

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 7 January 2020** at **4.00 pm**.

PRESENT

Councillor CW Horncastle
(Chair in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Dodd R	Reid J
Flux B	Renner-Thompson G
Gibson RM	Robinson M
Gobin JJ	Stewart G
Hepple A	Swithenbank ICF
Lang J	Thorne T
Ledger D	

OFFICERS

Armstrong N	Senior Planning Officer
Aviston S	Head of School Organisation & Resources
Blyth K	Principal Planning Officer
Bulman M	Solicitor
Harvey C	Planning Officer
Fairs G	Highways Development Officer
Feige D	Principal Ecologist and AONB Officer
Little L	Democratic Services Officer
Murfin R	Director of Planning
Murphy J	Principal Planning Officer
Park G	Environmental Protection Officer
Payne M	Consultant Engineer
Robson V	Building Conservation Officer
Sinnamon E	Senior Planning Manager
Wood T	Senior Planning Officer

ALSO PRESENT

Press/ public: 50

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Armstrong and Bowman.

56. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 3 December 2019, as circulated, be agreed as a true record and be signed by the Chair

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Reid and Robinson both declared an interest in Application 19/03489/FUL as they were Members of the Board of Advance Northumberland. Councillors Ledger and Hepple also both declared an interest in the same application as they had previously been on the Board of Arch. All advised that they would leave the Chamber when the application was discussed.

58. 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.

The Chair advised that the Committee would receive a joint presentation from the Officer in respect of applications 19/03998/CCD and 19/03999/LBC and the public speaking time in respect of the two linked applications would be increased to 10 minutes.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

59. 19/03998/CCD

Redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth High School including the refurbishment of Grade II listed hydro building and Westfield house for ongoing school use. New build school buildings of 2 and 3 storeys. Demolition of existing school buildings and associated new access points, car parking, bus parking, landscaping, grass playing fields, hard courts, and the artificial sport pitches including sports lighting.

Queen Elizabeth High School, Whetstone Bridge Road, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3JD

N Armstrong, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the reports to the Committee with the aid of a visual presentation. Updates were provided as follows:-

- 5 further objections/representations had been received that raised similar issues to those identified within the report including the impact of the artificial grass playing fields and raised levels on residential amenity; highway and pedestrian safety;

sustainability; and impacts on students during construction. In respect of the 92 contributions received there had been 81 objections; 2 support; and 9 representations.

- The wording to fifth bullet point of condition 27 should be updated to read as follows

Traffic and Parking Management Scheme and extension of existing 20mph school zone on Allendale Road;

- The wording to condition 39 should be updated to read as follows:-

Prior to development reaching damp-proof course level, a biodiversity mitigation and net-gain scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, including timescales for implementation of the scheme. This shall utilise the Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0, ***or an alternative measure as may be agreed with the Local Planning Authority***, to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% or equivalent. The approved scheme shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and timescales.

- A revised officer recommendation was outlined as follows:-

Recommended that Members are minded to GRANT permission subject to referral to the Secretary of State under CLG Circular 02/2009 - The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, with delegated authority to the Director of Planning to issue the decision if the Secretary of State does not call in the application, and the conditions set out in the report with updated wording to conditions 27 and 39

Drone footage which had been taken at the end of the school day on 16 December 2019 was also shown to the Committee.

Wendy Breach, a resident of Hexham, addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. Her comments included the following information:

- With the declaration of the Climate Emergency by Northumberland County Council and its pledge to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by 2025 and the £3m committed for projects, more consideration should be given to the construction and operation of the school building. Suggestions made to assist with the reduction of carbon emissions had been ignored.
- The suggestion by Hexham Town Council that the building should be built to the Passivhaus standard should be adopted and the use of other types of heating explored which would also provide savings to offset the more expensive building costs. She highlighted new schools in places such as Edinburgh and Exeter which had been built and were very good examples of such design and this school could be a flagship school setting an example for others.

- The Council's Carbon Action Plan sought to reduce car usage, however there was no evidence of this and the development would encourage car usage. Restricting vehicle movements on streets in the area at peak school start and finishing times as was done in Cramlington would reduce the conflict between vehicles and pupils.
- There were no plans to widen footpaths which at some points were only 60cm wide and were below the required standard.

