

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held in Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, Ponteland, NE20 9NX on Monday, 9 July 2018 at 5.30pm.

**PRESENT**

Councillor E. Armstrong  
(Chair, in the Chair)

**COUNCILLORS**

Bawn, D.	Jones, V. (part)
Beynon, J.A	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Dodd, R.R.	Towns, D.J
Foster, J.D.	Wearmouth. R. (part)
Jackson, P.	

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Bird, M.	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Filby, U.	Solicitor
Murphy, J.	Principal Planning Officer
Patrick, M.	Principal Highways Management Delivery Officer
Sanderson, J.	Senior Planning Manager - Planning Policy
Sinnamon, E.	Interim Head of Planning Services
Smith, S.	Digital Design and Delivery Manager
Soulsby, R.	Planning Officer
S. Rickitt - Northumberland Association of Local Councils	
J. McDonald, V. Walsh - Karbon Homes	

20 members of the public and one member of the press were in attendance.

**28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dickinson, Dunn and Ledger. Councillor Wearmouth had given his apologies about arriving late at the meeting.

**29. MINUTES**

Ch.'s Initials.....

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday, 11 June 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL**

### **30. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The attached report explained how the Local Area Council needed to decide the planning applications attached to this agenda using the powers delegated to it. and included details of the public speaking arrangements. (Report attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A.)

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **31. 17/04301/FUL**

**Construction of 1 no. dwellinghouses (C3 use) (as amended 08/03/18)  
Kirkups Corner, East Road, Longhorsley, NE65 8SY**

Ryan Soulsby, Planning Officer, introduced the application by firstly explaining that the amendment to the application concerned the reduction from two to one dwelling. He continued introducing the application using a slides presentation.

Paul Kerr, then spoke in objection to the application, of which his key points were:

- it would result in a lack of privacy as the proposed property's bedroom windows would look into their bedroom windows. The other neighbouring development had been designed to avoid such privacy issues and had been undertaken with much cooperation. Using opaque glass for bedroom windows was not appropriate
- it was not in keeping with the Conservation Area
- it would lead to a loss in village green land and there would be difficulties with access to the site
- it was contrary to parts of the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan, did not provide any positive social or environmental benefits, and neither preserved or enhanced the Neighbourhood Plan, all requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework
- it would have an adverse impact, as an 8 metre high building that would look directly at his house, whereas a bungalow at the location would have been acceptable.

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

- it would impact on a section of registered village green land, but this was a legal matter, not a material planning consideration. Planning permission could be granted for this application but the land in question would then have to be deregistered from its village green status, which would require an application to the Secretary of State
- the separation distance was 18 metres. Condition 3 required the side windows to be permanently opaque
- the main bedrooms were not facing the objector's property, as they were sited on the eastern elevations
- the previous application had been for two dwellings and this was for one; the orientation for this development was slightly different and it was unlikely that support

would be given for fitting another property on the site, as that was considered to constitute overdevelopment.

Councillor Dodd then moved the officer recommendation to grant the application. This was seconded by Councillor Towns.

Debate then followed of which the key points from members were:

- although the application was supported on planning grounds, the village green deregistration process was unlikely to succeed
- the site was not big enough to fit another house on in future.

On being put to the vote, the motion to grant the application was agreed by six votes in support to one against and one abstention, and it was thus:

**RESOLVED** that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report.

### **32. APPEAL UPDATE**

Members receives information on the progress of planning appeals. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix D.)

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

*(The meeting then adjourned at 5.45pm and reconvened at 6.00pm. Councillor Wearmouth arrived at 5.50pm.)*

### **33. COMMUNITY CHEST AWARDS**

This item had been arranged for a second round of presenting certificates to recipients of Community Chest funding, following the last presentations given in February 2018. Vice-chair Councillor Beynon, chair of this Local Area Council's Grants Panel, introduced the item by referring to the benefits of the scheme, the difference it made to enable some projects to go ahead and help support local organisations. If anybody knew any organisations that might benefit from the funding, they should let others know about it and encourage them to apply.

Councillor Beynon then presented certificates to representatives of the following organisations that had all received funding recently. Funding recipients were congratulated and photographs were taken.

