

Medway Council
Planning Committee
Wednesday, 12 March 2025
6.30pm to 8.19pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present:	Councillors: Stamp (Chairperson), Jones (Vice-Chairperson), Anang, Bowen, Etheridge, Field, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Peake and Vye
Substitutes:	Councillors: Brake (Substitute for Filmer) Mandaracas (Substitute for Myton) Mrs Turpin (Substitute for Pearce)
In Attendance:	Councillor Crozer (agenda item 5) Councillor Pearce (agenda item 5) Councillor Ron Sands (agenda item 5) Julie Francis-Beard, Democratic Services Officer Dave Harris, Chief Planning Officer Peter Hockney, DM Manager Joanna Horne, Lawyer Arron Nicholls, Senior Planner Steven Ward, Highways Consultant

744 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Filmer, Myton and Pearce.

745 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 15 January 2025 was agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

746 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

747 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Gulvin referred to MC23/2857 - Land at the former Sturdee Club and land at Stoke Road, Hoo St Werburgh, ME3 9BJ and stated that although he had no actual interest to declare, part of the application concerned land that had a military history, and his brother is a renowned expert on Medway's military artifacts, however, he had not discussed Hoo with his brother for at least 5 years.

Councillor Etheridge stated that he often attended meetings of Frindsbury Extra and Cliffe Woods Parish Councils and explained that if any planning applications were ever discussed there, which were due to be considered by the Medway Council Planning Committee meeting, he would not take part in the discussion at the Parish Council meetings.

Councillor Mrs Turpin stated that she often attended meetings of Frindsbury Extra Parish Council and explained that if any planning applications were ever discussed there, which were due to be considered by the Medway Council Planning Committee meeting, she would not take part in the discussion at the Parish Council meetings.

Councillor Vye referred to planning application MC23/2857 - Land at the former Sturdee Club and land at Stoke Road, Hoo St Werburgh, ME3 9BJ and stated that he was aware that St Mary Hoo Parish Council had objected to this planning application and that he knew the St Mary Hoo Parish Council clerk and that the Clerk was also the secretary of the local branch of Reform UK, however, he had taken no view on this planning application and would take part in this item.

748 Planning application - MC/23/2857 Land at the former Sturdee Club and land at Stoke Road, Hoo St Werburgh, ME3 9BJ

Discussion:

The Senior Planner outlined the application in detail for the construction of 134 residential dwellings (including affordable and over 55's homes), children's nursery (Class E(f)), cafe/community hub (Class E(b)/F2(b)) and commercial/retail floorspace (E(g)/E(a), new public open spaces, sustainable urban drainage systems, landscaping and biodiversity areas and play areas.

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Access to be from 4 new locations from Stoke Road. Provision of roads, parking spaces and earthworks - demolition of the Sturdee Club and associated structures.

The Senior Planner brought Members' attention to the supplementary agenda advice sheet which amended the recommended conditions and included additional representations from Councillor Pearce and the applicant. He also informed Members that bungalows should be referenced in the reason under condition 24.

He advised that Active Travel England had not been consulted originally and whilst under the 150 dwelling threshold, the site was above the 5-hectare threshold and as such consultation should have been undertaken. This consultation has now been undertaken and a change to the recommendations had been made. In addition, a number of conditions had been amended to improve clarity and enforceability, and one condition has been deleted as it was a duplicate. He referred Members to the supplementary agenda advice sheet for the amended conditions.

The Senior Planner informed Members that the former Sturdee Club had been closed for 12 years. A key part of this planning application was to provide community facilities, including the café and community hub, local employment, nursery facilities and open spaces and the inclusion of these facilities, in addition to providing much needed housing, including affordable housing were considered to outweigh the loss of the former Sturdee Club.

With the agreement of the Committee, Councillor Sands addressed the Committee as Ward Councillor and raised the following concerns:

- Hoo has a rich history with artifacts dating back to 399BCE.
- During the Second World War, many troops were based in Hoo and the Hoo 'Stop Lines' are located very close to this application.
- If Kent was the garden of England, Hoo was the fruit basket.
- The application would be located very close to Yew Tree Lodge which was a care home for senior citizens. This could be very disruptive to those residents who require routine and no stress.
- The application was considered to be an unsustainable development, and unachievable housing requirements should not try to be adhered.

