

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held at Meeting Space - Block 1, Floor 2 - County Hall on Tuesday, 7 September 2021 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

T Thorne (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

C Ball	L Darwin
R Dodd	B Flux
J Foster	G Hill
J Lang	G Renner-Thompson
G Stewart	M Swinbank
A Wallace	A Watson

OFFICERS

N Armstrong	Principal Planning Officer
M Bulman	Solicitor
T Crowe	Solicitor
G Halliday	Consultant Planner
C Mead	Highways Development Manager
H Parkin	FCERM Officer
E Sinnamon	Development Service Manager

Around 3 members of the press and public were present.

27 **PROCEDURE AT PLANNING MEETINGS**

The Chair outlined the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

28 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Hutchinson, Reid and Robinson.

29 **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

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procedure for handling representations, the requirement of conditions and the need for justifiable reasons for the granting of permission or refusal of planning applications.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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19/01489/FUL

Hybrid planning application: seeking detailed permission for residential development (Use Class C3, 68no dwellings), access, associated highways infrastructure, landscaping, public open space and sustainable urban drainage features and outline permission for residential development (Use Class C3, up to 126 no dwellings, 4.77ha) with all matters reserved (as amended)

Land to West of Park Road, Park Road, Haltwhistle, Northumberland

There were no questions on the site visit videos which had been shared with Members of the Committee.

N Armstrong, Principal Planning Officer provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. The following updates were provided to the Committee:

- Section 4.0 consultation responses - Fire & Rescue Service had submitted comments following original consultation on the proposals which raised no objection in principle.
- Section 6.1 National Planning Policy - reference to the NPPF should read July 2021 - this was the version referred to within the appraisal section of the report.
- Condition 2 - *1160-BEA 20.02 - Proposed Floor Plans – 2B-630* should read *1160-BEA 20.08 - Proposed Floor Plans – 2B-630*
- Comments received from the local ward member Cllr Hutchinson who was unable to attend had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting and included the following:-
 - Drew attention to the very well written objection from the Town Council and encouraged members to read this.
 - The land was allocated for housing which he accepted and a housing development like this would go a long way to assist to rejuvenate the town.
 - He would fully support this application "if" the sole access was not along Park Road but South over the railway line towards the A69 and in his opinion financial viability was not a planning matter.
 - The photographs of the site's surrounding area (i.e. Park Road) did not give justice to the congestion at present and the potential of higher congestion problems at the East end of the road if this application was approved. Further pictures of the congested part of Park Road should be provided so the committee could appreciate the existing congestion problems.

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- He questioned if a recent traffic survey had been carried out on the road. He had commissioned one 5/7/2019 to 12/7/2019 the result being, over an 18 hour period, 6:00am until midnight 418 vehicular passes and therefore two years later there would be a great deal more and if the application was approved.
 - There was a school at the end of Park Avenue, which was a Northerly off-shot from Park Road, at the most congested spot. A large number of children attend the school via this route and there have been numerous "near misses" between vehicles and children in the vicinity and he did not wish to see a collision causing injury or death.
 - If this application were to be approved, a condition could be attached with a S106 agreement stating the developer must install or provide finance for the installation of a pelican crossing on Park Road in the vicinity of Park Avenue before development commenced. This would assist in safer crossing to the five streets South of Park Road whose only access into Haltwhistle was via Park Road.
 - There were also concerns over flooding in this area and this site was notorious for flooding.
 - His only reason for asking for the Committee to refuse was on Highways grounds and as Highways had no objections he understood it could be difficult to go against officer recommendation but in this case he asked that they did.
- A further 6 representations in objection had been received following the publication of the committee report. These refer to the following main areas of concern:
 - the area was not suitable for the proposed number of houses and the town did not require more expensive housing
 - alternative sites were available for development
 - adverse visual impact on the character of the area
 - highway and pedestrian safety implications due to increased number of vehicles and vehicles parked on Park Road creating a hazard, along with concerns over impacts on access for fire station, policies station and school and construction traffic
 - flood risk, drainage and capacity of infrastructure
 - ground conditions
 - impacts on residents during construction
 - loss of agricultural land
 - publicity and notification of the application

F Fender addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments included the following:-

- He had lived in Haltwhistle over 20 years approximately 50m from the site, he was no NIMBY if a sensible working scheme was presented that could achieve the same outcome it would be welcomed as they all wanted the town to prosper.
- The proposed development was on green agricultural land which had

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been for a number of years open countryside used for grazing animals. It marked the border between Haltwhistle and open countryside to the west towards Greenhead.

