

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held at St. James's Church Centre (upstairs hall), Pottergate, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1JW on Thursday, 20 December 2018 at 3.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor T. Thorne
(Planning Vice-chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

T. Clark
G. Hill
R. Moore
W. Pattison

G. Renner-Thompson
G. Roughead
J. Watson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

J. Bellis
M. Bird
J. Blenkinsopp
G. Fairs
D. Hadden
N. Masson
C. McDonagh
H. Parkin

J. Sharp
E. Sinnamon

Senior Planning Officer
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Lawyer (observing)
Highways Development Manager
Lawyer (observing)
Principal Solicitor
Planning Officer
Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk
Management Officer
Planning Officer
Interim Head of Planning Services

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

131. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bridgett, Castle, Lawrie, Murray and Seymour.

132. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday, 22 November 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true

Ch.'s Initials.....

record and signed by the Vice-chair (Planning), subject to the first sentence in minute 128 being amended to say Berwick **Regeneration** (not 'Review') Commission.

133. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

- Councillor Moore declared an interest in relation to application 18/01893/FUL. He left the meeting whilst it was discussed
- Councillor Clark declared an interest in relation to item 18/01020/OUT as the applicant was his employer Northumberland Estates. He left the meeting whilst it was discussed.

134. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The report explained how the Local Area Council was asked to decide the planning applications attached to the agenda using the powers delegated to it. (Report and applications enclosed with official minutes as Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(Councillor Clark then left the meeting.)

135. 18/01020/OUT

**Outline Application (With Layout), 15 Dwellings (100% Self Build Plots) & Landscaped Area
Land North East of Stoney Hills, Alnwick**

James Bellis, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the application by firstly providing an update. An additional condition was recommended to require the road widening scheme to be completed ahead of the development, so all properties in the proposal could be accessed from that road. Mr Bellis then continued introducing the application with the aid of a slides presentation.

Public speaking slots then followed. Councillor Castle had submitted his apologies for the meeting, but had produced a written statement which he had requested to be read out, which was as follows:

"I have known this area from boyhood as open countryside crossed by extensively used footpaths that emphasise its rural nature. The field is a short distance west of the nearest settlement of Fairfields that is itself east of the Stoney Hills footpath, which has long comprised an effective settlement boundary of the town. The four long established and discreetly hidden houses amongst trees on the western fringe of the field are almost invisible from the footpath and emphasis the rurality of the setting. They do not invite infill enclosure to the east by any stretch of the imagination, save from a desktop view.

"The only practical means of access to the proposed 15 dwellings would be via a presently non-existent road conveniently proposed from the western edge of 10 houses recently given planning permission because, and only because, their site is on a car park of the soon to be moved Golf Club HQ and thus brown field. This

access road is not even in front of you for consideration other than as part of the reserved matters aspect of the application.

“I never reject officer views without solid planning grounds, but you certainly have them here in the shape of a quite unacceptable impact on the magnificent rural setting of the site, which was surely confirmed to members present on Monday and was never even thought likely to be threatened when the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan was finalised. I ask members to refuse this application.”

Martin Swinbank shared the local councillor speaking slot with Councillor Castle by speaking on behalf of Alnwick Town Council, of which his key points were:

- Alnwick Town Council objected to the application, which was proposed on green field land not allocated for housing within the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and had not been identified as potentially for development during the formation of the plan
- it was outside of the Alnwick settlement boundary as per the draft Local Plan
- it did not meet the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan due to the site’s unique rural character, open to views from the south and east of the town
- it would impact on local tranquility. The deciduous wood to the west of the site was an important habitat of principal importance in England. The proposal would sever an important access corridor and impact on local biodiversity.

