

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held in The Josephine Butler Academy, Academy Road, Ashington, NE63 9FZ on Wednesday, 13 December 2017 at 5.30 pm

PRESENT

Councillor G Webb

(Chair, in the Chair for agenda items 1-3 and 6 - 7)

(Planning Vice-chair Councillor B Gallacher in the chair for items 4 and 5)

MEMBERS

E Cartie
G Davey
S Davey
J J Gobin

L Grimshaw
K Parry
J Reid
T S Wilson

OFFICERS

H Bowers
U Filby
M Ketley
J Murphy
M Patrick

Democratic Services Officer
Solicitor, Regulation
Head of Planning Services
Principal Planning Officer
Principal Highways Development
Management Officer

ALSO PRESENT

2 members of the public
2 public speakers

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lang, Nisbet, Purvis, Rickerby and Simpson.

56. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 15 November 2017, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Chair's initials

Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council - 15 November 2017

57. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor T Wilson advised that he would be speaking as Ward Councillor on planning application 17/02792/FUL and would withdraw from the planning committee and take no part in the determination of the application.

Councillor Wilson withdrew from the meeting.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

58. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The report requested Members to decide the planning applications attached to the report using the powers delegated to it. Members were reminded of the principles which should govern their consideration of the applications, the procedure for handling representations, the requirement of conditions and the need for justifiable reasons for the granting of permission or refusal of planning applications. The procedure at Planning Committees was appended for information.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

59. 17/02792/COU

Proposed development of an Early Years Centre including associated parking, landscaping and outdoor space for children. Land south of Ashington Minors Nursery, Ashington.

The application had been deferred at the last meeting of Ashington and Blyth LAC on 15 November 2017 to allow Members to undertake a site visit.

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation. The original plans for the development had been amended slightly and the overall footprint and size of the school would be smaller.

Following the presentation, Brenda Dixon spoke on behalf of residents and raised the following concerns:-

- Residents were not opposed to the building but were concerned about existing traffic problems
- There was only one exit in the lane
- Access for emergency vehicles
- The flow of traffic coming up to the school
- Parents already parking in the street even though there were yellow lines
- The public using the dentist parked in the street which did not leave any parking for visiting relatives or carers for the elderly
- Parents were concerned about the safety of young children playing in the street
- It would be unfair if residents had to pay permit parking

Councillor Tom Wilson spoke as Ward Councillor and made the following comments:-

- He was not against the new building, but had concerns about the traffic in Sycamore Street
- He was unhappy that he had not been notified initially of the planning application
- The use of motorbikes and cars in the street
- The orientation of the school could be changed to face west instead of east to alleviate traffic on Sycamore Street
- The car park across the road (Milburn Road) could be used for the parking of staff and drop off point for parents
- Whilst people initially adhere to parking restrictions, they eventually ignore them

David Street, Commissioner for Early Years and Primary spoke in support of the application:-

- The reason for the proposed development was to provide 15 hours free childcare as a statutory function of the Council
- There was an opportunity to use capital funds from Central Government, where there was most need
- Other areas in Northumberland had been taken into consideration and it had been calculated that there was a shortfall in free childcare in Ashington
- Quality provision would be provided
- There would be a new facility for the community
- It was not intended to distress the residents and the applicant wanted to work with the local community
- There was a gap in provision for childcare and it was hoped to increase the capacity of Ashington

Members then asked questions to officers and the key points from responses were:

- The reason for the amendment in plan was that some of the rooms did not need to be the size proposed for the amount of children
- The plans and health and safety features had been passed by building control
- There was not a sprinkler system as such as the proposed development was a single storey building. Smoke detectors were proposed in each room which suggested safety measures were in place
- It would be difficult to condition a sprinkler system into the recommendations as plans had been passed by Building Control and the correct measures had been agreed through design. Members were also advised that issues relating to the health and safety of a building were dealt with under separate legislation and it is not the role of the planning system to deal with such matters.
- The applicant had submitted a transport assessment and undertaken a survey. Consultation had also taken place on a parking permit scheme.

- There would be sufficient parking spaces for staff within the school and residents would be able to park in the current car parking spaces
- A Travel Plan would be produced for the proposed development for the whole of the area and was being dealt with separately to the planning application
- The site had been chosen due to the demand in the area and Members were required to consider the scheme before them

In response to a suggestion that parking spaces be added along the one way system down Milburn Road, it was advised that the highways programme was to address parking issues and the Highways Team had already examined that suggestion.

In response to a further suggestion to opening up an access to Milburn Road, Members were advised that the access had originally been blocked off for safeguarding reasons following the Dunblane incident.

Members were concerned of the impact of traffic safety in the view that the proposed development would accommodate very young children. The Principal Highways Development Management Officer advised that each application was assessed individually regardless of location.

Further concerns were raised regarding the suggestion of residents' parking permits and whether permit fees could be waived by the Authority, the Principal Highways Development Management Officer was unable to advise on that.

Following Members' questions, Councillor Parry moved the recommendation to approve the planning application which was seconded by Councillor Gallacher.

Debate then followed of which the key details were:

- There was nothing wrong with the proposed development, it was just the location
- Traffic Management Plans did not work. Parents who arrived in cars had busy lives and would not adhere to parking restrictions
- Councillor Cartie had major concerns with the application and would not be supporting the application. People would ignore any parking restrictions. The proposed parking and drop off points were dangerous for very young children
- People would park on double yellow lines and there would be no-one to enforce
- Councillor Davey also did not support the application and commented that other sites could have been chosen such as Bothal Primary School where the roads were wider. He had attended the earlier site visit where he had witnessed traffic problems
- Concern that sprinkler systems would not be used. There was a responsibility to make sure children and staff would be safe
- Councillors Grimshaw and Gobin also stated that they would be unable to support the proposed application

- The application should be refused on safety grounds as it was an unsafe site for dropping off children.

Legal advice was sought and the Solicitor advised that the parking issues were not a planning consideration. The Highways Authority had been consulted and had not objected to the application. If Members were minded to refuse the planning application, there would need to be sound planning reasons for refusal.

Councillor Parry withdrew his initial recommendation to approve, which was seconded by Councillor Gallacher.

Councillor G Davey then moved the recommendation to refuse the application which was seconded by Councillor Cartie.

The Head of Planning Services advised Members that the test in the NPPF in relation to highways safety was that there must be a severe highways impact to refuse the application on planning grounds. If Members considered this to be the case, that would be a planning reason for refusal but that the test of “severe impact” in paragraph 32 of the NPPF was a very high bar to overcome in justifying refusal of the application.

Councillor G Davey stated that the application should be rejected on highways safety grounds and until the Highways Department came up with a suitable scheme.

On being put to the vote, Members unanimously agreed to refuse the application.

RESOLVED that the application be **REFUSED** on highways safety grounds and a suitable highways safety and parking scheme put in place by the Highways Department.

60. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 10 January 2018 in Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre, Newbiggin.

The meeting ended at 6.32 pm

CHAIR.....

DATE.....