With the agreement of the Committee, Councillor Crozer addressed the Committee as Ward Councillor and raised the following concerns:

- He was speaking on behalf of the local residents, where there were concerns regarding the development.
- There was a time when the community thrived, the Sturdee Club used to be a cricket pavilion where residents gathered as a community. The loss of the Sturdee Club and other clubs in the area had been deeply felt by residents.

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- There had been concerns regarding the provision for the play areas, particularly would these play areas be accessible for all residents within the village or just for residents within the development.
- A fundamental concern was regarding the traffic and transport links. The A289 / A288 was now at full capacity and the local roads would not cope with more housing growth.
- The existing community must be prioritised, there was already a strain on the limited infrastructure.

With the agreement of the Committee, Councillor Pearce addressed the Committee as Ward Councillor and raised the following concerns:

- National and Local Planning policies, including the neighbourhood plan attached to the proposals were fundamental to this development and showed the pressure this development would cause.
- The development lied within a green field which was not allocated in the 2003 Local Plan and was not allocated within the latest Neighbourhood Plan. This was contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 104 which stated that open spaces and sport facilities should not be built on. The applicant should remove the employment aspect of the development and replace that with a new sports club or playing fields for the use of the local community.
- What would happen to the piece of land in the middle of the development between Parcel A and Parcel C?
- How did not need more houses, it needed a new primary school, which could be walked to, safely. The local primary schools had been full since 2015 and more spaces were required for the community. Could the applicant bring forward a full-size primary school in the land between Parcel A and Parcel C?
- More clarity was needed regarding the bus routes along Stoke Road. Would it affect the existing bus services? Where would the bus stops be located and what would the timetable look like?

The Committee discussed the planning application and the points raised by the Ward Councillors.

Members discussed the S106 contributions. A member raised concerns that the SEND provision should not be going to SEND facilities which had shareholders, the money should be spent on SEND facilities and not to pay their shareholders.

Members were pleased to see 25% of affordable housing, as it was discussed that there is a housing crisis and in particular an affordable housing crisis and that there are currently over 900 children, in Medway, living in temporary accommodation and providing suitable accommodation was very important.

Members acknowledged the community aspect of the development including café, the community hub, children's nursery, play areas and open spaces.

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The Senior Planner explained that as the Council did not have a current five-year housing land supply, and that there was not sufficient brown field land to meet Medway's housing needs, some agricultural land would need to be released to be developed.

The Chief Planning Officer stated that employment would help to make the development sustainable. He acknowledged that this area was not allocated to employment within the Local Plan, however, as there were no available sites in the centre of Hoo and that the businesses that would locate here were not ones that would alternatively go to Kingsnorth or Hoo Industrial estates the proposed commercial units would provide much needed employment for local residents.

Members considered this a good scheme, with a good mix of housing types, the room sizes exceeded the national standard guidelines and the development would provide access to high quality play areas. The Chief Planning Officer confirmed that the developer had referenced at a previous Members Briefing that the play areas would be available for the wider community as well as residents of the development. Condition 19, in the supplementary agenda advice sheet would cover this issue.

The Chief Planning Officer, following a question regarding a covenant about white vans parking within the development, would inform the applicant, however, developers could impose their own covenants.

The Senior Planner and Chief Planning Officer confirmed that there were continuous tarmac pathways all the way from the site along the south side of Stoke Road into the centre of Hoo, while there was a significant cycleway/footpath which runs from the A228 down Ropers Lane all the way to Kingsnorth industrial area. and that this cycleway/footpath linked to the cycleway/footpath on the A228.

Members asked about the pylons located within the site and near to the play areas. The Senior Planner confirmed that the pylons were above the mixed orchard.

The Service Manager - Development Management advised that the previous play area had not been in use as a playing field for the over 5 years, so there was no statutory requirement to consult Sport England. He also advised that Active Travel England had recently been consulted, hence the amended recommendation as set out in the supplementary agenda advice sheet.

A Member proposed a deferral for a site visit, this was seconded and upon being put to a vote, the proposal was lost.

The Chief Planning Officer informed Members that he was not sure, as yet, what was happening with the missing parcel of land within the development. He stated that there was definitely a need for a local primary school to the East of Hoo, however, that was being considered through the Local Plan.

