many residents from making brief trips to the town which many businesses relied on. Members further considered that they were being forced into agreeing to the changes by the threat of withdrawing parking enforcement on Newland Street, which was the organisation's core responsibility. Concern was also raised about the elderly, an important customer base for the town, who do not have smart-phones and many that do, would struggle to understand the MiPermit app.

RESOLVED to strongly object to the proposed changes.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 7.21 p.m.

Councillor P. Barlow
Chairman
GK/SP/12.11.2024