

## 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 3 December 2019** at **4.00 pm**.

#### PRESENT

Councillor CW Horncastle  
(Chair in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

Armstrong E	Lang J
Bowman L	Ledger D
Flux B	Reid J
Gibson RM	Renner-Thompson G
Gobin JJ	Stewart GM
Hepple A	Swithenbank ICF

#### OFFICERS

Armstrong N	Senior Planning Officer
Fairs G	Highways Development Manager
Little L	Democratic Services Officer
Masson N	Principal Solicitor
Robbie K	Senior Planning Officer
Sinnamon E	Senior Planning Manager

#### ALSO PRESENT

Press/ public: 10

#### 46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Robinson and T Thorne.

#### 47. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 5 November 2019, as circulated, be agreed as a true record and be signed by the Chair

#### 48. 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.

**49. 18/02239/FUL**

**Redevelopment of the former Marley Tiles factory to provide a residential development of 105 houses (Use Class C3) with associated access, parking, landscaping and infrastructure (AMENDED description and site layout) Marley Tile Factory, Lead Lane, Newlands, Consett, Northumberland, DH8 9JQ**

N Armstrong, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the report to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation. A list of updated conditions were circulated to Members and would be uploaded to the Council's website and a copy attached to the signed minutes. Updates were provided as follows:-

- The report did not include the most recent comments of Shotley Low Quarter Parish Council from July 2019. The original comments remain unchanged but further comments were made including the number of units would isolate and imbalance the current rural community; lack of pedestrian access to Whittonstall; and expressed disappointment that the design note referred to examples of house types in Ebchester rather than the stone properties more locally in Northumberland. The Parish Council continued to object to the application.
- One further objection had been received from Ebchester Village Trust on the following grounds: development within the Green Belt; development was not contiguous with any other settlement and created a new settlement; lack of services to serve development and reliance on the car; limited access to public transport; hazardous junction between the B6309 and Lead Lane; and the development would set a precedent for similar development.

Mr Anderson addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments included the following:-

- He had lived in his property Bridgend which was  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the proposed development since 1958 and was well aware of the traffic implications for the site. He had counted the traffic movements on the road between 6.30 am and 7.00 am with 59 vehicles travelling up the road and 11 down and again for a similar length of time later in the day with 40 vehicles travelling up the road and 50 down, this showed the high volume of traffic using the road.
- No details had been provided of how sewage from the site would be dealt with.
- The access to the development site was bad with no footpath. It was 1 mile to the nearest shop and there was no street lighting to be provided on the proposed footpath. There would be 200 more cars on the road as there was very limited access to public transport.
- The site should have been cleared up years ago and Marley Tiles had taken no responsibility for the clean up of the site which he was very aware, as he had

worked on the site on many occasions, was very contaminated with asbestos. It was a very dangerous site.

Councillor Cook addressed the Committee speaking on behalf of Shotley Low Quarter Parish Council (SLQPC). His comments included the following:-

- SLQPC had strong objections to the proposed development which was also the view of the community.
- The scale of the proposed development would have a significant negative impact on the area. The size of the development was not in keeping with the Parish and would result in a 70% increase in properties in the area.
- It would be a very isolated community with no suitable transport links and therefore no social cohesion with existing development.
- 14 Neighbours had been notified which resulted in 26 objections being made and no support for the proposals.
- Public transport was minimal with only 2 buses per day and no regular bus link to the catchment schools. No footpath was being provided to Whittonstall which was where the catchment first school was located and therefore it would be difficult to get children to school.
- The proposed footpath, situated very close to the road would not be lit.
- The development would create a lot of extra traffic on a road where there was already speeding traffic and major accidents had occurred.
- Visually, the proposed development was not in keeping with the area, with dwellings not constructed in stone. Only 12 properties would have some stonework, and none being constructed completely in stone.
- The proposed development conflicted with the Development Plan and the Committee was asked to refuse the application.

