

draft minutes

Planning Committee

20th March 2014

Present:

Members (15)

Councillors Coleman Chair (CC); Hall, Vice-Chair (PH); Barnes (GB); Driver (BD); Fisher (BF); Fletcher (JF); Garnham (RG); Godwin (LG); Jeffries (PJ); McKinlay (AM); Stennett (MS); Sudbury (KS); Thornton (PT); Wheeler (SW).

Substitutes: Councillor Roger Whyborn (RW)

Officers

Martin Chandler, Team Leader (Development Management) (MC)

Craig Hemphill, Principal Planning Officer (CH)

Emma Pickernell, Senior Planning Officer (EP)

Karen Radford, Heritage and Conservation Manager (KR)

Cheryl Lester, Legal Officer (CL)

1. Apologies

Councillor McCloskey

2. Declarations of interest

13/01683/REM GCHQ Oakley

Councillor Garnham – personal but not prejudicial – owns a flat in Phase 2 of the development.

Councillor Fletcher – was not at February committee when this application was discussed at length, and will therefore not take part in the tonight's debate and will abstain from the vote.

3. Public Questions

There were none.

4. Minutes of last meeting

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record *without* corrections

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5. Planning applications

Application Number:	13/01683/REM
Location:	GCHQ Oakley, Priors Road, Cheltenham
Proposal:	Approval of reserved matters pursuant to Outline Planning permission ref: CB11954/43 and ref:01/00637/CONDIT for the erection of 311 dwellings and associated roads, footways, parking, landscaping, drainage and public open space.
View:	Yes
Officer Recommendation:	Permit
Committee Decision:	Permit
Letters of Rep:	19
Update Report:	Officer comments; additional comments from the applicant following deferment in March

CH introduced the application, which is back at Committee this month, following last month's deferment pending further information and clarity. The reasons for deferment are set out in the minutes of the previous meeting – concerns about surface water, flood risk, highways issues, Cotswold Conservation Board response, protected species, the safety of the balancing pond, the windows condition and bin storage. This month's papers provide the response from the applicant and an update on conditions, including deletion of Condition 5 regarding timber windows and a new condition requiring a construction method statement to be submitted. To remind members, outline permission was granted in 1998, including S106 agreements, followed by an application in 2001 to extend the permission by 15 years to 2016. A lot of consideration was given to the retention of GCHQ in the town, as it is a major employer, and Phase 1 and 2 have been built, with Phase 3 coming forward within the timescale, in keeping with the conditions and S106. Officer recommendation is to grant permission, subject to conditions.

Public Speaking:

Ms Susann Ropella, local resident, in objection

Does not oppose the development in principal and recognises the need for housing and for the site to be developed, but does not consider plans for Phase 3 to address important issues which will reduce the quality of life and cause health and safety risks for the residents of all three phases of the development.

Firstly, traffic issues: the layout of Phases 1 and 2 has narrow roads, on-street parking, tight and blind corners, and playgrounds next to main roads. The roads cannot cope with existing traffic and are incapable of coping with additional traffic from Phase 3 and Sainsbury's petrol station. Traffic access to Phase 3 will be via Phases 1 and 2, via the quickest and easiest route – Clearwell Gardens and Brockweir Road – creating an extra burden on residents on that side of the development. There is already speeding and reckless driving on the development, and traffic calming measures are needed. The single entrance to the estate at Redmarley Road causes significant traffic hazards: on-road parking effectively makes it a single file road; no parking zones; collisions and near collisions are frequent; Sainsbury's lorries cannot get through and cause congestion by backing out; dangerous petrol tankers will have to deliver via Sainsbury's car park. More worrying and a major concern is inaccessibility for emergency services – a resident paramedic says that ambulances have been delayed due the traffic; Phase 3 will make this bad situation worse and put people's lives at risk.

Regarding flood risk, not enough detail has been provided regarding drainage, and there is also too little detail on mitigation of the impact of construction traffic – a concern to existing residents due to the narrow roads and possible damage to property, vehicles and the unadopted roads.

