

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Strategic Planning Board**
held on Wednesday, 20th December, 2023 in the The Capesthorpe Room -
Town Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor B Puddicombe (Chair)
Councillor S Gardiner (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Brooks, S Edgar, K Edwards, T Jackson, G Marshall, H Moss,
H Seddon, C Browne and L Smetham

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

David Malcolm, Head of Planning
Adrian Crowther, Senior Planner
Nick Hulland, Principal Planning Officer
Paul Griffiths, Major Projects Officer
James Thomas, Senior Planning and Highways Lawyer
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer
Sam Jones, Democratic Services Officer

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Edwardes.
Councillor Craig Browne attended as substitute.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PRE DETERMINATION

In the interest of openness the following declarations were made:

Councillor Gardiner read out the following statement in relation to 21/3100M:

"It has been suggest that my position on this Board has been fettered by my previous actions as a member of this Council, as a member of Knutsford Town Council and through associations relating to my previous appointment.

I was a Member of Knutsford Town Council (and then Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee) which KTC recommended to Cheshire East that in the event that additional sites were required to meet the Local Plan's assessed needs, then this site should be allocated in the Cheshire East Local Plan. This situation came about when the Local Plan Inspector instructed Cheshire East to identify further sites in the north of the Borough (including Knutsford) to bring the total number of homes for Knutsford nearer to 1000 than the 600 proposed.

This was one of several sites on the outskirts of the Town which was under consideration. However, the Local Plan Inspector independently agreed this was the site which should be allocated.

I was a member of Cheshire East Council at the time the Local Plan was put forward for adoption and voted for its adoption. However, the Local Plan was adopted several years ago and the site's allocation within the Local Plan is now a matter of fact and a material consideration which I am required to consider when determining whether this application should be refused or allowed. As such I consider that my previous comments and voting record no more fetters my position today than any other member of this Board.

Additionally, I was previously in the employ of Emery Planning, the agents for the application and I work directly with Mr Coxon at that time. I ceased working for Emery Planning in 2010 and although my paths continue to cross with Mr Coxon and other former colleagues, these meetings are increasingly rare these days and I don't recall seeing Mr Coxon for at least 4 years. I have not engaged with Mr Coxon or any of his colleagues I may have bumped into in the meantime regarding this application.

The last occasion I recall seeing Mr Coxon was when I attended a pre-submission briefing session about this site hosted by officers of Knutsford Town Council and attended by the Town Clerk, Mr Coxon, and most members of the Town Council in post at that time.

It is part of the planning process of major applications for applicants to hold formal briefings with Town and Parish Councils in advance of formally submitting their application. At that meeting I did make several observations about concerns I had with the draft proposal.

Furthermore I am known to Mrs Jamison as a resident of Knutsford, as a spokesperson for KROW, a regular attendee at Town Council meetings and a lead-member of one of the working groups collecting data, informing debate and drafting policies for the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan, as previously mentioned I was the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee which oversaw the procedures associated with the Neighbourhood Plan, so had regular interaction with Mrs Jamison at that time. Timetabling issues aside, since its submission I have not discussed the application under consideration with Mrs Jamison.

I am known to Mr Finnan as a resident of Knutsford, we attend the same church and his wife, and I sing in the Church's choir together. Although I first met with Mr Finnan (and his wife) several years ago when this site was under consideration as part of the Local Plan process and I have subsequently met with him to walk the site, and I am thankful for him sharing his knowledge of the site's flora and fauna. Since the submission of this application, I have persisting told Mr Finnan that I cannot discuss this case with him, albeit he has regularly asked me when the application might come before the Board.

Yes, this site and I have history, but I have come here today with an open mind about this application, I can genuinely say that despite normally coming to the Board with some inclination as to how I might end up voting, with this application I genuinely have no idea. I do not believe that I am fettered in any way.”

Councillor Moss declared that, in relation to application 21/3100M, she was handed a paper of a note from Public Speaker Councillor Coan on her way in to the meeting, but handed it back without reading it.

Councillor Gardiner declared that, in relation to application 21/3100M, he has been an acquaintance of public speakers Councillor Coan, Councillor James McCulloch, Quentin Abel and Jeff Gazzard.

Councillor Browne declared that, in relation to application 21/3100M, he had been a Trustee of the Charity “Welcome” between 2013-2017, which was mentioned in the report, but has had no links to charity since 2019 and no discussion with its officers regarding this application.

Councillor Smetham declared that, in relation to application 21/3100M, she was an acquaintance of public speakers Councillor Coan and Quentin Abel, and was a member of the National Trust and Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

Councillor Brooks declared that, in relation to application 21/3100M, she was an acquaintance of public speaker Jeff Gazzard, although hadn’t spoken for 20+ years, and was a member of the National Trust.

