

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Thame Town Council held on 18 December 2018 at 6.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin, D Bretherton, N Champken-Woods, P Cowell, M Deacock, N Dixon, M Dyer, L Emery (Deputy Mayor), H Fickling, C Jones, A Midwinter (Town Mayor), M Stiles and T Wyse.

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk

G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

- A** The Town Mayor called for a minute's silence in memory of David Youens who passed away on 30 November 2018. David served as a Town Councillor for many years and was Town Mayor in 1982 and 1983.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Butler (Personal), Dodds (SODC) and Lambert (Personal).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllr Dixon declared an interest in item 4 as she was employed by Chinnor Rugby Football Club who had close connections with Rectory Homes. Cllr Dixon did not take part in the discussion or vote on this item.

3 Public Participation and Public Questions

Sara Livadeas spoke in favour of planning applications P18/S3596/FUL & P18/S3597/LB as an adviser to the applicant. Sara has 25 years of experience working in social care. As Deputy Director for Adult Social Care with Oxfordshire County Council she worked with District Councils and her team commissioned over 500 units of extra care housing.

Housing for older people with facilities and care available on site is known as Extra Care Housing (ECH), housing with care, assisted living and close care. This type of housing is recognised as a preventive service that allows people to live in their own home. Research shows that 12% of people in Oxfordshire who are over 65 years old live alone in four bedroom houses, higher than the 7% average in England.

Living in ECH provides the opportunity to make friends, take part in activities and clubs and is shown to improve health and wellbeing. People tend to visit their GP less, have fewer falls and shorter hospital stays. Downsizing to housing with care enables older people to use the equity built up in their home to fund support needed later in life.

There is a shortage of good care homes and if you move in not only do you need to sell your house to pay for it you also lose significant rights. ECH provides a good alternative, retaining ownership with no worries about maintenance and access to care when needed. This is why this scheme will benefit the people of Thame.

Simon Vickers, Chairman and owner of Rectory Homes spoke for planning applications P18/S3596/FUL and P18/S3597/LB. Simon began by providing a brief history of how we got to this point. After this site was allocated in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan, Rectory Homes spent many months talking to the Town Council to get a scheme everyone was happy with. However,

when the scheme was taken to the District Council they were not happy with it and wanted a more contemporary design.

Once the planning application had been submitted Rectory Homes were faced with a vitriolic campaign the like of which I have never encountered in 35 years as a principle house builder. Rectory Homes are a 'for profit' company but have ploughed money back into the local community for many years. The application had to meet the arbitrary number of houses for the site which meant some of the houses were bigger than those built around the edge of Thame and would sell for in excess of £1.5m.

Rectory Homes have thought long and hard about what best could go on this site and have established that extra care provision is the most needed. Rectory Homes have an approved scheme for the site which will last in perpetuity. If the current application is turned down Rectory Homes will continue to modify it until it gains approval or the markets change. I would ask the Town Council to consider everything put forward and ask what harm would be caused by granting this application consent.

After answering a number of questions from Councillors Sara Livadeas and Simon Vickers returned to the Public Gallery.

4 P18/S3596/FUL & P18/S3597/LB – The Elms, Upper High Street

The erection of a 'Housing with Care' development (use Class C2) and a communal residents centre; the creation of new public open space; the provision of new pedestrian / cycle links from Upper High Street to Elms Road and Elms Park; repairs and alterations to the boundary walls and entrance of Elms House; and associated infrastructure works and landscaping.

The Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer (NPCO) presented his report. The NPCO said there were many benefits to the proposed scheme and agreed the sales price of the units was not a planning matter. However, strategic housing is a concern. A clear requirement for this type of housing would need to be established through evidence gathering to inform a revised Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

Members agreed there was a clear need for a Housing Needs Analysis to be undertaken to identify the requirements for all types of housing in the Town and this application should not be considered in isolation.

The Town Council could not agree to a scheme that was not in conformity with the Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Thame Town Council Objects to the application as it is not in conformance with Thame Neighbourhood Plan Policies as set out in the Officer's report.***

The meeting concluded at 7.06pm

Signed
Chairman, 22 January 2019