

Minutes of a meeting of the
Worthing Planning Committee
22 September 2015
at 6.30 pm

Councillor Kevin Jenkins (Chairman)
**Councillor Vicky Vaughan (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillor Noel Atkins
Councillor James Doyle
Councillor Nigel Morgan

Councillor Edward Crouch
Councillor Diane Guest
**Councillor Paul Yallop

** Absent

Officers: Head of Economic Growth, Major Projects Officer, Senior Solicitor and Democratic Services Officer

As there was a large public presence at the meeting, the Chairman introduced each of the Members of the Committee, and ran through the order of business for the evening. He reminded Members of the change regarding registered speakers, allowing 5 speakers for and 5 speakers against, limited to 3 minutes each.

WBC-PC/028/15-16 Declarations of Interest / Substitute Members

There were no declarations of interest.

Councillor Luke Proudfoot substituted for Councillor Paul Yallop.

Councillor Louise Murphy substituted for Councillor Noel Atkins.

WBC-PC/029/15-16 Minutes

Councillor Luke Proudfoot raised a query regarding the minutes of 26 August 2015. He advised that the interest he and Councillor Louise Murphy declared at that meeting for their work as Trustees for South Downs Leisure was not pecuniary as stated. He requested the minutes did not reflect this and therefore requested the minutes be amended to reflect this.

The Committee agreed the amendment to the minutes of 26 August 2015.

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 26 August 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

WBC-PC/030/15-16 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no items raised under urgency provisions.

WBC-PC/031/15-16 Planning Application

The planning applications were considered, see attached appendix.

WBC-PC/032/15-16 Public Question Time

There were no questions raised under Public Question Time.

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm

Application Number: AWDM/1636/14	
Site:	The Aquarena, Brighton Road, Worthing
Proposal:	Revised application for demolition of the Worthing Aquarena and car park and the erection of 147 residential apartments including 39 affordable homes and a commercial unit (unspecified use class) within building blocks ranging from 4-21 storeys in height incorporating a basement car park comprising 69 public spaces and 150 private spaces plus areas of public and private open space with associated landscaping and access arrangements.

The Head of Economic Growth began the meeting by referring Members of the Committee to an addendum that had been circulated since the agenda for the meeting had been published.

The addendum included an additional consultation response from the Georgian Group, a further 8 letters of objection and 1 letter of support. The Officer touched on further key points within the addendum relating to the planning assessment, the impact on Heritage Assets, the S106 Agreement and design changes. He advised the recommendation would stay as per the report, but included two further conditions.

The Major Projects Officer began his presentation by referring Members to photographs of the former Aquarena building and its 27m high chimney, showing the condition of the site and the car park which was still in use. He described the background to the construction of the Splashpoint Leisure Centre and said the impact of the new leisure centre on the setting of Beach House, a Grade II listed building, had been a material consideration and improvements to its setting and additional planting in Beach House Grounds was secured as part of the approved scheme.

The Officer outlined the surroundings of the application site, which was bounded to the north by Brighton Road, close to the Farncombe Road Conservation Area; to the east by Merton Road, New Parade, Esplanade Court and Clarence Court and to the west the new leisure pool, followed by Beach House and Beach House gardens.

He stated that Roffey Homes had shown interest in the site and had prepared five previous schemes, this was the sixth and final scheme. The applicant had been developing his plans for the site and these had been the subject of review by Worthing planners, the Regional Design Panel and the Coastal West Sussex Design Panel.

Members were shown models of the proposal and advised there would be 147 apartments, 39 affordable (previously 37), an unspecified commercial unit within building blocks ranging from 4-21 storeys, a basement car park with 69 public spaces, 150 private spaces and areas of public and private open space with landscaping.

The Officer stated the applicant had revised proposals which included setting back the apartment blocks fronting Brighton Road by 2.4 metres, making a more appropriate building line, increased and enhanced public realm with a larger commercial unit which could be subdivided. Site coverage has been reduced from 49% to 41%.

