

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 February 2020** at **4.00 pm**.

PRESENT

Councillor CW Horncastle
(Chair in the Chair)

MEMBERS

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

OFFICERS

Bulman M	Solicitor
Leadbeatter N	Housing Enabling Officer
Little L	Democratic Services Officer
Millar-McMeeken E	Senior Planning Officer
Murphy J	Principal Planning Officer
Payne M	Consultant Engineer
Sinnamon E	Senior Planning Manager

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor S Dickinson
Press/ Public: 12

66. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 7 January 2020, as circulated, be agreed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

67. 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.

68. 18/04481/FUL

Erection of 160 residential dwellings with associated landscaping and infrastructure, including the diversion of existing public footpath to alternative route. (as amended)
Land West Of Surgery, Grange Road, Widdrington Station, Northumberland

The Senior Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a powerpoint presentation. An update was circulated to Members which would be attached to the signed minutes and uploaded to the Council's website. This document included details of Condition 31 which was to replace Conditions 31 and 32 in the report. Further updates were provided as follows:-

- An amended recommendation to read as follows:-

“That this application be GRANTED subject to S106 Agreement to secure £99,000 towards Education, £99,000 towards Health Care, £23,400 towards Coastal Mitigation, £70,000 towards the village community centre together with the land for and a 20 space car park provided at the entrance to the site and 17% on site affordable housing provision.”

- In paragraph 7.41 it should state that the development would provide separation distances in excess of 22 metres. It was highlighted that following a ground floor extension at the rear of one property (Welbeck House), the separation distance could be reduced to 18 or 19 metres gable to gable however the next closest property Hazeldene did exceed the policy requirements and a 1.8m timber boarded fencing was to be provided to all properties.
- It was proposed that 17% affordable housing on the site would be provided as follows:-

10% (16 x 2 bed houses) to be low cost home ownership i.e. homes at 20% discount to the open market value

5% (8 x 2 bed houses) to be Heylo Home Reach Step 1

2% (3 x 2 bed houses) to be Heylo Home Reach

J Bexfield addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. Her comments included the following:-

- A public consultation should have been undertaken as this application bore no resemblance to the previous outline application which residents had been happy with and in particular the location of bungalows on the Grangemoor Road side of the development.
- The Council's Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-20 stated that the number of people aged 65 plus was set to increase by 42.4% by 2031 which presented a challenge in making sure older people were properly housed and supported. The Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People Inquiry established in 2017 concluded that the ageing population in rural areas deserved a new drive for more and better homes, preferably where older people could stay close to friends and family and where their independence could be preserved. Housing provision that met the needs of older people had significant benefits to their health and wellbeing whilst easing social care and NHS budgets.
- Developing sustainable homes for the future for all Northumberland residents was a key priority. Creating housing for an ageing population and households with disabilities and ensuring affordability were key areas for action. Ensuring provision of purpose built and adapted properties on new build sites and developing a range of different housing options, promoting disability friendly design and making best use of technology were all steps in complying with the Equalities Act 2020. This development did not.
- There would be an adverse effect on the residential amenity of neighbours by overlooking and loss of privacy. Properties on Grangemoor Road were predominantly bungalows with living rooms at the rear and bedrooms at the front of the properties. Having two storey properties at the bottom of the garden would mean that anyone in the upstairs rooms of the new properties would have a direct view into the living rooms of the existing properties, especially at night.
- Planning Policy Strategy 7 - A30 stated that the overlooking of gardens may be unacceptable where it would result in an intrusive, direct and uninterrupted view from a main room to the most private area of the garden which is often the main sitting out area adjacent to the property of a neighbour's house.
- There would be an adverse visual impact which would adversely affect the residential amenity with the loss of existing unobstructed views onto a green field used for grazing sheep. Providing two storey properties on the site would create a brick wall effect. Planning Policy Strategy 7 - A31 stated that dominance was the extent to which a new development adversely impinges on the immediate aspect or outlook from an adjoining property with neighbouring occupiers not adversely affected by a sense of being hemmed in.
- The development would adversely affect highway safety and the convenience of other road users. 160 Properties with 2 cars per household equalled 320 exiting and entering on Grange Road which already had traffic congestion issues especially when the level crossing was closed and at busy times.
- Residents also had concerns that the increased volume of traffic at busy times would cause safety issues with cars exiting onto Grange Road without slowing down with the increased risk of accidents unless traffic calming measures were installed at the crossroads of Grangemoor Road and Grange Road. The existing bus stop also caused congestion for both Grangemoor Road and Grange Road at busy times and when the level crossing was down.
- The construction time with 7 years of construction and site traffic noise and disruption onto Grange Road and Grangemoor Road was unacceptable.

