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## Planning Working Group

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held at the site listed below on Thursday, 22 February 2024 from 10.00 am - 10.38 am.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mike Baldock (Chair), Simon Clark, Paul Stephen, Terry Thompson, Karen Watson and Tony Winckless.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Philippa Davies and Matt Duigan.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Shelley Cheesman.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Andy Booth, Kieran Golding, James Hall, Mike Henderson, James Hunt, Charlie Miller, Julien Speed and Angie Valls.

682 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

683 **23/502365/FULL 77 - 83 and 87 London Road, Sittingbourne ME10 1NL**

The Chair welcomed the applicant, the applicant's agent, members of the public and Members to the meeting.

The Planning Consultant introduced the application which sought the demolition of four dwellings and the erection of 20 dwellings with associated external amenity areas, site access improvements, internal access road, parking, landscaping and habitat creation, as set out in the report submitted to the Planning Committee on 8 February 2024. He outlined the reasons why the Committee had agreed a site meeting and said that although invited, an officer from Kent County Council (KCC) Highways and Transportation was not in attendance at the site meeting.

The Planning Consultant gave a brief history of the site.

Members of the public spoke on the application and raised points which included:

- Considered there was insufficient parking on-site for residents;
- concerned with the position of the electricity substation and whether it would be visible from Borden Lane;
- clarification sought on the status of the existing wall which ran alongside Borden Lane; and
- access and egress from the site was dangerous.

In response, the Planning Consultant said there were 27 flats and 26 parking spaces. He said that officers had reviewed car ownership in the surrounding area. There was a bus stop nearby and the site was close enough to walk to the town centre and railway station. The Planning Consultant confirmed that KCC Highways and Transportation were satisfied with the amount of parking proposed on the site.

The Planning Consultant referred to the substation concerns and said that it would not be visible from Borden Lane and although there would be a low humming noise, this would be monitored and tested to ensure it was at an acceptable level. He said the

existing wall on the Borden Lane site would remain and explained that it was locally listed with WWII defensive gun loops.

A Member referred to Block B on the site and said that it had been empty for a number of years. He sought reassurance that the scheme would go ahead if permission was granted and the site not lay empty for a further number of years with no development taking place.

In response, the Applicant confirmed that their intention was to go ahead with the build as soon as possible after permission was granted, within a year to 18 months. The Planning Consultant further explained that the houses at the entrance to the development site would not be demolished, unless there was absolute certainty that the scheme would go ahead.

A Member sought clarification on the height of the new buildings in relation to the existing block and the dwellings along Borden Lane. The Planning Consultant said the elevations would be in-line with no. 2 Borden Lane, and he indicated where the new blocks would be sited, set lower than neighbouring dwellings due to the ground levelling off. He explained that refuse collection lorries would be able to access the site and also carry out a three-point turn on-site.

A Member sought clarification on the bio-diversity aspects of the application and when protected species would be re-located. The Planning Consultant said this would be strictly controlled by KCC Ecology.

A Member asked why the site could not be used to house the elderly and the developer explained that there were already sites that offered elderly living provision in Sittingbourne.

In response to a further question, the Planning Consultant explained that new developments were required to include measures to address climate change.

The Planning Working Group moved to the entrance of the site. The Planning Consultant explained that there would be a bell mouth entrance to the site and vehicles would be able to enter and exit the site at the same time. There were some concerns with the access having a blind spot when exiting the site, but the Planning Consultant said once the properties along London Road had been demolished, the sight lines would improve.

Members also walked along Borden Lane and looked at the site from there and they were advised that the historic wall would be repaired, and there would be access for pedestrians from Borden Lane to the application site.

#### Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel