

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SONNING PARISH COUNCIL  
PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 3 MARCH 2014 AT 7.00PM  
IN THE PAVILION, POUND LANE, SONNING.**

PRESENT: Pat Doyle (Chairman), Anthony Farnese, Sid Liddiard. In the absence of Mr Runnalls Mrs Pownall and Mr Fisher had agreed to take part in the meeting. Lesley Bates (Clerk).

Mr M Hart (S&SE Society). Rev. Jamie Taylor, Mr Mark Jordon, Mr Terry Hunt and Mr Perry Mills (all PCC re item f), 4 Visitors.

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received from Mr Runnalls who was abroad.

**AGENDA**

- a) Present.
- b) Apologies for Absence
- c) Declaration of Interest
- d) Minutes of 22 January 2014 to approve.
- e) Updates.
- f) St Andrews Church (F/2014/0049) Erection of new community building to provide meeting room Parish Office and Clergy Office with replacement garden equipment store. Demolition of existing equipment store adjoining Listed Churchyard wall. (No demolition of any Listed structure) To consider comments. (Deadline 15/03/14).
- g) Former Fire Station Pound Lane (NMT/2014/0175) Non-material amendment to planning consent F/2013/0149 to allow minor design alterations for both new dwellings and relocation of fire station siren pole to north of driveway.
- h) Elm Gables Parkway Drive (F/2014/0144). Erection of a two storey front first floor side and rear extension single storey rear extension and erection of a single storey front extension to form front porch. To consider comments. (Deadline 04/03/14)
- i) WBC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule Consultation (Deadline 14 March).
- j) Conservation Area Assessment
- k) Any matters considered urgent by the Chairman.
- l) Date of the Next Meeting.

1252. DECLARATION OF INTEREST/DISPENSATIONS.

Mr Farnese would have an interested in item (h) Elm Gables as the applicant was known to him, it was agreed that this was not a prejudicial interest. Mr Liddiard said that as the adjoining neighbour he would have an interest in item (g) Former Fire Station. The Chairman welcomed those present.

1253. MINUTES.

The Minutes, having been circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman.

1254. UPDATES.

The Chairman said that the Managing Development Delivery Supplementary Core Strategy had been adopted and would be the governing document until 2016. Major development sites south of the M4 would produce 13,000 dwellings. The Chairman had looked up the regulations for signs following the erection of hoarding with signs around the Fire Station site. The regulations allowed a maximum of 2.3 sq. metres (if 2 boards joined together to form a single board) for estate agents, surveyors etc. If the advertisement was for residential use or development then the board could not exceed 0.5 sq. metres or 0.6 sq. metres for 2 joined boards.

The Farmhouse application, under permitted development, had been comprehensively refused. A formal planning application was required. A similar development had been refused previously.

1255. ST. ANDREWS CHURCH (F/2014/0049).

The Chairman said that the consultation period had been extended to 15 March as WBC had not consulted all the neighbours.

Site. The Chairman said that the plot was adjacent to the burial ground, which had been an extension of the original in the 1940's and was outside the development area or settlement boundary. CP11 talked about development outside development limits and said that they would not normally be permitted. However CP11 (6) said except where '*Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the reuse/replacement of an existing building*'. The Wokingham Borough Design Guide, section 8 Rural and Settlement Edge also supported this.

Use. The applicants Design and Access Statement and the Statement by Rev. J Taylor outlined the reasons for the development, the proposed facilities were for the use of Church groups, the existing facilities were too small and a larger unit was required to allow the church community to thrive and meet its future needs. There was no vehicular access to the site and this reflected English Heritage view that it was '*important to keep the Churchyard tranquil*' although they had recognised that the development was '*quite large*'. Under 202, in the Design Statement, it was stated that the site was in the settlement but this was incorrect. The Access Statement mentioned that there was no intention to attract significant new visitors to the site and '*the additional space was for the use by the existing congregation, administrators and clergy*'. The applicants accepted that there was '*limited onsite parking*' and the existing 12 spaces in the Churchyard were '*for the use of disabled visitors during services*'. However the Chairman had measured the available space and it fell below the accepted standard required for 12 disabled spaces. There were four spaces available at the Vicarage and the remaining visitors parked in Sonning Lane and other areas in the village. The statement said that arrangements were in hand for overflow parking at the RBC School when required. 8.06 stated that on street parking was already tightly controlled but the Chairman did not agree with this statement. The Chairman said that it was the responsibility of developers to prove that there was sufficient on-site parking and that there would be no increased parking on the highway. The applicant had not provided a travel statement with the application and there was pressure on parking in Sonning. The Vicar said that the new facilities would allow the Church community to grow and flourish and a programme of outreach could be established. It would also provide space for additional children and youngsters.

Mr Farnese asked how many could be accommodated in the new building. The Vicar confirmed 100 standing, less when seated. Mr Farnese had concerns about additional traffic, the traffic congestion would not be eased with the introduction of the new building. Mr Farnese had some misgivings about the building being used by other groups during the week, there was no existing lighting in the area and Mr Farnese was worried about the effect the change of use would have on the graveyard, which should remain a private area. Rev. Taylor said that the building would be used mostly on a Sunday with parish and clergy offices.