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In conclusion, the 15-year outline permission was granted for too long in view of significant developments during that time, the plan as it stands will cause severe traffic issues as well as health and safety risks, and reduce the quality of life for residents and wider community.

Mr Darren Beer, Persimmon Homes, in support

The developers have taken seriously the comments made at the last planning committee. Drainage was a key concern, and the detailed design for the entire scheme has been sent to the Environment Agency, which has reaffirmed its support, offering no objection, with surface water flow reduced by at least 20% and up to 50% across the entire site. Calculations have been based on a 1 in 100 year storm event plus 30%, with a balancing pond and below-ground culverts to protect the site. Emergency access is subject to planning permission, and has always been part of the lay-out of the site. Regarding ecology, a report has been done, and many of the mature trees are to be retained. There are no significant ecological issues to consider and no bats on site at present. The balancing pond slopes are no greater than 1:3, the maximum depth is 600mm, and a 1.3m toddler-proof fence has been introduced. For refuse and recycling, the requisite amount of storage is provided, and lockable storage units are provided for the apartments, allowing free passage to refuse vehicles throughout the site at all times. A construction method statement will be provided as required by a condition attached to the planning permission. Roads in Phases 1 and 2 are out of the control of Persimmon Homes, but good progress is being made with GCC towards their adoption. The density of the development has been reduced, to 20dph adjacent to the AONB and 40dph further into the site, giving an average of 30dph. This is a high-quality development, subject to extensive pre-application discussion, and the developer takes great pride in returning this brownfield site to use, and adopting a variety of methods to enhance the area.

Member debate:

MS: is not sure that all the questions asked at the last meeting have been fully answered. The developer has stated what a good quality scheme it is, which it may be, but the previous concerns are still there and local residents are not happy about the narrow roads in and out of the site or the way the development has been laid out. What actions will Gloucestershire Highways and Taylor Wimpey take to improve traffic flow, especially during the construction phase? What will be done to make the roads more effective for traffic moving without causing disruption to those living further down the site? It is a shame that Phase 3 wasn't built first. Notes at Para 2.30 in the report the developer states that surface water on the north of the site will be attenuated through underground storage tanks and culverts, but these get silted up and blocked, which could lead to flooding. Who will ensure they are maintained regularly and efficiently? Needs to reassure local residents that this will be done – it is not the responsibility of the borough council – but is otherwise prepared to vote for the proposal.

BF: agrees with MS, but considers there are other issues here too. The site would be perfect for a brownwater scheme – all water held for toilets, gardens etc – though this is not going to happen. The soil is very clay; water will run off, and problems with this have been seen all round the town. Is happier with the newest scheme but it is still not perfect. Para 2.40 is concerned with removing demolition materials from the site – the roads as built will not handle this additional traffic, and a condition should require construction traffic to enter and exit the site from the top. There is no way the new houses can be built without the walkways and pavements being damaged. Some of the huge haulage lorries won't get round the site, and there is a risk to children, but could easily get in from the top, with access to the A40 or down Harp Hill, not the widest of roads but twice as wide as those in Phases 1 and 2. GCHQ traffic came in and out at the top, and the number of vehicle movements created by the new use will be no more than GCHQ. It is clearly the safest way, and has not been addressed in the construction method statement. Anything less is unacceptable.

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PT: agrees with everything BF has said. In addition, regarding the balancing pond and the proposed toddler-proof fence, it is not toddlers she was concerned about – mums keep an eye on them – but older children and teenagers, who are adventurous, like to explore, and are drawn to water. Are officers satisfied with what has been proposed? Would be ashamed to let this application through, with its appalling roads and incredibly cramped lay-out, and is very, very sad that we didn't provide a better plan in the first place to avoid cramming more units in now. We need to be a lot more careful in future with similar sites and applications.

