

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ASHINGTON AND BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a virtual meeting of the **Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 14 October 2020** at **2.10 pm**.

PRESENT

Councillor G Webb (Chair, in the chair for items 1-4 and 7)

Councillor J Lang (Planning Vice-Chair, in the chair for items 5 and 6)

MEMBERS

Cartie, E
Davey, G
Gallacher, B
Gobin, JJ
Grimshaw, L
Lang, JA

Nisbet, K
Parry, K
Reid, J
Rickerby, LJ
Simpson, E
Wilson, TS

OFFICERS

Blenkinsopp, J
Dixon, L
Horsman, G
More, T
Murfin R
Murphy J
Norris K

Solicitor
Democratic Services Assistant
Senior Planning Officer
Support Officer ICT
Director of Planning
Principal Planning Officer
Democratic Services Officer

95. PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT A VIRTUAL LOCAL AREA COUNCIL (PLANNING)

The Chair outlined the procedure which would be followed at the virtual meeting and of the changes to the public speaking protocol.

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Campbell, S Davey and Purvis.

97. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 11 March 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

98 . DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Councillor Webb vacated the Chair, for Planning Vice-Chair Councillor Lang to chair the development control section of the agenda, as was the arrangement for all Local Area Councils.

The Planning Vice-Chair requested the Committee 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.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

99. 19/01442/FUL

Change of use of agricultural land to static caravan/holiday park including the creation of 102 pitches, visitor reception, associated infrastructure, recreational area and wildlife corridor, land North of Sandy Bay Caravan Park, Newbiggin by the Sea, Northumberland.

There were no questions arising from the site visit videos which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

G Horsman, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the application with the aid of a slide presentation. He advised members of some updates in terms of consultations and referred to further representations circulated yesterday from the applicant and a further letter of support from Newbiggin Development Trust. The letter advised that the town was on the list of most needy areas in the North East region and, in terms of the proposal, it was felt this would assist with aspirations to develop visitor attractions in the town and that it was acceptable in terms of visual appearance. In terms of ecology mitigation monies, it was requested if these could be directed to a dolphin viewing platform within the town.

The Senior Planning Officer also advised members that a letter of objection had been received yesterday from the owners of the adjacent Links Quarry site to the immediate North East in which they made reference to their extant planning permission for a mix of dwellings and holiday lodges. They were looking to relocate an existing stone business on the site to a local industrial estate, which would create 15 additional jobs, however, that relocation was dependent upon being able to progress redevelopment of the mixed-use

scheme and they were concerned that this current proposal could prejudice implementation of that scheme. At that point Mr Horsman stressed that any issues around competition were not a material planning consideration.

A summary of the key issues was provided. In terms of ecology, reference was made to paragraph 7.47 of the report which stated that the application was acceptable subject to a contribution of £35,129 to the Council's ecology coastal mitigation service. Members were advised that the legal agreement to secure that contribution had not yet been finalised so if members decided to refuse this application, in line with officer recommendation, it would be recommended that a further refusal reason be added around that contribution not having been secured.

Members were advised that the acceptability of the proposal came down to the consideration of the economic benefits alongside the impact in terms of character and visual amenity as detailed in the report. Officers were of the opinion that economic benefits outlined did not outweigh the harm to the local landscape character and visual amenity and the recommendation was for the application to be refused for the reasons stated in the report and the third reason mentioned earlier around the contribution for ecology coastal mitigation having not been secured.

A statement in support of the application submitted by Newbiggin Town Council was read out by K Norris, Democratic Services Officer and would be attached to the signed minutes and uploaded to the Council's website.

A statement in support of the application on behalf of George F White's, the agent to the applicant, was read out by K Norris, Democratic Services Officer and would be attached to the signed minutes and uploaded to the website.

In response to questions from members of the committee the following information was provided:

- The design of the clubhouse did not make any provision for social distancing or other Covid-19 restrictions. The application was submitted prior to the start of the pandemic and no change to the proposed design had been put forward.
- There was some detail on the site plan around refuse storage and facilities.
- Should members be minded to approve the application, the issues raised around recycling of glass and electric vehicle charging points could be addressed with the applicant through conditions and would be attached to any approval.

