

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF** on **Tuesday 4 June 2019** at **4.00 pm**.

#### PRESENT

Councillor CW Horncastle  
(Chair in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

Armstrong E  
Bowman L  
Flux B  
Gibson RM  
Gobin JJ  
Hepple A  
Moore R

Reid J  
Renner-Thompson G  
Robinson M  
Stewart GM  
Swithenbank ICF  
Thorne TN

#### OFFICERS

Little L  
Masson N  
Murfin R  
Robbie K

Democratic Services Officer  
Principal Solicitor  
Director of Planning  
Senior Planning Officer

#### ALSO PRESENT

Councillor J Riddle  
Ward A  
Press/ public: 14

Ward Councillor  
Communications Lead - External

#### 1. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair welcomed Councillor L Bowman to his first meeting of the Committee following his election to the Council.

**RESOLVED** that the Membership and Terms of Reference be noted.

#### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Lang and D Ledger.

### 3. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 7 May 2019, as circulated, be agreed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

### 4. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The report 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. The procedure at Planning Committees was appended for information.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### 5. 19/00247/FUL

**Construction of a publicly accessible landmark, commissioned to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II and the Commonwealth.  
Land At Cold Law, Kirkwhelpington, Northumberland**

Due to the unusual nature of this application, a model of the landmark sculpture and additional information on boards at the back of the Council Chamber had been provided and time was allowed for all Members of the Committee to view these.

The application was introduced by the Director of Planning with the aid of a powerpoint presentation. He advised that to address concerns from residents regarding lighting on the edge of the Dark Skies Park, a change to the wording of condition 20 was required to be attached to any permission granted and should now read as follows:-

“The developer / operator shall install MOD-accredited infrared warning lighting with an optimized flash pattern of 60 flashes per minute of 200ms to 500ms duration at the highest practicable point. The sculpture will be erected with this lighting installed and the lighting will remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interest of aviation safety.”

The Committee was advised that consultation undertaken by the Local Planning Authority in respect of this application had been above the statutory requirements and the applicant had also held five exhibitions over 34 days with material also published in the press and online.

Anne Palmer addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. Her comments included the following:-

- The major concerns of the local people which had been highlighted within the objection from Corsenside Parish Council.
- She stated that there had been no consultation with the local community regarding commemorating Queen Elizabeth II. This proposed tribute would

dominate the skyline and other ways of providing a commemoration would be better supported by local people.

- The idea had first been revealed the previous year with an announcement made in August that this proposal had been chosen. The local people did not choose, there had been no local representation on a panel which had been given an option of 3 proposals.
- Some local people living within the villages were still unaware of the proposals as had been reported in the Corsenside Clarion and some were under the impression that it was further away.
- Something that would dominate the landscape should have the blessing of local people and this does not.
- Planning Policy guidance states that pre application discussions help provide a better understanding of issues and this had not been undertaken.
- That the proposal was out of keeping with the local area was a complete understatement with views uninterrupted except for the wind turbines, which local people had accepted due to their usefulness, this would be useless.
- Once the concrete was in the ground and signs erected then one of the most unspoilt places in the countryside would be lost.
- This site was totally off the grid close to the Dark Skies Park, one of the best places in England, this proposal on its border would spoil the unspoilt.
- The report references the 2014 NPPF however a new version of the NPPF had been published in January 2019.
- It was stated that in the Council's own Local Plan that Northumberland's landscape was its jewel in the crown and Members should consider what was best for the area.

Councillor Riddle addressed the Committee speaking as the Local Ward Member. His comments included the following:-

- He had been a Councillor for over 30 years, and never, apart from when the wind turbines had been proposed, had he received as many calls from concerned residents.
- The main concerns of residents was the impact on the visual amenity and the fact that this was a massive structure of 56m high on top of a hill in an area of openness and tranquility.
- There was support for commemorating the Monarch, however a hill known locally as Tit Hill was not felt to be an appropriate location for such a monument.
- His concern regarding lighting on the structure had been allayed following the change to condition 20.
- The location was remote on a C-class road with a narrow bridge and bad access to the main road network.
- He commented on the lack of facilities to be provided at the car park and highlighted the issues encountered at Carter Bar due to the large number of visitors and lack of toilet facilities at that location.
- If the application was successful and the development went ahead there was the possibility it would attract visitors and it could eventually mean a burger/fast food van located at the car park with the associated litter this would cause in

such a windy location. He felt that if the application went ahead then more infrastructure should be provided.

- The development would be an alien structure on the wild and wonderful Wannies and was not needed. He commented that this could be seen as a Folly for Viscount Davenport to look at through his living room window.

Matthew Jarrett and Ros Southern addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Their comments included the following:-

- It was recognised that this was a controversial project, however consultation had been undertaken with exhibitions provided over 34 days across 5 venues.
- His previous experience with big art projects such as the Angel of the North, The Couples in Newbiggin, Kielder and Northumberlandia was that all had caused concerns but were now very well thought of.
- All people had different experiences and opinions of art, with the children at West Woodburn being very connected with the proposal.
- The Angel of the North had once made headlines with 95% of people being against its installation, however it was now used as part of logos in area. The project could appear challenging however it could become a national landmark.
- The timing of the project was important and fit in with the promotion of the strategic tourism strategy “Discover our Lands”, attracting new visitors to Northumberland and encouraging those passing through on their way to Cumbria and Scotland to stop in the area and it was close to walking routes in the area.
- The created landform would provide local history and information on the history of the commonwealth and could be seen as an educational piece of art.
- The area had an industrial history with iron ore mined for the High Level Bridge, stone quarried for Lord Armstrong and this would continue this history.
- The landscape and visual impact assessment was highlighted with the site being 5km from the Northumberland National Park. The local landscape was of outcrop hills, escarpments and rocky outcrops which were historically used for castles and which now formed part of the landscape in Northumberland.
- Visual mapping of views from a number of different locations had been analysed and had shown that the slender form of the structure would not disrupt views over the landscape and mitigation was not required for the structure itself, however earthbanks would be provided to screen the car parking area.
- All local associations had been brought together in the design which reflected local character and materials.