BD: is sorry about the lack of improvements from the developers – they are paying lip service and not introducing enough changes. Agrees with what has been said so far, so won't repeat it. Regarding recycling and bin storage, if this is provided at the back of the terraced houses, the wheely-bins will have to be dragged through the house for collection from the front. There is a lot more recycling now than there was 16 years ago when the outline permission was granted, and more recycling areas should now be included for today's residents – we should consider their quality of life. Is horrified at the level of affordable housing, although realises that this can't be changed now as it was also agreed 16 years ago - hopes CBC has learnt a lesson from this. Will not vote in support of this application, though realises it will still probably go through - we have got to consider the quality of life of the people living there who are being insulted by the developer.

RG: disagrees with BF's suggestion that all the traffic should use the top of the site – this would get out of control, and Gloucestershire Highways says that two routes are better than one. Visits his flat in a previous phase of the development a couple of times a week, and Harp Hill to Sixways on London Road is always busy and quite chaotic, including heavy lorry traffic. Regarding the balancing pond, we should celebrate this rather than fence it off, place life-belts nearby and signs warning people of the danger and against coming too close – this is not a nanny state. There are problems with this scheme which we can't do much about, including the harm to the amenity of Phase 1 and 2 residents, but Condition 8 is good, recommending a photo-survey of the roads before construction starts to show any damage it causes. Notes that Gloucestershire Highways is content that buses and lorries can go up through Phases 1 and 2, but as a committee, we should write to the highways authority expressing our disquiet at the situation and the inadequate road system. Taking this proactive approach, expressing our concerns and making sure they are acknowledged will mean that five years down the line, should the need arise, we will be able to say 'we told you so'. It's a pity it has taken so long for this proposal to be built, but 16 years ago, GCHQ was planning to downsize due to the fall of communism – then 9/11 happened and changed everything. Will support the application because there is little we can do, but there is a lot of disquiet from Members which should be brought to the attention of Gloucestershire Highways and CBC.

KS: has a general comment regarding affordable housing. When the developers are considering what this should comprise, requests that there be more two-bedroomed houses available for social rent - there are currently only four for the whole site. Has read the additional information, and considers the committee is between a rock and a hard place, trying to get a camel through the eye of a needle with the access road. Understands the technical issues, but CBC has responsibility to make sure that residents are safe and to do all it can to improve their lives. Is concerned about the access road to the site next to Sainsbury's – this is a pig's ear, and is sorry for existing residents. Regarding the pond, this doesn't need to be fenced off – there is one at Brizen Lane, which is boggy and muddy – no-one would choose to go in, and cats and dogs cannot climb down the sides – but who will maintain it? If the flood attenuation fails due to lack of regular maintenance, there will be serious consequences. Finally, considers it a shame that the legacy of this brownfield site is so unappealing – a second-rate development. We should have asked for and expected the very best.

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BF: RG says we can't change anything with conditions but this is wrong – an outline permission is subject to things which can be conditioned to make it acceptable. The developer says there will not be a lot of demolition material removed from the site as it will be re-used within the site – why can't we therefore condition that construction vehicles come in and out through the top, to avoid bringing misery and danger to people's lives – the construction phase won't just be for weeks, but for a number of years. If we can condition that all construction vehicles access the site from the top, we should.

SW: has real concerns here about construction traffic moving through the windy roads lower down the site, which have already been covered. Agrees with BD, but as RG says, we've got what we've got, and cannot re-design the roads now. Notes the proposed Condition 9, point 7, requests measures to control the emission of dust during construction, and suggests this should include demolition, when there's likely to be more dust. Is there any indication of what the hours of operation are likely to be? These have to be acceptable.

LG: like most people, is very unhappy for people in Phases 1 and 2, knowing how bad it will be for them once building work starts, but we are damned if we do and damned if we don't, with the only hope the paragraph in the report stating a fallback position, that car parking and road widths are being investigated. What might these investigations and discussions lead to? What will be the end result?