- Ellington Ladies Club
- Collingwood School & Media Arts College
- SEND to Learn
- Morpeth Explorer Scouts
- Guidepost Scout Group.

### **34. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**Stephen Rickitt, clerk to Mitford Parish Council** referred to the recent court planning

appeal decision about Tranwell. On behalf of the Parish Council he raised concerns around settlement boundaries for Tranwell Woods. It was proposed in the draft Local Plan that it would be washed over by the Green Belt, but what would be the position regarding existing boundaries and would settlement boundaries be considered at the final stage of the Local Plan? By not putting a boundary in, it could lead to greater uncertainties regarding infilling and other concerns, so could the plans be amended later to put settlement boundaries in?

The Interim Head of Planning Services advised that Tranwell Woods did not have a settlement boundary in the draft Local Plan which reflected the fact that one had not been proposed in the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan. The recent Court Of Appeal decision was acknowledged and reassurance was given that applications similar to the court decision would be assessed against the guidance in the Judgement and that they would be assessed on a case by case basis.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **35. PETITIONS**

No new petitions were received, nor were any updates available on petitions previously considered.

Members then considered a report, which acknowledged the petition received in respect of Riversdale House, Stakeford and responded to the petitioner's specific request that consideration be given to the compulsory purchase of the building or the introduction of selective licensing as a means of addressing current concerns, and set out the general background and issues associated with the building and action taken to date by the Council. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix E.)

Printed copies of a number of photographs of the site, as provided by the lead petitioner, were circulated at the meeting. (Copy attached to the official minutes.)

Lead petitioner Marjorie Glass then addressed the meeting about the petition. She expressed sympathy for law abiding residents still living at Riversdale House who had to live in poor conditions. The majority of local residents were older occupiers and felt intimidated by the language and disturbances caused by some residents at Riversdale House. There had been problems there for 30 of the 38 years that she and her husband had lived nearby. The situation had not been resolved and a duty of care was owed to local residents. The police had most recently attended an incident at the location on 5 July. 92 incidents had been reported between February 2017 to February 2018. The flats were neglected and landlords failed to do repair and maintenance requirements. Flytipping was endemic, windows and doors were left open, some but not other properties were boarded up, grass was rarely cut and trees and bushes were not maintained. Soiled clothes and sanitary products had been witnessed on the grounds. Residents wanted the County Council to take ownership of the situation, to include a meeting with Choppington Parish Council and local member Councillor Julie Foster, plus a follow up meeting organised in six months' time.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection then responded. He had met with Mr and Mrs Glass to discuss and was happy to commit to the three requests made in Mrs Glass's

concluding statement. A number of landlords were not managing their properties, so work needed to take place with them to discuss how those arrangements could be improved to reduce the impact on the local community. A new agent was being proactive and was going to attend meetings with housing and environmental health officers and the police. Ownership would be taken of the issues and work organised with residents and Choppington Parish Council to address the situation. The two options listed in the petition, compulsory purchase orders or selective licensing, would require an evidence base, but work would take place in the meantime to try and address the issues of concern.

Local member Councillor Foster then supported Mrs Glass's comments and referred to over 30 years' work trying to resolve the problem, beforehand by Councillor Ledger with Wansbeck District Council and now with Northumberland County Council. Previous efforts to work with landlords to resolve the problem had not succeeded but the Head of Housing and Public Protection had taken ownership of it, and a full rather than a partial solution was required. Older residents had been intimidated and the property stretched police resources. Hopefully the work with the new agent would be successful, and an update should be provided for the Local Area Council in six months' time. She praised Mr and Mrs Glass for the tireless work they had put into the petition, much of this over winter.

A member thanked Mrs Glass for her eloquent and compelling speech and asked for clarification about the Council's compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers and whether they could be used in these circumstances. Mr Soderquest advised that a number of options had been considered and a strong evidence base was required to pursue the CPO option, which was the imposition of control of the last resort. The owners need to be questioned on why they wouldn't invest; one agent owned 15 properties but many agents only owned one each. It was essential to be clear about what action was being taken and what outcome was to be achieved.