Nichola Allen, a Chartered Town Planner, also addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application on behalf of the Hydro Neighbourhood Group (HNG). Her comments included the following:-

- This was a fabulous, one in a lifetime opportunity for the area, and the development must be right. The principle of the building of the new school was supported however there was a perception that the application was being rushed through with key issues being dealt with by the imposition of conditions with the full impact not being fully understood.
- The existing school already caused harm to amenity in terms of noise, disturbance and pollution and it was wrong just to look at the additional impacts, but should be looked at cumulatively.
- This development would not save the planet with emissions only 10% below current building regulation levels, which was the target from the 2009 Core Strategy and was nowhere near the new Climate Emergency target of 50%.
- The site originally developed for 750 pupils, now hosted 1300 and with the co-location of the schools would have 1900 which would impact on traffic, amenity, pollution and pupil safety.
- There would be no increase in education provision and would only maintain the status quo.
- The alternative Allendale Road access should also continue to be used to spread movement rather than all access focussed on the main entrance off Whetstone Bridge Road which was opposite 20 Tynedale Terrace, with the view along the Boulevard given more weight than the amenity of neighbours.
- HNG still had concerns that access would not be adequately controlled by conditions and requested that a specific condition related to enforcement be added. Improved 20mph restrictions, yellow lines and a safety zone were required.
- The increase in height of the pitches was only being done to save money by not transporting earth from the site and with the addition of the lighting columns would cause substantial harm to amenity.
- The out of hours pitch usage would not be controlled and at £90 per hour to hire would not be affordable for community use.
- The loss of the walled garden was terrible in terms of biodiversity, wellbeing and the provision of open space.
- The Ecological Appraisal had not been made available and no independent scrutiny undertaken, there had been no survey of trees for protected bat species and other surveys had been undertaken in the winter period. The loss of 1.3ha

UK Priority Habitat broadleaved woodland would have a significant impact and condition 39 which sought biodiversity offset would be completely unenforceable.

- The development would be a climate disaster if not controlled and she requested Members to look to their conscience, embrace the opportunity to make this scheme the best and impose the 50% target from their own policy; impose controls to protect the amenity of residents and deliver a scheme of excellence for generations to come.

Councillor Derek Kennedy addressed the Committee speaking as the local Ward Member for the application. His comments included the following:-

- It was now a priority that the High School be improved and he commended the efforts made by pupils and staff in achieving outstanding results over the past few years in the current building.
- He had attended the site visit along with other Members and had viewed at first hand the state of the current school buildings, and said it was an outrage that they had been allowed to get into that state and it was desperate for investment.
- Councillors must satisfy themselves that this would be the best site for two schools. He highlighted that would mean 1900 pupils on a single site with 200 teachers, resulting in over 2000 people accessing the site on a daily basis, with one third of these living outside of the catchment area and would arrive by bus or cars.
- There would be a lot squeezed onto the site of the existing school.
- Whilst he welcomed the extension of the 20 mph zone, he felt that this should be increased to go as far as the B3651. Parts of the walk to school route were on narrow paths.
- Buses would be prevented from using the current access from Allendale Road, however this could still be used by refuse vehicles, it would be better to allow some buses to use this access in order to spread the load.
- Staggered start times for the high school and middle school should be introduced.
- In respect of the floodlighting for the pitches, he questioned whether 10 pm was the right time for these to be used up to and if this should be limited further.
- In respect of the Council's Climate Emergency, the opportunity should be taken to demonstrate that it was not just talk and bring the proposed building at least up to the Passivhaus standard, and he questioned the use of second hand solar panels.
- He highlighted the significant impact the proposals would have on the residents of 20 Tynedale Terrace and questioned whether the boulevard and car parking could be moved to the right.

Councillor Bob Hull addressed the Committee speaking on behalf of Hexham Town Council. His comments included the following:-

- The investment into the high school was welcome and offered a major opportunity to safeguard the outstanding school and was supported by the Town Council who welcomed the retention and incorporation of the Hydro into the Scheme.
- Sustainability had been dealt with in a sketchy way and there had been the opportunity to be more forward looking and set a good example for others to follow and build it to the Passivhaus standard. The opportunity should be taken to allow for future changes in fuel types and alternatives to gas should be explored.

- The Town Council did have concerns regarding the original Travel Plan and safety concerns with the number of coaches/vehicle movements to the site and the nearby St. Josephs RC Middle School. The latest Travel Plan addressed some of those concerns but should be strengthened to allow an early / constant review following one year of operation, including the effect of the parking policy and 20 mph extension; to encourage walking / cycling with improved provision and extra cycle space.
- In respect of the loss of local amenity due to the lighting and out of hours use, strict conditions should be imposed and supervision provided, as currently complaints were not investigated and there was no one on site to react to problems. He urged that more hedging and better tree coverage be provided to reduce the light pollution.
- The detrimental impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties with the height increase of 1.45m was highlighted which would increase the light and noise pollution and reduce privacy.