Councillor Puddicombe declared that, in relation to application 21/3100M, he was a member of the National Trust.

It was declared that all Cheshire East Councillors elected in 2019 had previously received a copy of public speaker Quentin Abel’s book.

Councillor Gardiner read out the following statement in relation to application 22/3283M:

“I am known to the site’s landowner (who I note is not the applicant) through Tatton Estates being a major land owner in and around Knutsford, a company which regularly submits applications to this Council. I am also known to him in my capacity as a member and current chair of Knutsford Conservative Association.

Tatton Estates is the landlord of Association’s office, albeit all transactions are through the owner’s agent. Additionally, people associated with Tatton Estates regularly attend social events which I may be attending. However, I have not discussed this application with anyone from Tatton Estates.”

Councillor Moss declared that, in relation to application 22/3283M, she has a professional association with the Tatton Estates Association, but has not discussed this application with employees.

Councillor Browne declared that, in relation to application 22/3283M, he was known to the land owner who had previously invited Councillor Browne to attend a lunch in his capacity as Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council which he attended and met with a number of senior politicians, but did not discuss this application.

Councillor Edgar declared that, in relation to application 22/3283M, he was known to the land owner, but the application had not been discussed.

27 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

28 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The public speaker procedure was noted.

In advance of the meeting the Chair had agreed the Local Community Groups would be allowed a period of up to 3 minutes each speaking time.

29 21/3100M - REPORT - LAND EAST OF, LONGRIDGE, KNUTSFORD: OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION WITH SOME MATTERS RESERVED - RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 225 DWELLINGS AND A BUILDING FOR CLASS F2 USE (WITH ACCESS CONSIDERED).

Consideration was given to the above planning application.

The following attended the meeting and spoke in relation to the application:

Peter Coan (Ward Councillor Councillor), Councillor James McCulloch (Knutsford Town Council), Debbie Jamison (Community Group "KROW"), John Finnan (Community Group "Save Longridge Greenbelt"), Jonathan Smith, Quentin Abel, Jeff Gazzard (objectors), and John Coxon (applicant).

RESOLVED:

That the application be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt as a result of the impact of the access

arrangements upon its openness, also resulting in encroachment. The development would also result in additional harm with regards to ecology, particularly as a result of the impact upon the Longridge Local Wildlife Site as well as resulting in a loss of Protected Open Space. It is not deemed that Very Special Circumstances clearly outweigh the identified harm. The application is subsequently deemed contrary to policies PG3 (Green Belt), SE3 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and LPS38 (Land South of Longridge, Knutsford) of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, policies ENV2 (Ecological Implementation) and REC1 (Open Space Protection) of the Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document, policies E3 (Habitat Protection and Biodiversity) and E4 (Local Green Space) of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The proposed development would fail to deliver an effective integrated scheme due to the lack of visual and physical connections and accessibility with the existing development on Longridge. The development is subsequently deemed contrary to policies SD2 (Sustainable Development Principles) and SE1 (Design) of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, policy GEN1 (Design principles) of the Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document, policy D1 (The Knutsford Design Guide) of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan, the Cheshire East Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document and the National Planning Policy Framework.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

Councillor Marshall left the meeting before consideration of the following item and did not return.

- 30 **22/3283M - REPORT - COSTAIN COMPOUND LAND SOUTH OF, LYMM ROAD, LITTLE BOLLINGTON: VARIATION OF CONDITIONS 1 & 2 ON APPROVAL 20/4682M FOR VARIATION OF CONDITIONS 1 & 2 ON APPROVAL 18/3219M FOR PROPOSED CONTINUED USE OF CONSTRUCTION COMPOUND INCLUDING ASSOCIATED ACCESS, CAR PARKING, CONSTRUCTION VEHICLE STORAGE, PORTACABINS AND OTHER ASSOCIATED WORKS.**

Consideration was given to the above planning application.

The following attended the meeting and spoke in relation to the application:

Jonathan Burns (applicant)

RESOLVED:

That the application be **REFUSED** for the reasons set out in the officer's report:

1. The proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt which by definition would be harmful. The very special circumstances put forward are not considered to outweigh this harm. In addition, there is considered to be landscape harm with no proposals to mitigate this. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to para's 147-150 of the NPPF, Policies PG3 Green Belt & SE 4 The Landscape of the LPS, and Policy ENV 5 Landscaping of the SADPD.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

The meeting commenced at 10.01 am and concluded at 1.58 pm

Councillor B Puddicombe (Chair)