A member asked whether untidy land notices could be issued in the circumstances, to which Mr Soderquest advised that all options continued to be reviewed, with reference to the new agent's work and improving the tenancy management arrangements. Members stressed that an evidence trail needed to be compiled and it was proposed suggested that updates should continue on a six monthly basis until the problems were resolved.

A local resident from Lansdowne Gardens expressed concern that the local paper advertised that properties were available to rent at Riversdale House without any bond or other evidence for £303 per month. He could regularly hear foul language and shouting from Riversdale House until 4am in the morning.

The Chair thanked Mr and Mrs Glass for their time and attendance and it was:

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) it be noted that the Private Sector Housing Team has contacted each of the owners by letter offering advice and support to appropriately tenant and manage the properties, and that all responses are being logged and the team will work actively with those owners wishing to access this guidance;
- (2) support be expressed for the Public Protection Environmental Enforcement Team continuing to proactively visit the locality on a weekly basis to monitor and manage the area to ensure an appropriate condition level is maintained; and

- (3) six monthly updates on the situation continue to be provided until members are satisfied that the problems have been addressed.

## **36. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

Members received a verbal update from the Area Managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services in attendance about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work for the attention of members of the Local Area Council, with the opportunity for members to ask questions afterwards.

### **Neighbourhood Services update:**

- two new refuse vehicles had now been delivered
- the Morpeth area had recently received its sixth grass cut of the year. Some had been suspended whilst the weather was warm and dry, which had enabled strimming work to be carried out
- Northumbria in Bloom in Britain in Bloom competitions were taking place over the coming weeks
- weed control work had been successful. Members should let officers know if any areas had been missed. No formal complaints had been received about the use of blue dye. Information cards had been issued for staff, which had worked well and enabled them to reassure residents
- verge cutting was on target, at the level as the same time last year.

### **Technical Services update:**

Work continued to take place to catch up on potholes caused by March's inclement weather, with officers also working at weekends. Additional funding had assisted and further road inspections would continue to take place. Members let officers know about any areas that they thought needed attention. Work would take place to make roads safe and the network useable. Further progress would be made over the next six months. Different road treatment types were being used. Part of the long term plan was to reduce the need for the amount of reactive pothole fixing.

In reply to a question about the amount of permanent patching being undertaken, members were advised about how micro-asphalting sealed surfaces and was long lasting. Work had to take place to ensure the highways were safe, reduce public liability claims, and traffic management arrangements were organised when required, including a programme in place for Castle Morpeth. An asset management approach was prioritised. By intervening sooner, substantial savings could be made.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that some complaints had been received prior to recent cycling events, but liaison had taken place with the event organisers. Inspections had been undertaken between two to three months in advance of the events, repairs had been organised, and no problems had been reported since.

Councillor Sanderson paid tribute to officers who provided these front line services. More permanent patching was being undertaken and the results were clear to see locally. Mr King and Mr Wardle were thanked for their attendance and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the updates be noted.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 37. KARBON HOMES

Members received a verbal update about proposals for Athol House from Jon McDonald (Older Persons Manager) and Vince Walsh (Development Manager).

Mr Walsh advised that funding had been secured between two to three years earlier for the redevelopment of Athol House, and consultation had taken place. Informal planning advice had been received but an application had not yet been submitted. Investigative work was taking place, as for example the site was near the River Pont. A further update would be provided in due course with details of what the scheme might look like. Any residents currently housed there would be able to return afterwards. The timescale was expected to be between 6 to 12 months, as planning permission would also be required for the demolition. Officers were continuing to identify properties for residents to move on to.

In response to a question, members were advised that residents had been reassured and provided support about their accommodation, and would be rehoused when suitable properties became available; residents wished to remain locally.

In response to a query about the shortage of alternative suitable local accommodation and not forcing anybody out, members were advised that the process to decant would take time, but it was a larger development with a longer gestation period, which would allow time for residents to be rehoused.