- Widdrington Station did not have the infrastructure to support the development with limited shops and the Doctors Surgery unable to cope with the current numbers.

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

- He thanked Members for their attendance at the site visit the previous day and advised that he had concerns on this application as it was very different to the previously consulted on and approved outline permission. The bungalows and types of property which would have been provided by the previous developer would have allowed residents to stay in their community and he was sad that these were not being kept.
- He highlighted the S106 contributions and queried the reduction between the community centre contribution figure stated in the Parish Council response and that now being included.
- In respect of Highways, he queried that no pedestrian crossing was to be provided or no other safety provision included in relation to the increase in traffic and he considered more weight should have been given to this as a child had been hit outside of the school and asked that this be looked at.
- The separation distances varied quite considerably and queried the email update which had been confusing to residents and clarity should be provided.
- He recognised that it had already been established the site was suitable for development with the outline permission, however this was different and did not meet the requirements of the village.
- He also stated that 7 years was a very long time for construction and the effects on the residents.

J Johnson, Land Manager for Gleesons addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- Gleesons provided entry level housing for first time buyers at the lower end of market offering more people the chance to own their own property. They had 65 sites, with 4 live sites in Northumberland at the current time.
- They had engaged with stakeholders on a number of occasions with their responses on the potential impacts on existing properties and perceived highways concerns considered.
- Distances all exceed those prescribed.
- Highways had been involved with suggested changes made and now supported the scheme advising that there would be no demonstrable harm.
- The properties were designed to be family homes priced at the lower end of the local housing market. The 2 / 3 bedroomed properties were entry level and affordable to 90% of people. With the Government's Help to Buy scheme for first time buyers a property of £110,000 would be reduced to £80,000 which was affordable to those on minimum wage.
- The running cost of the properties was approximately £600 per annum which enabled people to have their own truly affordable home.
- The Company was committed to supporting communities with the provision of junior sports, and a commitment to employ people within a two mile radius of the site.
- Changes to properties could be made free of charge for occupants with disabilities.

- The Company did not sell to landlords and properties were sold with a low rental covenant.
- The development would provide 164 homes with a £13.6m investment into the area supporting local suppliers and providing local employment and apprenticeships.
- He thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and Officers for their professional approach and report.

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

- The previous application for outline permission for 121 houses established the principle of development on the site. This was a different applicant with a subsequent increase in the number and different mix of dwellings to be provided. Members were reminded that the site was within the settlement boundary in the emerging Local Plan and the number of dwellings factored into the evidence base. The number of dwellings initially included in this application had been reduced in order to ensure that the open space and landscaping became the focus whilst providing an acceptable density and a good environment for residents. The application would not result in an overdevelopment of the site with plenty of amenity and green space and could accommodate the number of dwellings proposed.
- Whilst the provision of affordable bungalows on the site would have been welcomed, the applicant did not provide bungalows as part of their product.
- Condition 11 attached to any permission granted required an Estate Street Phasing and Completion Plan to be submitted and approved which would set out the development phases, completion sequence and construction standards for the streets and street lighting serving each phase of the development in order to ensure residential amenity and the safety of residents accessing their properties.
- Triggers would be included in the S106 Agreement in order to ensure mitigation was provided in a timely manner through the phasing of the development and would not rely upon the last property being completed.
- There had been no offer by the applicant for the provision of electric vehicle charging points in the car park. There was no current policy which required these to be provided, however Members could propose that this be included as part of any permission granted.
- The percentage increase in the number of properties in Widdrington Station was not a material consideration in this application as the principle of development had already been established through the previously granted outline application.
- In relation to pedestrian safety, the Committee was advised that Highways could only consider the increase in traffic that the additional 39 properties would provide over the already consented outline scheme for 121 properties. It was accepted that the development would have some adverse effect on highways safety, however most traffic would turn left out of the site and would not pass the first school. It was not envisaged that the development would increase traffic to the first school during peak periods. Bus stop improvements on Grange Road would be provided as part of the application.
- In response to Councillor Dodd highlighting an issue with S106 funding for education not being able to be spent in some instances because of schools being new, it was clarified that clauses within S106 agreements generally allowed repayments to be made to developers if the funds were not spent within a reasonable period of time. .