Guy Munden then spoke in support of the application, of which his key points were:

- the land was not allocated for development in the Neighbourhood Plan, but the proposal was not inconsistent with the plan. The site counted as white land and a windfall site. Between 2015-31, 50 houses needed to be built on windfall sites, and this application would account for 15 of those 50, meeting the quota for five years’ worth
- the site was well contained and not in the open countryside. The local landscape was residential in character and not visible within the wider landscape. The applicant had reduced the number of plots from 19 to 15. The amenity feature would complement the woodland area to the west of the site
- the proposed highways work would include resurfacing, the widening of footpaths and creating a public right of way, assisting pedestrian safety and connectivity
- there was a limited supply of self build opportunities in Alnwick. The proposal adhered to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 68 regarding meeting the housing requirements of the area
- the application also included a Section 106 contribution of £200,000 towards education, affordable housing and coastal mitigation costs.

Members then asked questions, to which the key details of officers’ responses were:

- future applications would be required for the individual plots and be subject to the full planning process including seeking comments from consultees, but the applicant had been asked to provide a design strategy first
- officers considered the application acceptable in relation to the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan; landscape issues would be considered and consulted on at the later detailed stage of the process, when more control would be available over that part of the proposals. Such assessments did include subjective considerations

- during discussions, relevant consultees felt that the application would cause no harm to local historical features
- regarding the timing of receiving the S106 payments, not all schemes included the final payment trigger once developments had been completed. For this application, the first amount would be due once five properties were sold, not when they were occupied. Even if a site was not built, once sold the contribution would be required. This would be covered when the agreements were drafted
- the £102,000 education contribution had been calculated on the basis of the needs of three local primary schools and two pupils at secondary level. Contributions could not be required if schools had spare places. The amounts for education contributions were calculated using a formula and evidential basis. Any council department asking for a S106 contribution had to evidence why they were asking for the amount requested, and the total on this occasion was based on the needs identified for the 15 dwellings proposed
- the existing highways arrangements already provided the through route into the site; some road widening was proposed. Possible additional congestion on local roads caused by this application, including Blakelaw Road, had to be considered but were not considered to significant enough that a reason for refusal could be substantiated
- it would be difficult to undertake a full landscape assessment until the designs were received
- two trees could be potentially cut down to allow for the development, but this would be subject to the reserved matters stage. One was not considered worthy of retention due to its poor condition. They might remain depending upon the further detail yet to be presented
- it was not appropriate to include a share of affordable housing within the 15 properties proposed as they were all self build and a commuted sum approach would be required in place of this
- officers considered that all the issues proposed in the application were acceptable in principle and the proposal was achievable; they felt that the application would not have a negative impact on the landscape
- If members wished, a landscape and visual assessment could be commissioned; currently one was not considered to be necessary. The application could be deferred until one was received if members requested so
- if members did want to refuse the application, they needed to consider an inspector's view on the expert evidence provided, which had been provided by statutory consultees.

Councillor Moore then moved refusal of the application on the basis of a negative impact on the landscape, historical features and highways. He considered that the impact on the landscape was so significant and the officer judgement/ recommendation was too subjective; insufficient reassurance had been provided that sufficient weight had been given to the impact, and it did not adhere to policies HD1 and HD6 of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. An adjoining application for 10 properties had been approved, and approving a further 15 would cause problems. This motion was seconded by Councillor Hill.

Members then discussed the motion, of which their key points were:

- the design statement was an essential part of the process, as it would detail how the development would fit into the landscape and link with the local listed buildings
- Alnwick Town Council had asked for the two trees possibly earmarked for removal to be retained
- the application raised a number of concerns including the issues mentioned by Alnwick Town Council, compatibility with the Neighbourhood Plan, impact on the historical buildings and the character of the landscape
- officers had given reassurance about highways matters and compatibility with the Neighbourhood Plan. If further applications were required, how could this application be turned down before the additional design information was received?
- the Conservation Officer considered that the development would cause no harm
- the site would be surrounded by built development on three sides; the development would fit in well with its surroundings
- it would bring benefits to Alnwick residents: three footpaths would be improved, one of which was used by schoolchildren
- the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan did not include a settlement boundary; one was proposed in the emerging Core Strategy, but this did not currently have any legal status.

