

MEMBER QUESTION

Audit Committee 22 February 2022

Question 1 from Roger Evans

From the information supplied I have concerns with what happened at a recent meeting. I am of the opinion it raises a fundamental question and assurances need to be given that Shropshire Council complies with and follows all appropriate regulations.

A Planning Application was submitted by CORNOVII, a company wholly owned by Shropshire Council (details below). The application number was 21/01948/FUL

Please note. The decision on whether the planning application should or should not be granted is not queried.

What is queried and the subject of this question is whether all the regulations concerning how much affordable housing should the applicant (Cornovii) be required to provide. This is especially relevant since it is a Shropshire Council wholly owned company

The regulations being queried are that under normal circumstances this application would be required to supply 20% affordable housing which, with the proposed scheme of 9 dwellings, would result in 1 affordable housing being provided on site and the balance of 0.8 being provided as a financial contribution towards future affordable housing.

The scheme was presented to the Southern Planning Committee of 8th February 2022 and Sect 4.1.10 of the committee report refers to a vacant building credit bringing the affordable housing contribution down to 0.6 which is less than one dwelling and therefore just £41,094 being required from the applicant. However it has been pointed out to me that the attached application form declares that the existing floor space (for vacant building credit) is just 465m². The proposed floor area of the scheme is 2280.1m². The existing floor area therefore only represents 20.4% of the proposed development area.

This leaves a net floor area of 1815.1m². The question asked is that, under the regulations shouldn't the reduction of affordable housing contribution be reduced by a similar amount, by just 20%. The application should then provide 1 affordable house plus 0.4 financial contribution towards future affordable housing (£27,396)

This application is not submitted by a private individual but by a company that is wholly owned by Shropshire Council. The details of which are shown below and is a copy of what appears on their website.

Cornovii Developments Limited is a local authority company wholly owned by Shropshire Council

Registered office: Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND |
Registered in England and Wales No 12088975

I wish this to be examined and a reply provided so that the public can be assured that every application, including those submitted by companies owned by Shropshire Council are all dealt with in a similar and correct fashion with all appropriate regulations complied with.

Response from Cllr Brian Williams – Chair Audit Committee

Thank you for your question. I have considered with the Head of Audit the most appropriate way to deal with this issue. Whilst it is a question around compliance with policies and processes the Service area is probably the best starting point for the enquiry and the Head of Audit has therefore raised your concern with the Planning Service and asked that they provide an initial response to her.

If there is an ongoing concern about the process followed this can then be escalated through the appropriate channel which may be an independent review by Internal Audit, and you will be advised on this in due course.