Mr C Smith, Senior Planner at Lichfields, agent on behalf of the applicant addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- The site had been derelict since Marley Tiles had vacated in the 1990's and had deteriorated significantly into an eyesore. The contaminated site was a concern for public safety due to it being accessed and vandalised. The fire service had to carry out a full decontamination of equipment after being called to the site due to the high levels of asbestos.
- The site was commercially viable and once full remediation works had been undertaken this development would secure its long term future providing 105 3, 4 and 5 bedroomed dwellings along with affordable housing.
- The site was on 3 plateaux with the central area being open space with play equipment to be provided. Stone would feature in a number of locations on the site and the use of materials would be controlled by Condition 3.
- Two new bus stops would be provided along with a new footpath of adoptable standard to Ebchester.
- He understood that there had been concerns regarding High Speed broadband and the Developer had indicated that this would be provided which would also improve speeds to Newlands and bring improvements in Whittonstall.

- Whittonstall First School was accessible by public transport and there would also be access to free school transport. A Planning Obligation of £531,000 would be made for investments into the local schools.
- No objections had been made in relation to highway safety or from other statutory consultees with conditions attached which would secure the technical work required.
- Approval of the application would ensure the opportunity to address the worsening issue of problems occurring on the site and he asked that the recommendation to approve be supported.

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

- The provision of High Speed Broadband was not part of a specific condition, however a standard informative encouraging developers to liaise with the relevant Council Officer for this to be provided would be used. It was not usual to add a specific condition, however, as the agent had indicated that the applicant would be willing for this to be provided, Members could request this be conditioned at the risk that it could be challenged.
- The Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan had been acknowledged during the process with concerns discussed regarding the sustainability of the site and housing in the countryside.
- There was some support for this type of development on previously developed land within the Green Belt in the NPPF and the additional provision of footpaths and bus stops, although recognised that the bus service was infrequent, added to its sustainability. This had been balanced against the current condition of the site, its location and the resultant enhancement.
- Full remedial works would be required in respect of asbestos contamination of the site and these would be controlled by conditions requested by Public Protection. Gas protection would also be required to be provided.
- Following concerns regarding the design of the proposed dwellings compared to the existing properties in the area, some improvements had been made with stonework being introduced on other parts of the site which whilst not of traditional farmhouse design would help mitigate the impact.
- Information related to previous traffic movements from the site when operating as a commercial site was not available.
- Affordable housing would not all be located in one area of the site, but would be dispersed across the whole site.
- The proposed footpath was in the direction that would be more likely to be used, towards Ebchester, which was nearer and had more facilities. The road towards Whittonstall had more gradients and it would be more technically difficult to install a footpath in that direction. A footpath in that direction would be more likely to have to be constructed in sections with road crossings incorporated along the route.
- The School Transport Team had indicated it was most likely that pupils would be eligible to free transport.
- The location of the LPG tanks had been designed around the areas of open space rather than in the middle of housing. The use of renewables and energy efficiencies cross over with Building Regulations however there was nothing

shown in the plans to show that any had been incorporated in the design of the dwellings.

- The number of car parking spaces on site were calculated on the number of bedrooms for each property. Visitor spaces were also provided, the exact number could not be confirmed but was considered to be approximately 22. It was not thought there would be parking restrictions on the roads between the different parts of the site.
- Sewage would be discharged to a manhole connected to the main system and a pumping station would be provided at the location of the LPG tanks. Surface water drainage had been agreed by the LLFA and a SuDs design used.
- It was not intended to reduce the speed limit to 30 mph close to the access roads to the site and it was confirmed that the visibility splays at the junctions would be based on vehicle speeds. It was not proposed to impose any Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) on the site. There was no justification for imposing any speed restriction on the road due to this application. Any reduction of speed could possibly be looked at outside the planning process, however the accident history over the last 5 years did not bear out the concerns of the Parish Council with only 1 accident in 2014 due to a loss of control. Improvements to the lines at the junction would be made along with the provision of the bus stop markings and crossings.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report and with the updated conditions as previously circulated which was seconded by Councillor Gibson.

Councillor Gibson stated that he was in favour of clearing the site as it was only going to get more dangerous and to prevent more vandalism and antisocial behaviour occurring, however he was not convinced that housing in the Green Belt was right, as the Committee had been highly protective of Green Belt previously. He would have preferred to have more stone included in the design which would be more in keeping with other properties in the area, however it was a good way of using the ground.

