

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Planning Committee held
in The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote
attendance on Tuesday, 4th April, 2023 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor Phil Murphy (Chairman)
County Councillor Dale Rooke (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Fay Bromfield, Emma Bryn, Jan Butler,
Ben Callard, John Crook, Tony Easson, Steven Garratt,
Meirion Howells, Su McConnel, Jayne McKenna, Maureen Powell,
Sue Riley and Ann Webb

County Councillors Tony Kear and Angela Sandles attended the
meeting by invitation of the Chair.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Craig O'Connor	Head of Planning
Philip Thomas	Development Services Manager
Andrew Jones	Development Management Area Team Manager
Mark Davies	Highway Development Manager
Paige Moseley	Solicitor
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

County Councillor Tony Easson left the meeting during consideration of application DM/2022/01042 and did not return. He therefore took no part in the voting for this application.

APOLOGIES:

None.

1. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor Meirion Howells declared a personal and prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of application DM/2018/01995, as he is a committee member of Usk Civic Society which had objected to the application. He therefore left the meeting taking no part in the discussion or voting thereon in respect of this application.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting dated 7th February 2023 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

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3. Application DM/2018/01995 - Outline application for a six dwelling residential development with primary access off Baron Street with some matters reserved. The Willows, 20 Baron Street, Usk, Monmouthshire, NP15 1AS

We considered the report of the application and late correspondence which was recommended for approval subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

This application had been presented to Planning Committee on 6th December 2022 with a recommendation for approval. The recommendation had been agreed by the Planning Committee subject to two additional conditions namely:

- Compliance with approved site levels (to manage flood issues).
- A Flood Action Plan to be submitted pursuant to the reserved matters.

Also, the resolution to approve had been subject to officers checking with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) that it had taken into account the impacts of flooding associated with the Olway Brook when assessing the flood information submitted by the applicant and that this matter be agreed via the Delegation Panel.

The Conservative local Member for Llanbadoc and Usk attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following information:

- Councillor Kear informed the Committee that he is the Chairman of Usk Civic Society. However, for the purpose of this planning application he has removed himself from any discussions within the Society regarding this matter.
- Following the Development Management Area Team Manager's presentation, the local Member confirmed his satisfaction and support for the application as local residents' concerns have been alleviated.

The applicant's agent, Nick Bowen, attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following points:

- There are in excess of 50 houses in Mill Street and Baron Street where the flood levels will reduce by up to 100mm as a result of this proposed development. Improvements are being made to the flood conveyance routes through the site.

It was proposed by County Councillor Jan Butler and seconded by County Councillor Su McConnel that application DM/2018/01995 be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report and subject to two additional conditions namely:

- Compliance with approved site levels (to manage flood issues).
- A Flood Action Plan to be submitted pursuant to the reserved matters.

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Upon being put to the vote the following votes were recorded:

For approval	-	15
Against approval	-	0
Abstentions	-	0

The proposition was carried.

We resolved that application DM/2018/01995 be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report and subject to two additional conditions namely:

- Compliance with approved site levels (to manage flood issues).
- A Flood Action Plan to be submitted pursuant to the reserved matters.

4. Application DM/2022/01042 - Construction of 70 homes, sustainable drainage infrastructure, open space, internal roads, paths and parking areas, landscaping and associated plant and infrastructure. Land at Vinegar Hill, Undy, Monmouthshire

We considered the report of the application and late correspondence which was recommended for approval subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

The local Member for Magor East with Undy, County Councillor Angela Sandles, attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following information:

- There is a history of objections to the development of this site going back to 2013.
- Outline Planning permission was granted in 2021.
- The Community Council had objected to the development.
- Complaints have been received from residents regarding the site relating to access, noise, drainage, traffic and the contractors.
- There is no area of open green space for walkers to access from any of the housing estates' vicinities.
- The field, known as Parcel B, was a community space that was used daily.
- Flora and fauna have changed over the years.
- The centre of the field has always been avoided as water does not drain from this area.
- There is limited access to the site.

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- The site is noisy being only 50 metres away from the M4 motorway with associated vehicle emissions.
- The surrounding area is densely populated with new build properties.
- The two local primary schools are full, there are no NHS dentists, and the GP surgery is overstretched.
- Traffic leaving either Dancing Hill or the Rockfield estates are already backed up the hills every weekday morning whilst leaving to go to work / school on their way to the B4245. It was considered that this matter would get worse, going forward, if the proposed development was approved.

The applicant's agent, Kate Coventry, attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following points:

- The report of the application is comprehensive outlining why the application should be approved.
- The site is allocated within the County Council's Local Development Plan (LDP).
- The site is located adjacent to the established built up area of Magor and Undy and connects the approved mixed-use scheme allocation at Rockfield Farm which is under construction and forms part of the connecting east – west link road.
- Planning Committee approved the hybrid application at its meeting in January 2022. Grant funding has now been received by the Cardiff Capital Region. Construction has commenced on site A with the first occupation expected in July 2023.
- There have been no objections raised from statutory consultees as outlined in the report of the application.
- The scheme will deliver 70 homes within Parcel B of the wider allocated site.
- The scheme, via grant funding, is able to deliver policy compliant 25% affordable housing to aid in the shortfall across the County.
- The scheme is designed around green infrastructure (GI) including key corridors running east to west and north to south across the parcel of land.
- The corridor has been maintained on site and has been enhanced which delivers a net gain in biodiversity on site. There is also a net gain in hedgerows and trees across the site with the scheme delivering a community orchard alongside public open space and a trim trail.