The Chair acknowledged that the process took time and she had and would continue to receive regular updates. Mr McDonald and Mr Walsh were thanked for their attendance and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

### 38. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

Members received a verbal overview from Stephen Rickitt, Northumberland Association of Local Councils Chief Officer, about recent changes to the data protection regime in the UK, including the new Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). The main provisions took effect from 25 May 2018. The presentation covered how town and parish councils were affected, of which the key details provided were:

- until six months previously there had been proposals for town/parish councils to each have to appoint a data protection officer, at a cost of around £300 per annum. However following lobbying, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport had decided not to require this
- data protection rules going back to 1984 still applied, however a new key change was that personal data could only be used if legal authority had been provided to do so. For example information could not be provided for a general mailout, but only used for the purpose for which it was there. People now had to opt in rather than out for their information to be used

- the National Association of Local Councils had provided a toolkit for town and parish councils to use, including templates and policies, which Mr Rickitt advised to adopt as written as they covered every eventuality
- the changes also provided a good opportunity for information 'housekeeping' by deleting unrequired old emails and depositing committee papers and minutes at Woodhorn Archives
- Mr Rickitt had provided training recently, which had been well attended
- clarification was expected about fees for support for town and parish councils, provisionally £40 per year or £35 if by direct debit, with a wide range of exemptions being considered, including the possibility of smaller parish councils being exempt from any costs. Guidance would also cover the position for individual councillors
- a number of updates continued to be provided on the Information Commissioner's website.

Mr Rickitt was thanked for his attendance and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **39. Northumberland Local Plan - Regulation 18 Draft Plan**

Members received a report and presentation providing an update on the Northumberland Local Plan and details of the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation. (Report attached to the official minutes as Appendix F.)

Senior Planning Manager - Planning Policy Joan Sanderson provided a presentation (copy attached to Appendix F with the official minutes) of which the details were:

- progress to date: preparing new Local Plan; number of updates to existing evidence base studies; call for sites undertaken; draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report undertaken; working with internal and external partners on evidence base; studies and draft policies; Working Group reviewing and inputting into development of draft policies; working with Neighbourhood Plan Groups; Spring 2018 Local Plan consultation; threat of government intervention
- new plan would have full coverage and last from 2016-2036
- the Local Plan would set the strategic planning policies of the Council; set the general scale and distribution of new development to 2036; provide the planning principles, including detailed 'development management'; policies to guide planning decisions; show in detail where new homes, workplaces and facilities would be located through allocations of land; show key environmental designations and include site specific proposals for the conservation and enhancement of historic and natural assets; cover the whole of Northumberland (except the National Park); replace all local plans and core strategies; run alongside recent and new Neighbourhood Plans
- the draft vision of the Local Plan, and its objectives: growing and diversifying the Northumberland economy; extending housing choice; conserving and enhancing the environment and environmental assets; improving connectivity and movement; supporting healthy, sustainable communities by responding to service needs; mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change; the prudent use of natural resources; ensuring high quality design of buildings and spaces
- delivering the vision: plan needed to define level and distribution of development and include specific policies to deliver the vision; ambitious growth scenario for



employment - aligned with the Strategic Economic Plan, North of Tyne and Borderlands Initiative; the plan included a spatial guide to location of development; main towns were main focus for development; Service Centres would accommodate development that maintains and strengthen their roles; Smaller scale development in other Service Villages and clusters of smaller settlements

- no Green Belt deletions were proposed other than for employment
- details of policies on climate change mitigation and adaptations, health and wellbeing and design
- use and details of settlement boundaries and Green Belt boundaries, including: the Green Belt around Morpeth; Morpeth and Ponteland as main towns; Service Centres (Guidpost/Stakeford); Seervice Centres (Broomhill/Togston and Choppington, Ellington, Hadston, Broomhill/Red Row, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Longhorsley, Lynemouth, Pegswood, Stamfordham, Stannington, Widdrington Station), Smaller settlements (Capheaton, Cresswell, Hartburn, Hebron, Hepscott, Ingoe, Kirkheaton, Linton, Loinghirst, Matfen, Medburn, Mitford, Netherwitton, Ogle, Stobswood, Ulgham, West Thirston, Whalton)
- consultation timescales and next steps.

Ms Sanderson was thanked for her presentation and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the report and presentation be noted.

## **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **40. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS SCHEMES**

Members received a progress report date as of July 2018. (Attached to the official minutes as Appendix G.)

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **41. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were asked to note the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings. (Attached to the official minutes as Appendix H.)

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **42. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Monday, 13 August 2018 in the Council Chamber, Morpeth.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_.

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_.