CH, in response:

- there have been a lot of questions – will attempt to answer them all, but Members must come back to him if he misses anything out;
- a big issue is clearly the existing roads, parking and access. Access to the site was assessed in the phasing plan provided for the outline permission, including a condition for the Harp Hill side of the site. The highways officer recommended a construction method statement to help maintain highway and pedestrian safety;
- regarding the roads, the big question is what can be done, and the answer, unfortunately, is not very much – we are where we are with the roads. The construction method statement will set out what can be done/when etc, and also require a photographic survey which will highlight any damage to existing roads which the developer will then be required to put right;
- we have to separate demolition and construction – construction comes under this present application, but a demolition condition has already been approved through the discharge application, and by Environmental Health. The spoil from demolition work is to be re-used on the site, so there may be a lot less waste to be removed from the site than perceived;
- a caveat on the condition for hours of operation for demolition work sets out 7.30am-6.00pm Monday to Friday, and 8.00am-1.00pm Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays. These hours can be carried through to the construction work;
- regarding maintenance of drainage schemes, the developers can be expected to look after this, and the condition regarding drainage can require them to submit a management regime for this;
- regarding affordable housing, the policy team has confirmed that developments such as these have delivered about 18% affordable housing over a number of years, so this scheme at 12% is not too far away from that, and linked in with viability issues among other things;

CC: are the hours of operation CH has mentioned normal? They sound quite long, and will affect a lot of people, both during the demolition and construction stages.

CH, in response:

- these hours are environmental health's standard requirements and considered to be reasonable.

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CC: can CH respond to RG's suggestion that the committee writes officially to the Highways Authority for assurance about buses and lorries passing through Phases 1 and 2, and also its disquiet about the lay-out. Would this be possible and an appropriate course of action?

CH, in response:

- the committee can do this if it gives a sense of comfort, but will undoubtedly be referred back to the outline permission, when highways issues were considered and settled. It is frustrating, but we cannot move away from what has already been decided – access is tied up in that.

CC: the public speaker set out local concerns and the need for traffic calming measures.

CH, in response:

- there are no technical objections to the application from the highways department, so we cannot reasonably expect any significant changes to be achieved.

RG: would like a record of the Committee's concerns about traffic and lay-out set out, and sees no harm in doing this, thus creating an audit trail should any questions be asked later on.

CH, in response:

- if that is the will of the Committee, this will be fine.

BF: if the highways department says buses and trucks can't go through Phases 1 and 2, the end result will be the condition he wants to apply – all additional traffic in and out from the top of the site.

CC: would this be possible or desirable?

CH, in response:

- isn't convinced we can ask for this specific detail this evening. We should let the condition do its work to ensure that the scheme coming forward is appropriate.

BF: the additional Condition 9 requires a construction method statement to be approved by the local planning authority. Can this come to Committee for approval?

KS: is very unhappy about the proposed hours of construction. It will cause problems with the access roads, and also for children playing at the weekends with construction traffic on the roads. Any working on Sundays and bank holidays, or even on Saturdays, isn't a good idea – it will be very disruptive, and ridiculous not to give residents a couple of days a week without it.

PJ: agrees with all that has been said about highways issues, and approves of the proposed condition for a photographic survey of the roads before and after construction. If we can't ask HWA to enter S38 agreement at this time, can we request a bond is provided to maintain the roads up until the point of adoption?

LG: is still not convinced by CH's answer on car parking and road widths, which are two very important concerns for people in Phases 1 and 2. Is there to be no alteration to the current car parking? Is there no possibility of the road widths being widened to accommodate passing vehicles?

MS: regarding the maintenance agreement on culverts etc, how long is this likely to last? It should be for ever. If not, who will pick up the bill to make sure it doesn't fall on the local authority?

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PH: regarding hours of work, there is still a great deal of disquiet. By the very nature of the site, the noise from the slope above will impact on the residents lower down. Vehicle movements, building work, extra noise and dust from 8.00am-1.00pm at weekends are a big concern. There should be at least one day a week free of these environmental issues, and we should be able to condition this.

CH, in response:

- two issues have been raised, regarding working hours, and access for construction;
- these are clearly major concerns for Members, and officers are looking for a steer on what would be acceptable arrangements. They could then possibly discuss this with the Chair and Vice-Chair and come up with an appropriate solution.

