

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held in the Council Chamber on Monday, 12 August 2019.

PRESENT

Councillor L. Dunn
(Planning Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Armstrong, E.
Bawn, D.L.
Beynon, J.A
Dodd, R.R.

Jones, V.
Sanderson, H.G.H.
Wearmouth, R.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bennett, Mrs L.M.
Brookes, D.
Kelly, S.
Laughton, R.
Masson, N.
Murphy, J.

Senior Democratic Services Officer
Infrastructure Records Manager
Building Conservation Officer
Planning Officer
Principal Solicitor
Principal Planning Officer

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Dickinson, J.D. Foster, D. Ledger and D.J. Towns.

41. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday, 8 July 2019 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

42. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of Members' interests.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

43. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The attached report explained how the Local Area Council was asked 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

44. 19/01298/FUL

**Proposed replacement of existing main entrance timber doors, with fully glazed doors, within a slim timber frame (resubmission).
St Georges United Reformed Church, Bridge Street, Morpeth, Northumberland,
NE61 1PD**

Richard Laughton, Planning Officer, introduced the application and provided a brief overview. He informed Members of an error in paragraph 7.19 of the report. The first sentence should read:-

“..... as the impact of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset has not been properly considered and it has not been demonstrated that the benefits will outweigh the harm of the development.”

Councillor A. Tebbutt addressed the meeting speaking on behalf of Morpeth Town Council. His key points included the following:-

- Morpeth Town Council believed that conservation and heritage in Morpeth was very important and there was a duty to maintain and enhance it by protecting the Conservation Area.
- Protection of the Conservation Area was central to the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan as outlined in policies Sus1, Des 2, Her 1 and Emp1.
- Morpeth Town Council had debated the application, believing it to be in conflict with the Conservation Area and resolved to support the view of the Conservation Officer, although those views were not known at that time.
- The Town Council supported the church elders' objective of making the church more open, however, the church community was already very welcoming.
- The church was opposite Morpeth's oldest building, the Morpeth Chantry, and in the heart of Morpeth.
- The oak doors complemented the overall view of the building and the loss of these doors would be detrimental to the immediate area.
- Morpeth Town Council hoped that the application would be rejected on the grounds that it did harm to the Morpeth Conservation Area and as such was in conflict with the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan and the specific policies previously referred to.

Mr. K. Anderson addressed the meeting speaking in support of the application. His key points included the following:-

- He was a Member of the church and was representing the congregation.
- The church was not just a building but was also the congregation and an important part of the community.
- The church was not only a place of worship but also provided meeting rooms, held concerts and hosted events such as the Lions' Christmas Party.
- The church used its space to good effect. The pews had been replaced by chairs and this had been well received.
- It was important that the church was seen to be open to all and the church wanted to move away from the perception of being behind closed doors.
- The doors were not of good quality and they caused draughts. Something needed to be done to improve them.
- If the application was successful it was planned to also install inner glass doors which it was hoped would give better access flow.
- The application was not out of the norm as many churches, including a number in Newcastle, had made similar changes.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:-

- A similar application had been approved at Stamfordham.
- The Conservation Officer had dealt with a number of similar applications. Some needed planning approval as it was not permitted development or if it was in a Conservation Area.
- It was not possible at this stage to return to the applicants to seek to negotiate changes to the plans, design or use of materials.
- The planners were always happy to engage with applicants at an early stage, pre application, but in this instance there had been no contact from the applicants.
- By the time this application was received officers were limited in the time available to make comments.
- The building was late 19th Century and gothic in style.
- The doors fitted in with the style of the building and the surrounding ironmongery. Irrespective of whether the doors were original or not, they were of good quality.
- The only drawings available to members were those provided with the application and shown as part of the presentation.
- The Conservation Officer's view was that the proposal would lead to a loss of the historic fabric of the area with the church sitting in the Designated Conservation Area and lead to harm to the host building.

Councillor E. Armstrong then proposed the officer recommendation to refuse the application. There was no seconder, so the motion fell.

Councillor D.L. Bawn proposed that the approval be granted as the benefits of the proposal outweighed the potential harm. This was seconded by Councillor H.G.H. Sanderson.

Debate then followed and key points from members to explain the reasons for the motion included:

- Similar glass doors had been seen in older churches.

- The closed dark Victorian doors were not very attractive.
- The benefits of the proposal would outweigh any harm and it would be beneficial to open up the church in a sympathetic way.
- The report referred to the doors “.....providing security for worshippers; and spiritually as the passage from one world to another (secular to sacred).....” However, the church was trying to break down such barriers and it was inappropriate for religious doctrinal reasons to be contained in the report.
- The principle of the proposal should be encouraged with the details controlled by conditions.
- The proposal would improve the building and change its dynamic.
- Glass had been used on the Chantry building which was a Grade I Listed Building. There should be consistency.
- It was important to experience the Conservation Area and not to keep it preserved in aspic.
- Further discussions should take place to try and reach a compromise with the applicant regarding the design and type of materials used and to control this via conditions
- The application did not have a proper visual display and so the details should be worked on with delegated powers to the Director of Planning to agree them.

The Principal Planning Officer stressed that Members had to decide the application on the design and materials that were in front of them and it was not possible to suggest alternatives at this stage. On further inspection of the plans, it was confirmed that application was for fully glazed double doors in a timber surround. The church logo would be included within the design with details to be confirmed. It was stressed that it was only the design of the logo which was to be confirmed and that all other details would remain as detailed in the plans.

In response to a question, the Principal Solicitor advised that if Members wished to defer the consideration for further details, then Councillor Bawn and his seconder would have to withdraw the motion to approve, and another motion to defer would have to be proposed and seconded.

On being put to the vote, it was agreed by 4 votes for to 2 against with 2 abstentions, that it be

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** on the grounds that the public benefits of the proposal outweighed any harm with authority delegated to the Director of Planning to determine the wording of the conditions.

45. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

RESOLVED that the contents of the report in respect of the progress of planning appeal that have been submitted to and determined by the Planning Inspectorate be noted.

RIGHTS OF WAY

**46. Review of the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way
Alleged Public Bridleway No. 54, Parish of Stannington**

The Infrastructure Records Manager introduced the above report in which Members were asked to consider all the relevant evidence gathered in support and in rebuttal of a proposal to upgrade to Public Bridleway existing Parish of Stannington Public Footpath No. 17 from a point on the eastern boundary of the A1 trunk road at the junction with Public Footpath No. 46 in an easterly direction, in part over the access road to Briery Hill farm, to join existing Public Bridleway No. 51 north-east of Plessey Mill Farm.

Background information and clarification about the status of the route were provided.

In response to a query from Members regarding the safety of users of the proposed bridleway, the Infrastructure Records Manager reported that it was not expected that horseriders would use the crossing of the A1 for safety reasons. The terminology, bridleway, was intended to just confirm the historical evidence of its use as a bridleway. If the recommendation was agreed and an Order confirmed, then there would be further discussions with the landowners regarding alternative options such as possibly creating a diversion to include a safe crossing place.

It was noted that from 2026 it would no longer be possible to consider applications to record public rights of way based on historical documentary information. It was likely that a number of such applications would be received to prevent these routes being lost forever before the 2026 cut off date.

Councillor R. Wearmouth proposed acceptance of the recommendation as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor D.L. Bawn.

Upon being put to the vote the motion was unanimously agreed and it was

RESOLVED that it be agreed that:

In the light of the evidence submitted it appears that public bridleway rights have, on the balance of probability, been proven to exist over the route.

47. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 9 September 2019, at 4.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth.

CHAIRMAN

DATE