Graham Atkins, Executive Headteacher of the Hadrian Learning Trust (HLT), Anne Hargreaves, Planning Consultant, and Simon Kitchman, Chair of the HLT, addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Their comments included:-

- The school performs well but the building and facilities were in poor condition and there was an urgent need for significant capital investment which was welcomed.
- A lot of work had been undertaken over the last 18 months on the design which was based on the co-location of the high school and middle school on the high school site with each school keeping their individual identity.
- The co-location design would provide fit for purpose and better facilities than if the two schools remained on separate sites; enable teachers to work closely together for the benefit of pupils; allow a more coherent curriculum whilst sharing resources and provide access to more specialised teaching staff.
- The development would ensure more effective use of resources and provide better value allowing more resources to be available for the young people providing a broader educational experience.
- Students and staff were very enthusiastic about the proposals, especially the younger pupils at the Middle School, and this was the right way forward.
- Discussions had commenced in 2019 between the Council and HLT on the co-location of the two schools on the site with pre-application discussions undertaken followed by consultation.
- Bus parking was to be provided on the site which would remove the need for parking on the highway, as was the existing practice. Buses could remain on site which would have a net reduction on the number of journeys each day and specific bus routing would be utilised.
- A 250 space car park was to be provided which was over double the existing number and would improve the current situation.
- The site access would be relocated, the 20 mph zone increased.
- Residential amenity had been carefully considered.
- Increasing the height of the pitches would allow all material to be retained on site thereby reducing the number of vehicle movements and the developer would be happy to work with officers to reach an acceptable solution.

- The number of mature trees to be removed had been kept as low as possible with 2500 new trees planted as part of the scheme. All tree and ecology assessments had been completed and informed the conditions to be attached.
- In respect of sustainability, the Council would be investing £400,000 into the school with details of to be provided as part of Condition 7.
- HLT had two charitable objectives which were (i) to provide the best education and (ii) to provide facilities for the local community in which schools should have a role after the school day and out of term time.
- The 3G pitches would provide facilities for local boys, girls and disabled teams to play.
- Everyone wanted Northumberland to be the best place to live and work and this vision should start with good schooling.

The Director of Planning provided the following information:-

- The School Travel Plan (STP) was a live document and was subject to review and would flag up any physical measures required / parent behaviour etc. Any request for staggered start /finish times would need to be based on evidence.
- The Community Use Strategy would allow the maximum use by the public of the sporting facilities, however it was recognised that this might cause some impact for residents. Complaint measures and a management system would be delivered as appropriate.
- The Ecological Appraisal had not been made publicly available as it was standard practice not to release any documents containing protected species information, however the document had been fully consulted upon by relevant authorities.
- In respect of the levels of the pitches which were close to existing properties, a condition was included for this to be looked at in detail, however if Members wished then this condition could be strengthened, however some increase was necessary for to assist in the drainage of the site. This was welcomed by the Committee who asked this to be agreed by delegated authority to the Director of Planning in conjunction with the Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.

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

- Staggered start times did raise operational issues for schools and could only be implemented where there was a demonstrated requirement. The STP had the mechanism to look at staggered times and implement these if required, however there was no evidence at present to require this. Most pupils at the schools would be dropped off by coach and a lot of work had been undertaken to minimise the impact of this by allowing coaches to stay on site and control their exit at the end of the school day. There was an ongoing approach to sustainable travel within the STP and an informative could be added to ensure that the STP was provided on the website and promoted for local input.
- All school transport on site would be marshalled. There would be an opportunity to stay on site if buses were not contracted out for the rest of the day and it was thought 5 or 6 would take up this opportunity and would park in an allocated bay. A condition was included to finalise the Transport Management Plan and parking restrictions would be implemented on Whetstone Bridge Road when buses no

longer used this for pick up/drop off. All day parking by buses on Whetstone Bridge Road had not been observed by Officers.