RG: CH has said that the condition has already been discharged and changes can't be made now.

CH, in response:

- confirmed that the condition concerning demolition has already been discharged, but the condition for construction is a separate issue and can still be dealt with;
- regarding roads, Phases 1 and 2 have been built, and the highways officer is satisfied that Phase 3 can also be achieved. Changes to the roads, bringing them up to adoptable standards in line with the S38 agreement, will have to be achieved before the roads can be adopted;
- prior to adoption, the roads remain the developers' responsibility, and issues need to be taken forward with them. The Phase 3 developer will have to bear the cost of any damage to the roads in Phases 1 and 2, caused by construction vehicles; there is very little planners can do about bringing the roads up to adoptable standards;
- regarding SUDS and maintenance issues, any arrangements should be in perpetuity – a condition will ensure that this is in place.

RG: supports the re-negotiation of hours of operation, but does not think this should be done by committee – it has to be reasonable in relation to other permissions. Agrees that officers should work this out with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to ensure consistency.

BF: does not consider an answer has been provided to his comments – if construction traffic cannot access the site through Phases 1 and 2, it will have to come in and out through the top. The suggested construction method statement condition states that it should be submitted in writing and approved by the local Planning Authority – it is not a lot to ask that this be changed to local Planning Committee. The building work could go on for years and cause a lot of misery.

CC: CH has already dealt with the possibility of a condition. Would Members support a move to require all demolition and construction traffic to access the site via Harp Hill?

BF: all traffic to or from the Cotswolds side will have to come via Sixways, whether it uses Greenway Lane or the A40 – it is a red herring to say using the top of the site could cause more traffic problems.

CH, in response:

- regarding the letter to Gloucestershire Highways, this will not change anything – GHW has no objection to the application and is happy with the network as it stands – but could be a marker to show that Members are concerned;
- to BF's request that the condition comes back to committee for approval, this would not be normal, and 'local planning authority' is a collective term. This isn't the type of matter officers would want to bring back to committee but they could discuss and confirm the details with the Chair and Vice-Chair once they are submitted if Members consider that appropriate;

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CL, in response:

- to clarify, consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair would not appear in the construction method statement condition itself; officers could note the request for consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair but the appropriate body for reference in the condition for the approval remains the local planning authority.

CC: confirmed that Members in general are happy with this.

BF: is not happy – this is crucial to the application and the whole committee should have a say.

RW: a way out of this – if the Committee expresses strong views now that the traffic should come via the route suggested by BF and the developer/Highways consider it reasonable to do this, discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair can settle the matter – they can use their discretion.

BD: we're going round in circles and getting nowhere. Where are highways officers? They should be present to answer questions. Regarding working hours and other matters, it could take years before the work is complete, and the scheme agreed 16 years ago is already in a mess. Is hearing only excuses and nothing constructive, but it's time to stop making excuses and get on and do something.

KS: agrees with BD. Came to today's meeting with an open mind on this application, but having listened, is convinced that it isn't OK. Does not want to support it – cannot vote for it. Has sympathy with what BF has said, and doesn't think Members have enough information and could end up moving the problems from Phase 1 and 2 to somewhere else. Regarding hours of operation to be agreed with the Chair and Vice-Chair – cannot support this, it is a pig's ear. We need to be decisive and think about the future of Cheltenham. We are in a real pickle here and shouldn't support the application, not necessarily because it is contrary to any policies, but because common sense and humanity make it clear that it is just not right – we have made a mess. Regarding affordable housing, isn't so concerned with the percentage as with the type of housing delivered on site. Two-bedroomed houses are what are needed, for small families with one or two children. It is a shame that these are not provided. Cannot vote for this application – would not sleep at night if she did.

PJ: officers have given a good description of the situation here, and there are so many road network issues, it is beyond belief. Members' hearts are saying one thing, and policies and the planning system guiding them towards another, but officer advice is right - issues can be finalised with the Chair and Vice-Chair. Agrees with RG that the committee should write to the Highways Authority in clear, layman's terms, setting out its concerns. Will reluctantly vote in support of the application.