At that point Rob Murfin, the Director of Planning, gave a strategic view of the application and said the Council supported tourism in the county but could not automatically equate to accept tourism related development anywhere without looking at policy and harm. Even by admission of the applicant, this development would cause harm.

Officers were particularly concerned about the impact on the coastal footpath, which was an equally important part of tourism for the county. For members to make a reasonable decision, Mr Murfin said they would need to accept that the policy approach was correct. If they were minded to support the application, they should consider if they would be placing less weight on the issue of coalescence and the impact of this site and placing more weight on the economic benefit. They were entitled to do that should they so wish but he maintained that the policy approach, as outlined in the officer's report, was correct. He added that there had been a change in wording from job forecasts to securing jobs and said these were mostly in relation to the construction phase rather than the number of jobs on the site.

If members were convinced that the economic benefit outweighed the harm caused by coalescence and were minded to move to approval, the Director of Planning advised them not to make a decision today but delegate authority to himself to negotiate the details of the scheme. He would cover all of the points made and would also look more closely at screening the site from the coastal path. The total scheme would need a lengthy list of planning conditions attached and he would negotiate these in detail with the applicant to agree a scheme and consult with the Chair at that point.

Councillor Reid moved refusal in line with officer recommendation and the extra reason regarding the contribution for ecology coastal mitigation having not been secured. There was no seconder for the motion and it therefore fell.

Councillor Cartie moved approval of the application with delegated authority to the Director of Planning to negotiate conditions as previously outlined which was seconded by Councillor Nisbett.

The motion was repeated as minded to approve the application subject to conditions being required, with delegated authority being provided to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair, to agree conditions with the applicant and to circulate them to the committee and also subject to a Section 106 Agreement for the coastal mitigation contribution. If the conditions could not be agreed then the matter should come back to this Committee for re-determination.

In response to comments the Director of Planning said he would negotiate planning conditions and if they were secured to his satisfaction he would consult with the Chair and circulate a briefing note to members.

Members commented as follows:

- Officers had weighed up the benefits and disadvantages of this proposal and had said the application should be refused. There were no extenuating circumstances to change the recommendations and the applicant could appeal.
- As a general point, going forward members should consider the consequences of Covid-19 and when applications were made for public

buildings, social distancing should be a consideration. The Council should be promoting Northumberland as a safe place to visit and live.

- South East Northumberland was a deprived area, it was an area of beauty which needed to be rejuvenated. Caravan parks were taking measures to be secure and this was an ideal place for this kind of application.
- The application was vital for the recovery of the economy in Newbiggin
- The people of Newbiggin were in support of the application, only the officers were against it.
- Behind the line of site and caravan park, there were windmills in the sea.
- The number of FTE people to be employed may not be as many as first stated but the local community would benefit from the proposal.
- The issues relating to the coastal path could be addressed going forward.

Discussion ensued about Councillor Simpson being Ward Councillor and on a point of clarification, the Director of Planning said members were required to make a decision as a planning committee. Councillor Simpson's role as Ward Member could be addressed in terms of her providing feedback to the Town Council and some wording could be provided for her use in that regard.

Members were advised that they would need to provide reasons for approval as it was against the officer's recommendations. Following discussion, the reason for approval of the application was for the economic benefit of the whole of the county of Northumberland, particularly for the deprived area of Newbiggin. The Director of Planning suggested some wording as follows:

'that the economic benefits likely to accrue from the proposal would outweigh the identified harm'.

The motion was repeated as follows:

Members were minded to approve the application subject to conditions being required, with delegated authority being provided to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair, to agree conditions with the applicant and to circulate them to committee and also subject to a Section 106 Agreement for the coastal mitigation contribution. If the conditions could not be agreed then the matter should come back to this Committee for determination.

A vote was taken on the proposal outlined above as follows:- FOR 11; AGAINST 1; ABSTENTIONS; 1.

RESOLVED that the Committee be MINDED TO GRANT the application subject to conditions being required, with delegated authority being provided to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair, to agree conditions with the applicant and to circulate them to committee and also subject to a Section 106 Agreement for the coastal mitigation contribution. If the conditions could not be agreed then the matter should come back to this Committee for determination.

The meeting closed at 3:50 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____