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The Senior Planner and Service Manager - Development Management advised that the planning application was submitted before the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement legislation and the applicant did not have to provide the 10% BNG. The development would provide approximately 1% net gain and that would be within the right hand corner of the site in the scrub land rather than the orchard, although the trees and hedgerows would also provide some net gain.

The Chief Planning Officer explained that there would be an impact due to increased vehicles, however, a significant contribution to travel would mitigate that. By making this a mixed-use development with employment on site, close to additional employment opportunities at Kingsnorth and providing a children's nursery on site for local residents, this would help reduce the impact of traffic which would make the development more sustainable. He went on to state that he was having conversations with Goodmans, an employer located in Kingsnorth Industrial Estate, for a bus service that worked for employers and linking those conversations with Arriva and Nu-Venture Buses to provide improved public bus services in the area and in particular down Stoke Road past this application site.

The Service Manager - Development Management clarified that the development would be quite a distance away from Yew Tree Lodge and would secure the amenities of those residents at the care facilities. He also stated how important the history of this area was and the development would firmly put this at the front of people's minds, making those moving into the development aware of the significance of the history of the local area.

Decision:

Approved subject to:

- A. The expiry of the consultation with Active Travel England; and
- B. The imposition of any additional conditions recommended as a result of a response from Active Travel England and no unresolvable objections being received; and
- C. The applicants entering into agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act to secure:
 - i. A minimum of 25% affordable housing.
 - ii. £28,303.48 to improve equipment and facilities at Hoo Library.
 - iii. £41,726.26 towards improvements at Hoo Leisure Centre.
 - iv. £29,656.88 for the provision, improvement and promotion of waste and recycling services.

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- v. £150,000 towards improvements to open space and outdoor formal sport within the Hoo area.
- vi. £489,169.09 for primary provision within 2 miles of development site or SEND education within Medway.
- vii. £387,585.48 for secondary provision or SEND within Medway.
- viii. £95,201.64 health contribution towards extension/refurbishment or upgrading of existing proactive premises within the vicinity or contribution to a new facility.
- ix. £10,050 towards public rights of way improvements within the vicinity of the site.
- x. £400,000 towards Public Transport provision improvements.
- xi. £550,000 Off site highways improvements.
- xii. £93,800 towards travel plan.
- xiii. £32,830.00 towards public realm improvements in Hoo centre or within the vicinity of the site.
- xiv. £5,000 to contribute to the overall interpretation of the stop line and propose that their interpretation is undertaken in coordination with the Whose Hoo Strategy.
- xv. £43,988.18 towards strategic measures in respect of the coastal North Kent Special Protection Area.
- xvi. Meeting the Council's costs.

D. Conditions 1 – 35 as set out in the supplementary agenda advice sheet.

749 Performance Report 1 October to 31 December 2024

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance for the period 1 October to 31 December 2024.

The Chief Planning Officer drew Members' attention to how his team and Members had performed. He discussed the reform of the planning system, where Government was focused on planning committee decisions and wanted Local Authorities to determine planning applications quicker.

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He informed Members that last year was the best year for units completed, 1300, however the Council was still well below target. The Government published a revised Standard Method for calculating Local Housing need. The figure for Medway was now 1,594 homes a year, which was a slight reduction on the previous figure of 1,658 homes.

A number of compliments had been received and were set out on pages 83-84 of the report.

Members extended their thanks to the Chief Planning Officer and his team for all their hard work and acknowledged the amount of work that went into producing the results shown.

It was requested that under Appendix E – units under construction, whether an additional column be added to show what had been approved 3 years or more. Could this also be contrasted with permission granted.

Regarding the Government's plan for the planning system, a Member requested speaking to the local MP's about the proposals.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and requested that the Chief Planning Officer express the Committee's appreciation for the levels of achievement to staff within the Planning Service.

750 Appeal Decisions 1 October to 31 December 2024

Discussion:

The Chief Planning Officer gave a summary of the appeal decisions referred to in appendix A to the report.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

751 Section 106 Agreements October to December 2024

Discussion:

The Chief Planning Officer gave a summary of the amount of S106 funding received and agreements signed from October to December 2024 and referred to Appendix 1 to 3 in the report.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

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Chairperson

Date:

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