In summing up, Councillor Moore considered that the three grounds of refusal were strong; members had to consider what was currently proposed. The impact on the landscape was significant, the recommendation to approve was too subjective and the site would be seen from far away.

The motion to refuse was then put to the vote; it received four votes in support and three against, so it was;

RESOLVED that the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. the proposal fails to protect and enhance the distinctive landscape character of Alnwick and the wider former district of Alnwick. This proposal is therefore contrary to Policy S13 of Alnwick Core Strategy, Policy HD1 of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan and Paragraph 17 of the NPPF;
2. the development would harm the setting and special character of the grade II and grade II* listed buildings in proximity of the site contrary to Policy S15 of the Alnwick Core Strategy, Policy HD5 of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan and the Chapter 16 NPPF; and
3. the proposed scheme has failed to address concerns with regards to highways safety and therefore does not comply with the provisions of policy S11 of the Alnwick Core Strategy and Chapter 9 of the NPPF.

(3.46pm: Councillor Clark then returned to the meeting.)

**136. 18/03379/FUL
Erection of 1 residential unit (C3 use)
Land west of Dunstanburgh Road, Craster**

Chris McDonagh, Planning Officer, introduced the application with the aid of a slides presentation.

David Bonser then spoke in objection to the application, of which his key points were:

- other local planning applications had been refused on access and safety grounds. This application had been modified from the previous one refused, but no highways issues had been addressed, nor could they be
- the applicant was not supported by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, Highways and Planning, plus 14 neighbours had objected
- 240,000 people visited Craster annually; it was a very popular route nearby and the access track was used daily by a number of different users
- the development would lead to additional traffic and a loss of green space. It would not result in minimal vehicular movement, as friends and others would also visit. It was not merely a cul-de-sac; many vehicles had to reverse out due to the width, including delivery vehicles. There was no clear place where cars would relocate to; it would likely be Dunstanburgh Road, which was already under pressure. There would be constant access problems during the construction phase
- if approved, it would be detrimental to the the AONB's dark skies. It would also be essential to consult locally about any construction statement produced.

Councillor Margaret Brooks then spoke on behalf of Craster Parish Council, of which her key points were:

- Craster Parish Council objected to the application and agreed with the Highways Authority's views. Access to and from the site was along an unadopted track in poor condition
- the access track had a restricted width; at no point could two vehicles pass each other at the same time. The development would lead to the increased potential of vehicles having to reverse back out, often in bad conditions
- drivers had limited vision at the junction, which was even more dangerous during the peak tourist season. It was impossible to say that future residents would result in the same amount of current vehicular movement
- although each planning application was treated on its own merits, similar schemes at the location had also been rejected in the past
- any development at the location would not conserve or enhance the local scenic beauty. Producing additional urban clutter would erode the rural landscape.

Michael Heslop then spoke in support of the application, of which his key points were:

- seven of the 14 objectors did not live in Craster
- amendments had been made to the scheme to improve it, including reducing the roof pitch by eight feet and changing the materials to larchwood. The property would be enclosed by other buildings on three sides. It lay within the settlement boundary; there were no open views to the west. The NPPF stated that such developments should only be refused if the residual cumulative impact was severe
- there was adequate vision both ways for traffic and plenty of room to access. The track was currently used by the owners of garages for 19 houses. One additional house would not add substantially to traffic
- he had never witnessed an accident at the location, and none had been reported during the past 10 years

- the house would not be for tourists, but a permanent resident who would contribute to the community.