BF: KS has spoken about hours of work. Even if these are 8.30am-5.00pm, this will include two school runs with children coming in and out – there must be a great many in Phases 1 and 2. It is crazy to allow any construction traffic to use these roads when there is an alternative.

AM: we need to move on and vote – currently going round in circles, trying to find reasons not to support it. We have written information from Gloucestershire Highways regarding access through Phases 1 and 2, though this remains a key concern for Members - not having a representative of Gloucestershire Highways present is inexcusable. Deciding issues through the Chair and Vice-Chair is acceptable, and BF's comment that hours of work include two school runs is not valid – these are normal hours of work, and limiting them to 10.00am-2.00pm would not be reasonable. Like PJ, will reluctantly support the scheme, even though there are huge reasons why he wouldn't want to.

CC: it is important that everyone has the chance to have their say – this is a significant application and there are some very real concerns.

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RG: is happy for the Chair and Vice-Chair to agree hours of work consistent with others, though if we restrict these too much, removing Saturdays for example, a job which could take five years could take even longer, prolonging residents' misery. The professional view of hours of operation should prevail.

MJC, in response:

- recognises Members' concern about this, but reasonable hours of operation are set out by Environmental Health on the website;
- does not have the previous application to hand, but will tie the condition back to that, and discuss hours of operation with the Chair and Vice-Chair before the permission is issued.

Vote on officer recommendation to permit

8 in support

6 in objection

1 abstention

PERMIT

Application Number:	13/02143/FUL
Location:	282 London Road, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham
Proposal:	Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two new dwellings
View:	Yes
Officer Recommendation:	Permit
Committee Decision:	Refuse
Letters of Rep: 4	Update Report: Parish Council comments received in response to revised drawings; additional condition

EP introduced the application, to demolish the existing dwelling at the junction of London Road and Ryeworth Road, and replace with two contemporary dwellings. The change of levels within the site will require a considerable amount of excavation work to enable this. The application is at Committee because the Parish Council has objected. Officer recommendation is to permit.

Public Speaking:

Mr Gavin Hill, neighbour, in objection

Lives immediately next door to the application site, and while having no objection to the principle of demolition and erection of two new dwellings – which the site can accommodate with negligible highways impact – is strongly concerned about the contemporary architecture proposed. In general, likes contemporary architecture where it is coherent and sits well in its setting, but this scheme does neither, and is out of keeping with the Cudnall Street Conservation Area in which it lies. It is also out of keeping with the current street frontage on an important approach to town – existing dwellings on both sides are traditional, with pitched roofs. The contemporary, flat-roofed dwellings would represent an unwelcome interruption to the existing street frontage. This is not infill or garden-grabbing – it is an important street frontage and any new proposal should conform rather than be at odds with it. Cannot agree with the Architects' Panel's view that the proposal sits comfortably with its neighbours, agreeing rather with the Civic Society and Parish Council, who consider it shows little respect for its context and is not appropriate in this location. The officer report states that in line with the NPPF, the proposal replaces poor design with better design, responds to the local character, and doesn't result in significant harm to the conservation area – but in fact it fails on all these points. In recent years, No. 288 London Road was demolished and replaced with 12 dwellings of traditional design, including pitched roofs. These blend well into the street scene and are an improvement on what was there before. This proposal should have been designed along similar lines.

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Member debate:

PT: there is some question in the report about red or buff bricks – what was decided?

RG: this is interesting – the Architects' Panel says yes, the Civic Society says no. Recognises the concern about the design of the proposed dwellings in the conservation area, and notes the Conservation Officer's request that the hedge be retained to shield the buildings. Is worried about this, looking to the future – if the scheme is OK as long as it is disguised, it must be the wrong design?

RW: wishes common sense could be applied here. One look is all it takes to see that this proposal is appalling and shouldn't have seen the light of day. Will vote against it.

BD: it looks as if someone has got dressed but forgotten to put their top on! – a horrible design, in the wrong place. Notes a neighbour's comment about the difficulty in putting their comments on the internet – has this been sorted? In the 21st century, we should be able to get this right.