The Officer outlined each of the four main areas and Members were shown serial views of the tower from various vantage points along the coastline and a flyover view giving an impression of the finished scheme.

The Head of Economic Growth concluded the presentation by highlighting the key important matters of the proposal.

The Officer advised that Historic England had assessed the application and felt that it would entail a high level of harm to heritage assets in Worthing, principally the town centre conservation areas and the listed building, Beach House. Officers have accepted that there will be harm to heritage assets but it is less than substantial harm, furthermore, there were public benefits that the scheme would provide. He advised Members that there was a statutory presumption against development that harmed the setting of heritage assets but because the harm is less than substantial Members would need to balance the harm to heritage assets against the public benefits of the proposal. Members would need to be satisfied that wider economic benefits of the scheme were sufficient to outweigh this harm.

The Design Panel felt the proposal could be a bold gateway to Worthing and a striking architectural landmark building which would have more of a regional significance for the town. The scheme would provide a strong regeneration benefit to the town. The scheme would provide a significant level of housing both market and affordable apartments which was of particular benefit given Worthing's housing need. There was the added benefit of the public car park for 69 vehicles replacing the car parking currently provided on the site and an enhanced public realm leading to the leisure centre entrance. The new Trust Manager welcomed the new car park which would greatly assist visitors to the Splashpoint Leisure Pool.

The scheme would also provide public realm enhancements along the Brighton Road frontage and an enhanced area of open space along the promenade. There was also the opportunity to use development contributions (approximately £200,000) to enhance the open space in front of New Parade and/or further enhancements of the Active Beach zone to the west of the site. The internal landscaped courtyard within the development would also be open to the public during the day providing semi-public open space. The

amount of public realm to be added, plus the s106 contributions were both material considerations.

There is a duty of local planning authorities to make good use of brownfield sites.

The Officers felt the development had progressed significantly during a long design process involving various Design Panels as recommended by the NPPF. The lower elements of the scheme were now acceptable following significant amendments and the tower had been completely re-designed to reflect some of the key design elements of the adjoining Splashpoint leisure facility. The tower related far more sympathetically with the award winning design of the replacement swimming pool and the key issue for Members was whether the design of the 21 storey tower achieved landmark status which would override the harm to heritage interests.

An, on balance, recommendation of approval was made subject to a s106 Agreement as set out on page 142 of the report with the two additional conditions set out in the addendum to the original report.

The Members were then invited to raise any questions with the Officers specifically on the presentation.

These queries were answered in turn and included:-

- Lack of sunlight and increase in shadow;
- public realm aspect of the proposal;
- Energy and Renewable Statement - why no water source heat pump;
- reduction in footprint but what effect on number of apartments;
- space standards;
- quality of materials to be used (*samples of glazed green and white tiles handed round to Members*);
- percentage of affordable housing/dedicated access;
- value to taxpayer - S106 Agreement
- possible parking shortfall.

There were further representations at the meeting from:-

Objectors: Mr David Aherne
Mr Anthony Barber (Save our Seafront)
Mr Chris Spratt
Mr David Sawers (The Worthing Society)
Mr Martin Thorn

Supporters: Mr Mark Sanderson
Mr Chris Barker (Agent)

Mr Ben Cheal (Applicant)
Mr Iain Flitcroft
Councillor Bryan Turner

The meeting was adjourned at 9.05pm and reconvened at 09.15pm.

The Members debated the proposal at length and in summary, felt there were some positives to the scheme, however their concerns appeared to be the design and the height of the tower element of the proposal, the impact on heritage assets and the over development of the site.

The Members expressed some concern as to the number of affordable houses proposed, the impact of the development on neighbouring properties. The Committee recognised that it was a key regeneration site, there was a need for more homes and a transformation of the area would be welcomed. However, the majority of Members still wished to go against the Officer's recommendation and refuse the application.

Decision

That the application be **REFUSED** on the grounds of overdevelopment and density, the impact on heritage assets, together with concerns in relation to design being out of character and unsympathetic.

Members agreed that Officers should prepare the precise refusal reasons in consultation with the Chairman.