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- Car parking provision and highway safety has been given due consideration and there is no objection raised from the Highways Department. The applicant has worked with the Highways Officer throughout the course of the preparations and submission and determination of the application and they have designed a scheme which will provide safe travel across the local highway network and prevent inappropriate levels of traffic on unsuitable roads.
- This scheme enables the east – west link road to connect from Rockfield Farm through the site and onto Grange Road as required through policy.
- The Council's Drainage Officer has confirmed that the scheme has an appropriate drainage strategy. The requirement for the preparation of a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) was established after this site was allocated and did cause delays and viability issues on site. It should be recognised that these have all been overcome and the scheme is deliverable.
- This is the last remaining allocation in the Council's adopted Local Development Plan (LDP). It accords with national and local policy.
- The scheme will provide an important contribution to both market and affordable housing and is not subject to the phosphates constraint experienced elsewhere in the County.
- The developer is keen to deliver on this parcel of land as soon as possible.

Having considered the report of the application and the views expressed, the following points were noted:

- During the candidate site review for the Local Development Plan (LDP) this site was thoroughly examined, and it had been determined that no off-site mitigation was required on the B4245. The east – west link is in the gift of the Council to provide that road when that allocation comes forward with or without development. Positive conversations are being held with a number of developers regarding this matter with a view to a planning application being presented to Planning Committee in the future in respect of this site.
- The Authority currently has no LDP policy that requires photovoltaic panels to be installed on new properties. There is no policy nationally or locally to insist on photovoltaic panels being installed on the roofs of new properties. It is at the discretion of the developer regarding whether such panels are installed. The Council could consider this matter under future policies.
- With regard to proximity to shops and other facilities, it is a 10 – 15 minute walk to the centre of Magor which accords with the 15 minute town planning concept.
- With regard to affordable housing in the Severnside area, the current LDP requirement is 25%. Both Parcels A and B on the site accord with this policy requirement.

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- There has been funding for community facilities via these developments such as the building of the Community Hub on the three Fields Site. Parcel B itself will lever in almost £500,000 of off-site recreation to spend on facilities in the wider area.
- Surface water issues will be subject to SuDS Approving Body (SAB) approval. The SAB officer at pre-application stage had indicated that the scheme could drain satisfactorily and would not damage any third-party interest. It is likely that there would be betterment of the site when the SuDS features are installed as the site currently does not drain very well.
- A town centres first approach is being adopted across Wales.
- The development site field has been used for grazing but is not ecologically rich. There is an opportunity to plant more diverse species of plants with a view to attracting pollinators to the area. More hedgerows are to be planted to aid in enriching the ecology of the site.
- The footways on the site are set back from the carriageway edge into the junction with direct crossing points. This is to accommodate the SAB provision. The junction radii are very tight but still allow for service and refuse vehicles to access the site.
- Landscaping details will be signed off by a qualified landscape officer and will be appropriate for the area as well as being low maintenance.
- The density of the scheme relates to around 26 dwellings per hectare which is below current policy of 30 dwellings per hectare.
- The east – west link has a full pedestrian link for its entire length and has been designed with public transportation incorporated into it. The aim is to future proof the scheme. There are areas located on the plans to include bus stops, going forward.
- Street names can be looked at with a view to including Welsh street names with links to the cultural and historical nature of the area.
- S106 funding had provided £2000 per dwelling to deliver sustainable transport.
- The affordable housing units equate to eight one-bedroomed maisonettes, six two-bedroomed houses, three three-bedroomed houses and one four-bedroomed house and are pepper potted across the site.

The local Member for Magor East with Undy, County Councillor John Crook, also a Planning Committee Member, outlined the following points:

- The proposed development has been let down by poor infrastructure.

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- The original outline approval was granted 15 years ago when this area and the village was different to the way it is today with less traffic.
- There is confusion regarding the property between the proposed site and the Rockfield Farm site regarding ownership of land and whether it is in private ownership or County Council ownership. In response, it was noted that some land is in the ownership of the County Council with two parcels of land in private ownership. Concern was expressed that the Authority is depending on another development for the road to link both sites. In response, it was noted that the east – west link is in the gift of the Council to provide that road when that allocation comes forward with or without development.
- In response to a question raised the Highways Officer stated that in determining this application that diverting traffic at Vinegar Hill would be safer than creating a crossroads. The traffic flows north of Vinegar Hill are minor in comparison to other traffic movements.
- In response to a question raised the Highways Officer stated that Grange Road is an historic road. In order to facilitate this development and ensure the safe passage of vehicles a priority narrowing utilising existing carriageway width available has been promoted, designed and modelled which will also provide a traffic calming measure for traffic accessing the east – west link via Grange Road.
- In response to a question regarding surface water running off Vinegar Hill onto dancing Hill, it was noted that SAB approval and SuDS provision is a very vigorous and robust provision with high standards for its delivery. It was considered that the local area would obtain a net gain from the introduction of SAB provision on this site in terms of surface water flows emanating from the fields and onto Vinegar Hill.
- Biodiversification and landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) matters need to be addressed.

It was proposed by County Councillor M. Powell and seconded by County Councillor S. McConnel that application DM/2022/01042 be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

Upon being put to the vote the following votes were recorded:

For approval	-	11
Against approval	-	2
Abstentions	-	1

The proposition was carried.

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We resolved that application DM/2022/01042 be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

5. FOR INFORMATION - The Planning Inspectorate - Appeals Decisions Received:

5.1. Brookside shed, Llancayo Road, Gwehelog

We received the Planning Inspectorate report which related to an appeal decision following a site visit that had been held at Brookside Shed, Llancayo Road, Gwehelog on 9th January 2023.

We noted that the appeal had been dismissed.

The meeting ended at 3.41 pm.