MS: this is totally out of character. The design is not suitable for this area. It is more of a Mediterranean style dwelling, and that is where it belongs.

JF: agrees with the Civic Society here – the dwellings look like two matchboxes next to the existing houses and do not reflect or enhance the conservation area. Will vote against it.

SW: has recently returned from New Zealand, and noted in Christchurch, which was devastated by an earthquake, buildings made from ships' containers – very similar to this proposal, but more colourful and built quickly out of need. The flat roofs don't work here. It is a conservation area; if it wasn't, may be struggling about whether or not to support the scheme, but as it is, cannot support it.

KS: has a heartfelt request for planning officers when considering applications with flat roofs: they may be modern and innovative, but can cause huge problems down the line with internal water, particularly in view of the heavy rainfall we are getting now. These roofs are fine in sunny, Mediterranean climates but not here – the design is impractical in this country, and traditional roofs are pitched for a reason. Is not sure about this design in this location but in view of the grain and the prominence of the site, thinks it is probably not right, and is inclined to vote against it.

BF: it is interesting that Members are discussing the design, when a similar dwelling – Eslington Mews - won a Civic Society award and was described as an architectural gem, and Century Court has been praised as fantastic and practical. People don't like to see modern architecture next to old, but the new Art Gallery and Museum falls into this category, and has also won an award; it can be seen in other towns, too, and the all-glass Shard in south-east London is breath-taking. In view of this, it's difficult to make a case that this proposal is unacceptable here.

PJ: the longevity of roofs is outside the Committee's remit, and personally has no issues with the design. The height has been reduced and is OK – will be interested to hear the Conservation Officer's response to Members' comments today. This is certainly a prominent location, and the proposal is like something from Grand Designs, becoming mainstream.

PT: on planning view, made a point of looking at the surrounding houses. All but one in a wide circle around it have pitched traditional roofs. The only dwelling which doesn't is an old house with a unique style of roof. Cannot support this proposal. Didn't like it on site - it doesn't complement the other houses. Would be find elsewhere, but this is the wrong place.

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PH: had been trying to observe the golden rule of planning committee that if intending to vote for proposal, there is no need to speak, but wants to speak up for a variety of housing styles everywhere, otherwise we end up with pastiche. At 2m below Ryeworth Road, this will not be very visible, and the clever use of the site should be acknowledged. Likes modern buildings, which often win Civic Society awards. As long as the design is good, they add variety and interest to an area.

GB: is not a huge fan of modern buildings, but acknowledges they have their role. However, regrets that we could lose our culture of houses if too many flat-roofed houses are built - roofs are where we store treasures and cultural heritage. Despite this, cannot vote against this proposal.

CC: will ask KR to comment, but notes that several Members have said they will not vote in support of the application but no move to refuse has been put forward. Members might like to consider this.

EP, in response:

- as background, the previous application included a third storey which was considered out of scale with the other buildings around it. A slight alteration of the position on the plot has resulted in spacing with which officers are comfortable;
- the final finish of the dwellings has not yet been agreed – a condition requires samples. The drawings show buff-coloured bricks, but this can be revisited in line with the overall pallet.

KR, in response:

- it is good to hear a full debate about design – gave a talk about this recently, and hopes that Members have benefitted from this;
- as part of the talk, mentioned proportions and duality – these are applicable here;
- can only refuse a scheme in relation to policy, and there is no policy to say a house has to have a pitched roof. There are many examples of houses with flat roofs and shallow pitched roofs not visible from the street. This is not a reason to refuse;
- the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions shouldn't impose architectural styles or tastes, or stifle innovation and originality by requiring conformity to certain forms and styles, although it is proper to promote local distinctiveness. this would be debated at appeal;
- regarding local distinctiveness, there are two distinct elements to the site: the approach from London Road is quite varied around Sixways, with listed buildings, old buildings, red brick houses, a coach house conversion, the London Inn, regency dwellings and so on. Ryeworth Road sees a change in level, and is very green which helps with the setting of buildings on either side of the road, and there is quite a variety of styles further down Ryeworth Road. Objectors say the flat-roofed dwellings won't fit in to the surrounding area – but what should fit to?;
- the hedge is important, not simply because it will hide the new buildings but because Ryeworth Road has a rural feel and this should be retained. Has reservations about whether this will be practical, but the trees officer says it will be – laurel is very tough – and we must take his advice.

