

Briefing Note

Our ref 23218/01/MHE/AWi
Date 2 December 2020
To Northumberland County Council
From Lichfields
Copy Ashford Residential

Subject **Planning Committee Statement - 20/01601/FUL: Residential development of 18no. units with associated infrastructure**

1.0 Statement to Committee – 7th December 2020

- 1.1 On behalf of Ashford Residential, we thank members for this opportunity to submit a statement in support of this application. Your officer's report is a comprehensive and accurate representation of the application before you today. It includes a robust assessment of the proposed development against the relevant planning policies as well as a comparison with the previous application submitted by McCarthy & Stone.
- 1.2 The application before you today involved a complete redesign from the scheme which was refused in 2013. Ashford Residential have no association with the previous scheme and have sought to differentiate themselves from that application at every point.
- 1.3 The applicant appointed the local award-winning architect, JDDK, to design a scheme which responds to the local design characteristics found in this part of Morpeth. As you have seen from the images shown on screen, this includes important details like materials selection, window size and proportions and architectural detailing. As a result, there was overwhelming recognition at our consultation event that the design represented a vast improvement over the previous application.
- 1.4 The design approach has been to build a scheme which is attractive to those downsizing from family housing, helping to free up traditional family housing in the town.
- 1.5 Whilst we recognise some people will object to development, we have sought to address their concerns and exceed the policy requirements in aspects of design and amenity. Following the public consultation event held at the KEVI Youth Centre, the Directors of Ashford Residential offered to meet with residents of South Terrace and School Close to discuss detailed aspects of the design and any concerns they had. We worked with residents to take detailed levels of their properties and provide accurate drawings of how the scheme would appear from their properties. Whilst the scheme we consulted upon did meet with the Council's separation distances, we acknowledged the higher level of the development site and so reduced the scheme by two units and omitted south facing windows and roof terrace, further improving its relationship with neighbouring properties. We also included more tree planting and a separate communal garden area for use by residents to the south.
- 1.6 The commitment to positive engagement with residents provides clear demonstration of Ashford Residential's approach to quality development and not simply maximising the developable area, as had been the case with the previous McCarthy & Stone scheme.

- 1.7 Your officer's report and presentation has explained these relationships, with the closest parts of the development being between 35 and 40m to existing dwellings. Distances were increased to this following discussion with residents and are around twice the distance policy would usually require. In this case the elevations are also set at oblique angles, further reducing any amenity issues.
- 1.8 In terms of the principle of development, your officer's report sets out compliance with the relevant policies of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Importantly, the previous appeal decision confirmed the principle of development was acceptable. These are also the same policies considered in the recent Pottery Bank appeal, which also found the principle of development to be acceptable.
- 1.9 In other areas, the scheme has responded to the concerns raised. In terms of drainage, it is an absolute requirement of planning to demonstrate the development will not increase the risk of flooding beyond the site. This has been achieved through on-site rainwater storage which will reduce flows into the surface water drainage system. Any increased risk of flooding beyond the site would result in objections from the Environment Agency and LLFA, both of whom are supportive of the application with appropriate conditions.
- 1.10 Access to the site has not only been redesigned from the previous scheme to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety, but it has also been subject to an independent road safety audit. The road safety audit identified some minor design tweaks which were resolved before submission of the planning application. Subsequently, the Council's highways officers recommend approval of the application subject to appropriate conditions.
- 1.11 In summary, the application exceeds policy requirements for separations distances, adopts a quality design which reflects local vernacular, is of an appropriate scale and mass which significantly improves upon the previous scheme, is policy compliant on affordable housing and education making a combined contribution of £288,000, exceeds cycle parking and electric vehicle charging point requirements, is safe for pedestrians and vehicles and is policy compliant in all other respects.
- 1.12 We respectfully request members follow the officer recommendation in approving planning permission.
- 1.13 Thank you.

Word count: 750