Mr Liddiard said that a hedge would provide screening but he was concerned that the proposal could increase parking. Mr Liddiard was also concerned about the proposal being outside the settlement although he understood that the boundary had been moved to the Church wall eight years previously. Clearly no one had envisaged any development and he hoped that this development would not give comfort to other developers if it went ahead. He would probably object to the proposal if the applicant were anyone other than the Church but felt the Church was a special case. Mr Farnese said he could see the need for the building but was concerned that a future PCC might allow the building to be used for weddings and social functions. The Vicar said that clearly the building could not be used commercially, it would be located in the graveyard which was consecrated ground, it was also inconceivable that a Vicar would allow such use in the future. The village would object anyway and he would be prepared to accept a condition limiting the use. As a trustee he would not want to take business away from the Pearson Hall. Children of the current congregation were growing up and there was no separate meeting area for them. This was something the PCC wanted to provide. It would not be a Youth Club and would be for members of the congregation on Sundays only. Unfortunately Deidre Wells was in hospital but Rev Taylor understood that a Transport Plan would be lodged with WBC on 4 March. Mr Fisher said that his initial reaction was that the building was quite large, three times the size of the St. Sarik room. He asked which days, other than Sundays, would the building be used. Rev. Taylor said that Sunday's would be the primary use. There were also plans for a Lunch Club for OAP's, which would fill a gap that needed to be plugged. He was conscious of the parking issues and there would be some travel provision such as a mini-bus, which could park in the Vicarage. There would be a coffee morning on Wednesday's. Mr Fisher said that the Church was a special case but he was concerned that parking problems would increase. There were already problems when the Pearson Hall held an event and if one clashed with a Church event it could be problematic. Rev. Taylor said that he would be aware of Hall bookings and any clash but generally if the Church had a large event then the RBCS car park could be used. Mr Liddiard said that there was only one dissenting letter and that was about car parking not about the building. The Chairman said that the plans showed that the land allocated for the new building and garden was immediately adjacent to the existing line of graves limiting the available space. The facility would be lost to the community. Rev. Taylor said that the loss of three large trees during the winter storms had increased the size of the area and the PCC had not taken this into consideration as the plans had been prepared prior to this. Mr Farnese said that the lack of burial space was a national problem, would the new area donated by Mrs Cooksey be used for burials. The Chairman said that the new building would impact on travel and parking. PPG15 asked if a building were suitable for the proposed use and situation. The Chairman asked if there were any comments from those present but there were none. Mr Farnese felt a more modern design might have been more appropriate. Mrs Pownall felt the building would blend in and would be screened. Mr Liddiard was happy with the design and had been reassured having seen the view from the footpath and the comments from English Heritage. The Chairman said that there were two accesses neither of which was well lit. He was not sure if additional lighting in a tranquil area such as a churchyard was acceptable. Mr Mills said that it was likely that only one access would be used, there would be some low level of lighting but not in the burial ground. The Chairman said that everyone shared the concern about parking in an area already oversubscribed, this had to be balanced against the need. Mr Farnese asked if the parking concerns should be mentioned and the Chairman confirmed that they should and this was unanimously agreed. The Chairman then asked if anyone was against the proposal but there was none, it was agreed to say that there were no objections to the proposal but to express concerns about potential parking problems and the need for a travel plan. Mr Hart said that the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society had three concerns, the proposal was outside the settlement area, no traffic management plan and the loss of an amenity to the village. Rev. Taylor said that the building would be in an area currently used for compost, there was no need to be concerned

about taking space away from graves as there was a new area where the trees had come down, in addition there was the Cooksey area. It was true that most graveyards were full,

Sonning was blessed in still having some space. At any time the Church could decide to close the graveyard if it found the upkeep too onerous for instance. The Chairman said that SPC had to follow national guidelines. Mr Brooker said that he would be registering his objections mainly about the loss of amenity.

1256. FORMER FIRE STATION (NMT/2014/0175)

This application had already been approved. The Chairman said the biggest issue was the tower and Mr Liddiard said that it was a link to the site's historical past.

1257. ELM GABLES PARKWAY DRIVE (F/2014/0144).

Mr Farnese said that one neighbour had seen the plans and had no objections the other neighbour was unavailable. Although the proposal was almost a rebuild it tidied the building up and there was no overlooking. Following discussion it was agreed to say no comment.

1258. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL).

The Chairman said that this would run together with the S106 system. Under CIL it would be possible to calculate the increase in size when extensions were built and to apply a fee based on the increase. This did not apply under the S106 system. The Chairman said that SPC had written to WBC about the S106 contribution on the Fire Station being reduced to zero. WBC had replied that it was sensitive information and was not available under the FOI. Having looked through the file it was clear that the external assessor had based his conclusions on an incorrect valuation.

1259 CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

The Chairman said that this should be ready by the end of March.

1260 MATTERS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIRMAN.

There were no urgent matters.

1261 DATE OF THE OF THE NEXT MEETING. The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 19 March at 7.00pm.

Signed.....Dated.....