LG: comments so far have concerned the design and the flat roof, but the first part of the application is for demolition of a house in a conservation area, not permitted under policy BE3. On planning view, noticed that the house is identical to that immediately adjacent to it and similar to others in the area. Under BE3, demolition is not permitted if the house makes a positive contribution to the area. Removing this house will change the area completely. BE3 should be included as a refusal reason.

EP, in response:

- regarding the demolition of the existing building, this is not an attractive house, not identical to its neighbour, with a poor extension and in bad condition. The proposal is a good re-use of the site. Policy BE3 is therefore not appropriate as a refusal reason.

draft minutes

LG: any building left to go downhill will end up looking down and out. It is a feature of the conservation area. We have policies to cover this, and a lot of time has been spent trying to make them work. If we go back on them at the first opportunity, this is rather odd.

CC: does LG think the application should be refused on that basis?

LG: yes.

RW: the new building doesn't fit with its neighbours and is a poor design – Policy CP7(c) can also be used as a refusal reason.

PJ: doesn't agree with these reasons. Will vote in support of the officer recommendation.

EP, in response:

- most issues have now been covered. Officers do not consider the existing building to be a positive feature in the conservation area – it is not designated, nor is it a heritage asset – and the proposed dwellings are felt to be appropriate.

BF: last month, Members were happy to vote for the demolition of The Little Owl in Charlton Kings. Buildings are being demolished all over town – Sandy Lane Road, Prestbury Road, The Greyhound.

Vote taken on move to refuse on BE3 and CP7(c)

8 in support

7 in objection

REFUSE

Application Number:	14/00095/FUL
Location:	12 Glynrosa Road, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham
Proposal:	Single storey front extension, and part single storey / part two storey side extension
View:	Yes
Officer Recommendation:	Permit
Committee Decision:	Permit
Letters of Rep:	1
Update Report:	None

EP introduced the application, which is at Committee due to an objection from the Parish Council. Officers are happy that it complies with council guidance on extensions regarding impact and design.

Public Speaking:

None.

Member debate:

BF: when this application was sent to the Parish Council, were they aware that it complies with the light test and other policies. If so, why have they objected?

draft minutes

CC: would like to strengthen interaction between parish councils and the planning authority, to increase their understanding of the planning process.

BD: how do we know if anyone else tried to object on line in view of problems as mentioned earlier?

EP, in response:

- parish councils are given a copy of the plans and are at liberty to make any comments they wish; there are plans to improve their understanding of the planning process;
- it's true that the website is occasionally out of action, but not usually for more than one day. We accept representations up to the date of the committee meeting, and the neighbour most affected by this proposal has made his objections known.

BD: asks that the planning department put in an objection to ICT about lack of service – it is not on.

JF: do parish councils have a copy of the Local Plan, the NPPF etc so that they know the policies they can refer to? They don't mention any policies in their objections, and it's important that they should know where they're coming from.

MJC, in response:

- not in relation to this application in particular, officers are starting to have discussions with parish councils at the C5 group. MJC and CH will attend the next meeting to talk about S106 agreements, and hope to discuss planning application comments, things the parish councils need to know about, and how to make their comments for relevant and useful. This is work in progress.

PT: EP said we accept representations right up to the last minute before planning committee, but people don't realise this. Neighbour letters give a date beyond which representations won't be taken into consideration. Maybe this should be changed to the date of the planning committee?

PJ: agrees that parish councils should be encouraged to comment, but also feels that neighbours who object should come to Committee in person.

Vote on officer recommendation to permit

14 in support

0 in objection

1 abstention

PERMIT

The meeting ended at 7.50pm.