Members then asked questions, to which the key details of officers' responses were:

- there were no means to circumnavigate the safety issues nor improve access unless third party land could be used. Neither access, width nor the restricted visibility could be controlled within the existing land
- it was not possible to confirm whether the Highways Authority had been consulted on the garage extensions undertaken, but they might not have increased vehicular movements. The garages might be in the places where vehicles had parked previously
- highways officers considered the access level to be substandard and neither safe nor suitable. They had also objected to the two previously rejected applications at the location and been consistent in their objections to any new build residential usage there
- refusing this application, in addition to the other refusals, would not stop an applicant from applying again; the Local Planning Authority was obliged to assess and consider every application received
- a comparison was made between the existing use and the proposed residential use; any vehicles displaced would have to go somewhere, perhaps Dunstanburgh Road or other land accessed by the track. A new residential use was likely to lead to other vehicles using it, such as visitors and service vehicles, which would be more than the existing use for parking
- the definition of 'severe' in the 2018 version of the NPPF was different to the original version, and now indicated the requirement of safe and suitable access.

Councillor Pattison moved the officer recommendation to refuse the application. She expressed sympathy for the applicants, but could not justify supporting the application in case it led to any highways safety problems, and also agreed that it had an unacceptable impact on the AONB. This was seconded by Councillor Hill.

A member added that he wasn't going to go against the officer recommendation that considered access to be dangerous. The applicant was also welcome to reapply.

It was then put to the vote; the motion to refuse was supported by six votes in favour to two against, so it was:

RESOLVED that the application be REFUSED for the reasons set out in the report.

(4.23pm: Councillor Moore left the meeting in advance of application 18/01893/FUL being considered.)

137. 18/01893/FUL

**Retain the existing farmhouse and the majority of the adjoining traditional farm buildings as one holding as these buildings are subject to a covenant restricting the use to agricultural. The proposal is to seek planning consent to develop the remaining farm steading for three new dwellings substituting this for the existing extant consent for 9 dwellings
Land West Of Brockdam Farm, Ellingham**

Jon Sharp, Planning Officer, introduced the application by firstly providing a correction to the report; paragraph 7.8 stated that the site benefitted from residential use with “holiday let”. There was no holiday let restriction, but the proposal was intended to be used for residential letting. Mr Sharp then continued introducing the application with the assistance of a slides application.

Stephanie Linnell then spoke in support of the application, of which her key points were:

- there had been little developer interest in the site. As a result the number of dwellings had been reduced from nine to three. They would use high quality materials, be in keeping with the site, and be family homes
- the plans had been amended following feedback from Ellingham Parish Council, who now supported the application
- reducing the proposal from nine to three properties would also result in less impact on the landscape and fewer transport movements
- no local residents objected and there were no objections from statutory consultees subject to the proposed conditions.

In response to a question, it was clarified that four farm cottages existed within the farm steading; there was thus an established residential use nearby.

Councillor Watson then moved the officer recommendation to grant the application, which was seconded by Councillor Thorne. It was then put to the vote, agreed unanimously, and thus:

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

(4.33pm: Councillor Moore then returned to the meeting.)

138. 17/02893/FUL

**Development of 9 Bedroom Bunkhouse (C1) with 2 Holiday Apartments (C3)
Former Sailing Club Site, Coquet Street, Amble**

Mr Sharp introduced the application with the aid of a slides presentation. He explained that the application needed to be reconsidered as a result of the new NPPF, but did not contravene it.

In the absence of any public speakers being registered, members then asked questions, to which the key details of officers’ responses were:

- the existing footpath along the harbour front had already been agreed; it was not a public right of way as it was permissive
- Amble Town Council had raised concerns regarding access along the front, but as these had been resolved, they were now content with the proposal.

Councillor Thorne moved the officer recommendation to grant the application. He welcomed the modern design, that it was a good addition to the harbour and gave more prominence to Amble, plus its continental style. This was seconded by Councillor Watson.

The local member added that he agreed with Councillors Thorne and Watson, it would be a very good facility and attract cyclists.

It was then put to the vote, agreed unanimously, and it was thus:

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

139. Planning Appeals

Members received information on the progress of planning appeals. (Copy of report enclosed with the official minutes within Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

140. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 24 January 2019 in St James' Church Centre, Alnwick.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....