- There were parking issues at present at drop off and pick up points as there were at most schools in the County.
- Some bus services were shared at present by both the high school, middle school and also some with St. Josephs RC Middle.
- Some buses currently use the Hydro entrance on Allendale Road for pick ups and this was not shown on the drone footage.
- Buses would arrive from Allendale Road in the morning and would go to the drop off area. In an afternoon all buses would be held until all were loaded then the barrier would be lifted with buses able to go in both directions out of the site as there would be no buses coming onto the site.
- There would be no car drop off allowed in the bus area. Whilst parking was not allowed on single/ double yellow lines, pupils could be dropped off in this area. It was considered that to provide easy drop off space within the school site would encourage car usage.
- The use of modern lighting equipment would reduce light spill from the pitches and was subject to final agreement which would provide for the current best practice. The timings for use of the pitches had been decided as part of the Community Use Strategy with the use of the pitches balanced against the impact on residents. The Strategy would have a complaints handling procedure which would be well publicised.
- Biodiversity was a reserved matter and would be negotiated and appropriate mitigation provided.
- It had been concluded that having the two schools on the same site was the most sustainable solution and based on what was known at the current time would have the appropriate capacity for future growth.
- The plans showed a lot of detail and whilst the pitches could look like buildings on the plans, these were all open areas in active use at present and would only be improved. The actual footprint of the building would not be significantly bigger than at present. It was not considered that the proposals would lead to an overdevelopment of the site.
- The development would have some impacts, as all developments do, but it was considered that these would be acceptable.
- The provision of MUGA pitches were required on site by the School. The Community Use Strategy would promote out of hours use with measures to promote and manage responsible usage included.

Councillor Thorne proposed acceptance of the revised recommendation as follows:-

“Recommended that Members are minded to GRANT permission subject to referral to the Secretary of State under CLG Circular 02/2009 - The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, with delegated authority to the Director of Planning to issue the decision if the Secretary of State does not call in the application, and the conditions set out in the report with updated wording to conditions 27 and 39 and delegated authority to the Director of Planning in conjunction with the Chair of the Committee to agree the height of the pitches and informatives added in connection with the publication on the website of the School Travel Plan and Community Use Strategy. “

Councillor Thorne advised that investment was required with a lot of work having been undertaken in respect of the design of the proposed development which included the Hydro, a very special listed building. The site visit had shown that the proposals would not be an overdevelopment of the site but would provide the facilities required by the number of pupils attending the schools whilst still providing lots of open space on the very big site along with a lovely facade.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Hepple who stated that the conditions attached to the permission went some way to addressing the Climate Emergency concerns with the addition of the £400,000 funding from the Council. He had felt it useful to attend the two site visits and commended the school for achieving the results it had in the current building.

Members welcomed the proposals stating that whilst they appreciated difficulties for residents who have schools located beside their properties, the young people deserved to have the better facilities this development would provide, as Members had been horrified at the state of the current buildings the students had to use. Concern was expressed by some regarding the STP as parents would always try to drop off as close to the school as possible; and whilst this development went some way to addressing concerns regarding the Climate Emergency, so much more could have been done to make this good project into an excellent one.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** subject to referral to the Secretary of State under CLG Circular 02/2009 - The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, with delegated authority to the Director of Planning to issue the decision if the Secretary of State does not call in the application, and the conditions set out in the report with updated wording to conditions 27 and 39 and delegated authority to the Director of Planning in conjunction with the Chair of the Committee to agree the height of the pitches and informatives added in connection with the publication on the website of the School Travel Plan and Community Use Strategy.

59. 19/03999/LBC

Listed Building Consent for redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth High School including the refurbishment of Grade II listed hydro building and Westfield house for ongoing school use. New build school buildings of 2 and 3 storeys. Demolition of existing school buildings and associated new access points, car parking, bus parking, landscaping, grass playing fields, hard courts, and the artificial sport pitches including sports lighting. Queen Elizabeth High School, Whetstone Bridge Road, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3JD

The application had been introduced to Committee by N Armstrong, Senior Planning Officer, as above with the following update provided:-

- 3 further representations had been received although these referred to matters relevant to the application seeking full planning permission as covered in the update for that application.

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

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

6.00 pm The Chair advised that a 10 minute break would be taken at this point. Councillor Dodd left the meeting and did not return. The meeting recommenced at 6.10 pm.

60. 19/04025/FUL

Hybrid Application incorporating: Detailed application for demolition of hospital buildings (excl medical directorate, Tweed, Tyne, Hebron, Hepscott, Mitford unit, Gees Club, Chapel (PMVA), Bothal, Cambo and Belsay Villas), Development of medium secure in-patient unit and ancillary facilities; Refurbishment of Gees club (Villa 34), Hebron, Medical directorate and Belsay, Bothal and Cambo villas and Hepscott 1-4; Associated parking and landscape works across masterplan area; and, Outline application for residential development. Northgate Hospital, Northgate, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 3BP

T Wood, Senior Planning Officer introduced the application to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation. A document containing a revised recommendation and additional conditions was circulated to Members with time allowed for them to read this. A copy of the document would be uploaded to the Council's website.