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

- The management of the immediate site, including litter picking, would be managed by the estate and would not be an additional burden on the Parish Council. Any increase in the use of local facilities would be the responsibility of the Parish.
- The NPPF encouraged applicants to carry out consultation over and above that statutorily required to be undertaken. It was confirmed that the applicant had held 5 public exhibitions over 34 days in 5 different venues between 9 May

2019 to 12 June 2019 which was over and above any statutory requirement. Whilst there had been a new iteration of the NPPF published in 2019 this new version provided guidance however the core principles had been set out in the previous versions. Officers regarded the applicant as having completed above and beyond what had been required.

- An applicant was entitled to submit an application for any site. Officers had been advised that this site had been chosen as it felt that it met the applicant's requirements and had been judged on its merits. There was no requirement to test alternative sites.
- It was thought that the monument was to be privately funded.
- It was not known how many people had attended the exhibitions however Officers were satisfied that the consultation undertaken by the applicant had been over and above what was required with 43 adults and 19 young people who had completed feedback questionnaires following the events. The Local Planning Authority had also carried out consultation in excess of what was statutorily required, with letters being sent to properties within a 2.5km radius of the application site as there were a number of isolated properties.
- It was clarified that Officer recommendations were based on planning issues and were not based on the number of people who either objected to or supported an application.
- It was further clarified that not all tourist attractions required facilities to be provided and it was approximately 2-3 miles to the nearest facilities.
- Whilst objectors had indicated that the proposal would be inappropriate due to the increased level of traffic on the road network, the Highways Authority had not judged the increase to be inappropriate.
- The landscape analysis had considered the impact of the monument from the most sensitive points. The scale of the monument should be considered as whilst it was larger than the Angel of the North, it was smaller and static as opposed to the nearby wind turbines which were larger and also moved. A third party landscape impact evaluation had been commissioned in order to verify the findings of the applicant's impact analysis. This concluded that the evaluation submitted in support of the proposal was robust.
- In respect of concerns that the monument would be out of keeping with the tourism offer in Northumberland, the Committee were reminded that while the wilderness was part of the offer there were also many buildings and landmarks which were also part of the tourism offer.
- The committee was advised to consider the extent of harm identified in the analysis and to distinguish this from "change". The degree of harm then needed to be set against the potential benefits of the scheme.
- Roads within Northumberland were of varying widths and this was not a restricted road. Highways had not raised any objection in respect of road safety and therefore this would not stand up at appeal as a reason to refuse the application.
- It was confirmed that 90 properties had been notified of the proposals.
- Whilst no response had been received from the Tourism, Leisure and Culture section, the Cabinet Member for Tourism, Leisure and Culture was supportive of the proposals.
- This part of Northumberland was not a designated or protected site.

- Any decision must be made on the application before the Committee and judged on its merits.

Councillor Thorne moved acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report with the amended condition 20 as outlined above which was seconded by Councillor Stewart.

In debating the proposal to approve the application a number of Councillors gave their views. Opinions were divided with some Members voicing concerns regarding the impact on existing tourism; the unspoilt nature of the landscape; parking; road safety and whether this was the right location for the monument. Other Members of the Committee spoke in support of the proposals stating that they thought it was a very good design; would enhance the landscape allowing visitors to walk around and through the monument; would help to bring tourists to a different location in Northumberland; would support local facilities; and they supported the provision of public art.

In response to a Councillor advising that if a motion to approve the application had not been made then he would have proposed a site visit, advice was provided by the Principal Solicitor that as a motion had already been made, Councillor Thorn would need to withdraw his motion to approve the application in order to allow a further motion to be made. Councillor Thorne advised that he did not wish to withdraw the motion to approve the application as whilst a site visit could sometimes be useful he felt that the case had been made for this application and it deserved support. It was further clarified that if Councillor Thorne's motion to approve the application was defeated then another motion could be made either to refuse the application or to defer the application to allow a site visit to be undertaken.

Councillor Thorne stated that art was very subjective and this monument would allow people to visit a very lovely unspoilt place to think about Queen Elizabeth II and the Commonwealth. History boards would provide information which would also contribute to making this an educational attraction, bringing visitors into the area and helping to support local services.

A vote was taken on the motion to approve the application as outlined in the report with the amended Condition 20 as outlined above as follows: FOR - 6; AGAINST - 8 therefore the motion was defeated.

Councillor Thorne then proposed a motion to defer the application to allow a site visit to be undertaken which was seconded by Councillor Reid. A vote was taken as follows: FOR - 12; AGAINST 2.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **DEFERRED** in order to allow a site visit by Members of the Committee to be undertaken.

The Chair reminded Members of their duty and encouraged them to attend all site visits when they were able to.

**6. PLANNING APPEALS**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.50 pm.

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

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