- Currently the Right of Way through the site provided no exit onto Grange Road as it went through properties, the development would seek to alter the route and provide an exit onto Grange Road.
- In response to concerns regarding the proximity of the proposed properties to existing properties and in particular Welbeck House, it was clarified that most properties were at least 10m from the boundary of the proposed development site with only Welbeck House, due to it being extended at ground floor level, was approximately 9m. The distance at first floor level to the boundary was 12m with another 10m to the gable of the proposed development. The Castle Morpeth Local Plan stated that the distance, between primary elevations of new and existing dwellings particularly at first floor level or above should not fall below 20 metres unless it could be demonstrated by the developer that allowances should be made because of site specific circumstances. It was therefore considered that this was a minor infringement of the policy in relation to one property and was therefore acceptable with Officers recommending this should not be used as a reason to refuse the application.
- It was confirmed that all affordable housing would now be delivered on site, contrary to what had been previously advised in the officer report , it was NPPF compliant and the mix was acceptable. Initially no Registered Provider was willing to take these properties due to the low demand for this type of rented property in the area. Detailed information was provided on the different types of affordable housing to be provided.
- There were agreed formulas used to calculate the level of contributions in respect of services to be requested through the S106 Agreement and did not just rely on the current population number compared to the increased population.
- The phasing of the development was not known at present.

Councillor Thorne proposed acceptance of the revised recommendation outlined above which was seconded by Councillor Dodd.

Concern was expressed at the length of time it would take for the development of the site which would mean 7 years of disruption for existing residents and the first new residents living on a building site for that length of time. Members also highlighted that solar panels and heat pumps should have been incorporated into the scheme to assist in achieving the Council's target of becoming a carbon neutral County. In relation to the car park it was suggested that at least one electric vehicle charging point should be provided as petrol/diesel cars were being phased out and the use of electric vehicles would increase. Councillor Thorne agreed to revise his motion to approve the application as follows:-

“That this application be GRANTED subject to a S106 Agreement to secure £99,000 towards Education, £99,000 towards Health Care, £23,400 towards Coastal Mitigation, £70,000 towards the village community centre together with the land for and a 20 space car park provided at the entrance to the site including the provision of at least one electric vehicle charging point and 17% on site affordable housing provision.”

The revised proposal was seconded by Councillor Dodds.

Members considered that the minor infringement in relation to the distance between Welbeck House and the development would not be sufficient to warrant refusal with the possibility of the Council having to meet any appeal costs and loss of the provision

of affordable housing on the site a concern. Whilst Members acknowledged that the design was acceptable and provision of garages on the development welcomed, stated that they would have preferred to have seen some bungalows provided on the site as per the previous application. Officers advised that the permitted outline application provided that the principle of development on the site was acceptable and the indicative layout only showed what the development could look like and that separation distances and height were not considered as part of that application.

Members supported the ethos of the Company in providing entry level housing with low running costs for young families.

A vote was taken to approve the application as per Councillor Thorne's revised proposal as follows:- FOR - 16; AGAINST - 0; ABSTENTION - 1.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** subject to a S106 Agreement to secure £99,000 towards Education, £99,000 towards Health Care, £23,400 towards Coastal Mitigation, £70,000 towards the village community centre together with the land for and a 20 space car park provided at the entrance to the site including the provision of at least one electric vehicle charging point and 17% on site affordable housing provision."

69. **PLANNING APPEALS**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.40 pm

CHAIR _____

DATE _____