Concerns were expressed by a number of Councillors who stated that they could not support the application. These concerns were in relation to sustainable transport, parking and that the impact of the development was not clear and could cause substantial harm to the Green Belt. The Developer was not prepared to take account of the design and provide dwellings like others in the area. It was a missed opportunity to provide a new village type development on a previously developed area in the Green Belt, which would be unique and would be something to be proud of. If insufficient visitor car parking was provided then parking on the roads between the different levels of the site could reduce these to single lane roads causing problems. It was not felt that sufficient consideration had been given to the rural location and the necessity of all visitors arriving in cars.

No thought had been given to the effects of the Climate Emergency with no solar power or ground source heat pumps utilised on the site. The LPG tanks were provided at the rear of the site which required access through the site by HGVs. The fact that the site was derelict and contaminated and required remedial works should be a separate issue and should not be linked to a planning application. Local people would

like to see the site tidied up and it had been hoped that this application would have provided something special on the site. This application would increase the number of dwellings in the area by 70% which was a very significant increase. There would be no opportunity for green travel by children attending Whittonstall First School.

Councillor Flux advised that he had based his proposal on not having anything policy wise to justify refusing the application. A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application as outlined above as follows:- FOR - 3; AGAINST - 10. The motion to approve the application was not supported.

Councillor Hepple then moved that the application should be refused. After a short discussion Councillor Hepple proposed the following reasons for refusal :

- Isolated development in the open countryside.
- Inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- Design not appropriate and out of keeping with the character and locality and was not sustainable.

Councillor Reid then seconded the motion to refuse the application for those reasons and a vote taken as follows:- FOR - 10; AGAINST - 2; ABSTENTION - 1.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:-

- Isolated development in the open countryside.
- Inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- Design not appropriate and out of keeping with the character and locality and was not sustainable.

**40. 19/02871/CCD**

**Retrospective: Installation of ground source heat pump (GSHP) comprising of 3no. heat pumps (1no. 75kW, 1no. 60kW, & 1no. 17kW) and array of 18no. boreholes located within curtilage of building  
Seahouses Primary School, James Street, Seahouses, Northumberland**

K Robbie, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the application with the aid of a powerpoint presentation.

In response to Member's questioning the fact that the application was for retrospective permission, it was clarified that there had been some confusion as some ground source heat pumps could be installed under permitted development rights. On further investigation it had been found that when there was more than one pump to be installed or if any part was outside the curtilage of the site, then permission should be sought. The retrospective application had been made to regularise the position.

Councillor Stewart proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Renner-Thompson.

Members commented that a procedure should be in place whereby checks should be made with Planning regarding any permissions required prior to any Council development taking place. Councillor Renner-Thompson advised that he was aware of publicity surrounding the situation, however it had been a well-meaning scheme and the savings generated by the installation allowed the school to use the extra funding for the education of its pupils.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously:

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

**51. 19/03368/CCD**

**Retrospective: Installation of ground source heat pump system comprising of 2 heat pumps (1no. 40kW and 1no. 50kW) and array of 10no. boreholes within curtilage of building.**

**Cambois Primary School, Cambois, Blyth, Northumberland**

K Robbie, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the report to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation.

Councillor Stewart proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Flux. A vote was taken and it was unanimously:

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

**52. 19/03369/CCD**

**Retrospective: Installation of ground source heat pump system comprising of 2no. 35kw Heat Pumps and associated ground array.**

**Ashington Community Association Football Club , Woodhorn Lane, Ashington, NE63 9FW**

K Robbie, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the report to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation.

Councillor Reid proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Flux. A vote was taken and it was unanimously:

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

**53. PLANNING APPEALS**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**54. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chair reminded Members of the importance of their attendance at site visits. A site visit was to be arranged prior to the next meeting in January 2020 for an application for the Hexham High School site, however due to the Christmas break it was not known when this would take place. It was important for Members to be able to view the site when pupils were in attendance, however the school did not return from the Christmas break until the morning of the Committee. Members would be advised of the arrangements as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 5.45 pm.

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

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