

Avebury Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Avebury Parish Council's Planning Committee held on 17 November 2018 at the Play Area, Avebury Trusloe SN8 1QZ.

Starting time: 10:00

Present: Councillors Mr Stephen Stacey (Chairman), Mrs Maggie Lewis (Vice-Chair), Mr Ben Butler, Mr Terence O'Connor, Mrs Lynzey Paradise and Mr Andrew Williamson.

In attendance: Miss Liz Moore (Parish Clerk).

1. **Questions from the public:** there were three members of the public present and questions were recorded during item 3. Local residents Mrs Michèle Lomas and Mr David Scattergood had emailed to say that they were unable to attend.
2. **Declarations of interest:** received from Mr Ben Butler during the meeting as a landowner and the son of Mr Robin Butler, the landowner neighbouring the site of the proposed development.
3. **To consider an application for full planning permission** for erection of dwelling house with garaging and access at **land at South Street, Avebury, SN8 1QZ Ref: 18/09889/FUL**. The Chairman explained that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the application in relation to the site itself. He would draft a comment and circulate it to the members for approval before submission to Wiltshire Council. He invited questions from members of the public and members of the Parish Council during the meeting as plans were considered and the site inspected. Discussion focused on the new building's position on the site, its height, the lack of safe access, insensitivity to the sense of enclosure in its immediate neighbourhood, and the proposal's failure to respond to identified local housing need. The following points emerged:
 - a. The proximity of the proposed building to the village's Play Area was a concern. The east elevation of the new building would be so close to the boundary of the village's Play Area as to require permission from the Parish Council for access to maintain that part of the building. Furthermore the Play Area's basketball hoop is on a post positioned very close to the boundary. There must be a risk that basketballs inadvertently ejected from the field of play will bounce on the wall of the proposed building or otherwise end up in the development site.
 - b. The north elevation of the proposed building is very close to South Street. This adversely affects the alignment of buildings on that side of the street. It also means that the proposed building is so close to September Cottage opposite as to raise concerns for the privacy of its residents.
 - c. The mass and bulk of the proposed building represents very full usage of the site and is also much greater than many other buildings in South Street. The block-like shape of the building is not in keeping with South Street's existing cottages immediately opposite, which are of linear construction, and thereby represents an overdevelopment of the site.

- d. The shallower gradient of the new building's roof, a consequence of its bulk, is more suburban than rural in character and is not in keeping with the roof pitch of other houses nearby.
- e. The height of the proposed building is said to be 8-8.5m and thus significantly greater than that of the neighbouring new building, which was limited to 7.6m (and, we were informed, is actually 7.15m). The proposed building is overbearing and out of scale in the street scene and, though the site is on a falling gradient, the slab height would need to be much lower. Elevation drawings or 3D models to show comparative heights would add detail to this point.
- f. The applicant's claim that the proposed building was merely infilling was difficult to understand given that, if built, the house would be the last in a line of dwellings with its neighbour to the east being the village's Play Area, which itself is bereft of buildings.
- g. The May 2000 report of an archaeological survey of the site and the immediately adjacent area indicated the presence of significant mediaeval remains to the north. Whilst the southern part (i.e. the site of the proposed building itself) was found to be less interesting to archaeologists, the whole area falls within the World Heritage Site and the North West Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and just outside the Avebury Conservation Area. This is a very sensitive area and a building of this size and type detracts from the quality of both the natural and the built environment.
- h. The assertion that the proposed building "will be one and a half storeys high to mimic the character of the street" and constructed in brick with timber windows under a slate roof (Fowler Planning Statement, para 6.4) is supported neither by the plans submitted nor evidence on the ground. In fact the design is of a two storey building with a substantial attic whilst two of the three buildings nearby are built of mixed media under roofs of thatch.
- i. Access to the proposed driveway at the narrowest point of South Street is dangerous and raises serious road safety concern.
- j. The driveway entrance as designed would pierce the existing sarsen stone wall and severely compromise its integrity. The applicant himself admits the wall "will need preserving" (para 2.2). The claim that "the preservation of the low sarsen stone retaining wall is an important feature" of the design (para 6.5) is contradicted by the plans submitted, which show that an extended part of the wall will be removed.
- k. Avebury's Parish Housing Needs Survey (March 2017) identified a need for two one-bedroom homes and two two-bedroom homes. It did not identify a need for a five-bedroom home. The planning statement wisely concedes that the proposal will not acquire positive weight for meeting local needs (para 4.4).

It was agreed that the Parish Council **object to the application** on the grounds that:

1. The mass and bulk is inconsistent with the character of the nearby built environment and represents a very significant overdevelopment of the site.
 2. The height of the roof is greater than the nearby houses, its ridge and the line of its eaves inappropriate for the location, and its pitch too shallow and, in a rural setting, suburban in character.
 3. The overbearing nature of the design compromises the privacy of neighbours.
 4. The proximity of the east wall to the Play Area is not acceptable.
 5. Creating a new access and a visible ramp by opening up of the sarsen stone wall at the narrowest point of the lane would result in the sense of enclosure being lost and create additional road safety dangers. It is also inconsistent with the applicant's expressed desire to preserve the wall (Fowler Planning Statement para 6.5).
 6. Avebury's Parish Housing Needs Survey (March 2017) identified a need for two one-bedroom homes and two two-bedroom homes. It did not identify a need for a five-bedroom home. The planning statement wisely concedes that the proposal will not acquire positive weight for meeting local needs (para 4.4).
4. **To answer questions and to receive and note any feedback and requests for changes to the budget:** (the budget and draft note on reserves had been previously circulated by email to members). It was noted that Mr Williamson had already asked for several changes to the document and as no other changes were requested the Chairman said he would update the document and email it to members for approval at the next meeting.

The Chairman expressed thanks to members of the public and his colleagues for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 11:44