Tony Railton addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application on behalf of the Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust. His comments included the following:-

- CEDAR was part of a bigger scheme with changes to Northgate to improve patient care and safety for staff in fit for purpose buildings.
- The development would provide patient choice in the region and reduce travel. It would have regional and national significance and had already attracted significant funding from the NHS but also required funding from the sale of some of the land for housing. The proposal was dependent on other schemes, however Northgate was the first and most important.
- He asked that Members give positive consideration to the application which would allow important investment to Northgate providing 820 sustainable jobs.
- The development was good for Northumberland and would concentrate the clinical and forensic services on one site.

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

- As this was a hybrid application with the housing scheme as an outline application, condition 3 related to orientation of dwellings would safeguard it to be explored further by Public Protection when the scheme came forward for development. A substantial amount of modelling would be undertaken with noise readings undertaken both prior to and after buildings were erected. This was an industry accepted way, and it would be expected that the modelling undertaken would be accurate.
- The site had previously been identified as a committed housing site.
- The County Ecologist would identify the best native species of trees to be planted on site.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the revised recommendation which had been circulated which was seconded by Councillor Reid who stated that this was an excellent scheme which allowed buildings to be modernised and was a worthwhile investment. A vote was taken and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Committee be minded to **GRANT** this application:

- i) subject to the conditions set out in the report;
- ii) subject to referral to the National Planning Casework Unit for a determination on whether the Secretary of State wished to call-in the application for his own determination with delegated authority to the Director of Planning to issue the decision if the Secretary of State did not call in the application (under CLG Circular 02/2009 - The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009)
- iii) subject to no responses being received to outstanding site notice and press notice consultations that raise substantial matters not already addressed; and
- v) subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement securing contributions towards affordable housing (13 shared ownership and 10 affordable rented units), health care (£92,700), education (£908,154), a bus service (4 installments of £60,000 if required after a bus service review) and with the Conditions proposed by Public Protection (as circulated)– to be added to the list of conditions.

6.50 pm - Councillors Hepple, Ledger, Reid and Robinson left the Chamber at this point.

61. **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

It was agreed that standing orders be suspended to continue the meeting beyond the 3 hour limit.

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, standing orders be suspended and the meeting continue over the 3 hour limit.

62. **19/03489/FUL**

Full planning permission for the erection of a 2,599 sqm/27,975 sqft (GEA) cinema (Use Class D2), incorporating 544 sqm/5,859 sq ft (GIA) of ancillary restaurant provision (Use Class A3) and associated car parking spaces. Outline planning permission for 1,115 sqm/12,000 sqft (GEA) of retail development (Use

Classes A1/A2 and A3) and associated parking (no reserved matters discharged at this stage).

Land South Of Petrol Station, Lintonville Terrace, Ashington, Northumberland

G Horsman, Senior Planning Officer introduced the application to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation. Updates to conditions were reported as follows:-

- Condition 28 - fourth line - replace Defra with EMAQ to read as defined in the EMAQ document Guidance
- Condition 31 - paragraph iii) to be deleted.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the recommendation to grant permission as outlined in the report with the revised conditions as above which was seconded by Councillor Lang.

Members welcomed the application and the investment into Ashington. A vote was taken and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions as outlined in the report and amended above.

63. 19/01981/VARYCO

**Variation of Condition 25 to include the installation of a 1.5m to 2.1m high close boarded timber fence, Condition 36 reworded and Removal of Condition 34 pursuant to planning permission 18/03387/VARYCO
Former Fire And Rescue Workshop, Loansdean, Morpeth, Northumberland
NE61 2AP**

T Wood, Senior Planning Officer introduced the application to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation.

Councillor Thorne proposed acceptance of the recommendation as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Gibson. A vote was taken and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** subject to the Conditions as outlined in the report.

64. 19/03754/FUL

**Change of use from caretakers bungalow Class C3 to School D1 and conversion of existing car port to garage (Amended Description and Application Type 14/11/2019).
School House, Highfield Middle School, Highfield Lane, Prudhoe
Northumberland**

C Harvey, Planning Officer introduced the application to the Committee with the aid of a powerpoint presentation.

Councillor Stewart proposed acceptance of the recommendation to grant permission which was seconded by Councillor Gibson. A vote was taken and it was unanimously

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

65. PLANNING APPEALS

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm

CHAIR _____

DATE _____