

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANS SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT GROVE HOUSE, DUNSTABLE

ON MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 6 pm

Present: Councillors Liz Jones (Town Mayor & Chairman), Louise O’Riordan (Deputy Mayor) Richard Attwell, Wendy Bater and Nicholas Kotarski.

Apologies: Councillors Trevor Adams and Robert Blennerhassett.

In Attendance: Councillors John Gurney (substituting for Councillor Blennerhassett) Kenson Gurney (substituting for Councillor Adams) with Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive) and Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager)

Public: Nil

2. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions put forward to the council ahead of the meeting.

3. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor John Gurney as a member of Central Bedfordshire Development Management Committee.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Plans Sub-Committee held on 2 January 2024 were approved as a correct record following one minor amendment and were signed by the Chair.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Sub-Committee considered all planning applications submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of Dunstable since the last meeting of this Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: that the following comments be forwarded to Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of the applications indicated:

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- 1 **CB/23/03863/REG3:** Site of former Dunstable Library, Vernon Place, Dunstable
 Proposal: Construction of a part 3, 4 and part 5 storey building with ground floor multi-purpose space and 40 one-bedroom apartments.

Comments: Objection – It was resolved that Councillor Kotarski will attend the Development Management Committee, to represent Dunstable Town Council if they discuss the application.

Dunstable Town Council considered this application in full.

We recognise the site does need re-development and needs to support the national planning policy framework where its aim is to build a strong, competitive economy (6) and ensuring the vitality of town centres (7). This site is located on land identified under the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan as falling within Town Centre boundary therefore Local Plan Policy R1 applies.

This application goes against both of the NPPFW section 6 & 7 and against Local Plan Policy R1. Approving this application will not positively support the vitality of the town centre by enhancing the range of facilities offered nor stimulate activity outside of normal shopping hours.

Dunstable Town Council would prefer the land at ground floor level to be maintained for commercial / community space to ensure we maintain its use for the people of Dunstable and bring opportunities for employment. We see this space as prime opportunity to support new business startup units which is in much need and would continue to grow the town centre's occupancy rates of successful independent business owners.

Policy EMP2 states that proposals for non-employment generating uses on unallocated sites will only be considered suitable where; there is no reasonable or viable prospect of the site delivering employment generating use, the change will not detrimentally impact upon the deliverability of existing employment uses within the locality and the use would not detrimentally impact upon the existing surrounding land uses.

This is a town centre location that has the highest footfall count and therefore is prime employment / commercial land. Retail units are highly sought in this area of town with very few, if any retail space available on Queensway Parade and in The Quadrant.

We do not understand the siting of the proposed plant room on ground floor level; why does this have to take much needed commercial /employability space and why can this not be sited elsewhere of the proposed development?

Central Bedfordshire Council planners recently refused a town centre business in High Street South to convert their employment / retail space on the ground floor to social housing. In the absence of robust justification and evidence of viability, the proposal would be unacceptable in principal as it would result in the reduction of employment generating town centre space within the Dunstable Town Centre Area and would therefore be in conflict with Policies EMP2 and R1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2015-2023).

The change of use of the ground floor space from commercial to some residential would impact detrimentally on the existing neighbouring uses as it would introduce a non-confirming residential use at ground floor level which would have the potential to generate complaints resulting from noise which could significantly impact on the operation and viability of those units around. If approved, this would be in direct conflict with Policy EMP2. The noises from established uses of nearby commercial properties will also impact on the quality of the living environment.

Dunstable Town Council has no objections to the upper floor and suggested layouts for residential accommodation with the exception of the siting of the plant room to maximise commercial / employability space.

Dunstable Town Council does object due to overdevelopment of town centre commercial space due to

- loss of commercial / community space – Dunstable library previously had large exhibition space for local organisations to utilise and was all commercial on the ground floor; this proposal only provides two small areas of commercial.
- NO welfare provision provided for those working on site in the commercial units thus breaking the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, section 2, and the Workplace Regulations 1992 where adequate provision for employees has to be provided for them to enable them to gain drinking water, rest room and space to eat meals.
- loss of employment opportunities – this development reduces commercial space to two small units with little or no facilities therefore making the hire of space less desirable and unlikely to attract employment opportunities.
- no commercial waste provision on site for the two commercial units
- inadequate parking provision going against CBCs own car parking standards of 1 bedroom properties = 1 space per dwelling – this is against the R1: Ensuring Town Centre Vitality and R3: Town Centre Development
- potential flooding implications of site and neighbouring proposed developments (old Ambulance Station) and capacity of current drainage – we cannot see a full flood evaluation survey has been completed.

Should CBC approve future development of the site, Dunstable Town Council would like to see the following additional conditions.

- S106 monies are given to help Dunstable Town Council continue to build on its Town Centre Management role in improving the vitality of our town centre businesses.
- Improvements to pedestrian footways
- Increased cycle routes for residents and visitors to the town
- Artwork / sculpture
- Funding for adult education

2	CB/24/00112/FULL: 164 West Street Proposal: Single-storey side extension Comments: No Objection
3	CB/24/00101/FULL: 209 Jeans Way Proposal: Single storey front porch extension Comments: No Objection
4	CB/24/00092/FULL: 4 Kingsbury Avenue Proposal: Erection of rear extension and front porch Comments: No Objection
5	CB/24/00056/FULL: 42 Marina Drive Proposal: Erection of single storey side and rear extension (amendment to CB/23/03478/FULL to include small bathroom extension) Comments: No Objection
6	CB/24/00084/FULL: 48 High Street North

Proposal: Change of use of existing ground floor retail space into two retail units and one storage unit with alterations to rear doors. Erection of a studio flat on the first floor.

Comments: Objection – Due to overdevelopment.

7 CB/24/00166/FULL: 23 Meadway

Proposal: Front extension and single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory

Comments: No Objection

8 CB/24/00184/FULL: 18 Hawthorn Close

Proposal: Single storey rear and side extension following demolition of conservatory, conversion of garage to habitable space and erection of detached car port

Comments: No Objection

5. PLANNING DECISIONS

The Sub-Committee noted the decisions of Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of recent planning applications.

6. LICENSING APPLICATIONS

None received.

The Meeting Closed at 6:40 pm