- The field acted as a flood sink with a pond appearing after heavy rain which slowly drained away. Recent works on the field had led, in his opinion, to flooding on Park Road with his property being affected along with others.
- Neil Harrison and Councillor Hutchinson had attended the site 3 months ago to view the site but no reply had been received.
- The field should not have been included in the Local Plan for housing. Minutes of Haltwhistle Town Council on 30 July stated that it was to consider 190/1801 local plan consultation to agree a response. A councillor reported on the meeting he had attended on the 23, it was stated that HTC agreed that the only land viable for housing would be in the west of the town which did not appear to be in the settlement boundary. It was never in the plan it was added afterwards. It was reasonable to assume that the reason for omission from Haltwhistle settlement area by NCC was it was outside the boundary and not suitable for development.
- Some people had bought homes because of the country aspect now they could find themselves in the middle of a large housing estate.
- According to the Census in 2001 there were 3811 people in Haltwhistle in the 2019 census it was 3822, an increase of only 11 in 18 years, with 27.5% over 65 many of them living in Park road.
- The application had almost tripled in size to almost 200 homes since the original application and they had been led to believe it wouldn't stop there, each with 2 parking spaces. Of 48 schemes within Northumberland Local Plan this was the largest, with zero justification and was just not needed. The conclusion being that the developer intended to build them as holiday homes due to their close proximity to Hadrian's Wall.
- Northumberland had an occupied dwelling figure of 6.4% compared to a national average of 2.6% resolving this would go a long way.
- Other allocated sites around Haltwhistle number around 40 dwellings. Table 7.1 indicative distribution of housing requirements 2016-2036 the average number of estimated dwellings per annum was 12. This application did not meet policy HOU2 1.b as it was too large and also HOU2 1.e.
- The main cause for concern was the access and egress along Park Road, the route from Park Road to the town centre was a narrow road and on Sunday 5 September there were 47 vehicles parked along Park Road. This was compounded by the fact that this was also a cycle route.

C Van Bedaf addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following information:-

- He was the agent, architect and designer of the scheme he was passionate about the scheme which was the conclusion of over 2.5 years of work by the development team and could only be viewed as contextual, extremely well considered and sensitive to the site.
- This was a bespoke design response with a private developer taking

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the site forward with a design commitment that the scheme is of the highest quality rather than those more commercially driven.

- This was a hybrid application seeking permission for up to 194 houses in total with the detailed scheme for 68 houses and an outline scheme for 126 houses. The detailed first scheme allowed for 43 no 3 bedroom homes, 13 no four bedroom homes and 12 number 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom affordable homes.
- There was a shortage of 3 bedroom homes which discouraged young couples and families to stay within the town, these would offer suitable accommodation and encourage them to stay and also attract others to Haltwhistle bring a boost to the town's economy.
- A number of key development characteristics needed to be carefully considered and these would ensure that the visual amenity of existing residents would not be adversely affected. All dwellings at the eastern boundary of the site had separation distances in excess of those required.
- A new separate junction would provide access to the majority of the dwellings would be provided from Park Road. Detailed consultations had been undertaken with relevant highways authorities which took into account all of Park Road, all junctions on it, the entire local road network and access on the A69, and following reviews and modelling highways authorities did not object subject to conditions.
- There would be 80 visitor parking spaces and 154 residential parking spaces as recommended.
- The scheme would retain, protect and enhance the watercourse and biodiversity on the site with a number of SUDs basis provided across the site and has full sign approval by the County Ecologist and LLFA.
- The dwelling types attempts to provide a traditional design response of Northumbria materiality and design at its heart.
- The S106 contributions were outlined as improvements to bus stops, improvements to footpaths; contribution to local schools, onsite play provision with the outline element and in addition a play space contribution and affordable housing provided at 17% across the whole scheme.
- Careful consideration of every characteristic and all planning policies had been undertaken over the last 2.5 years and he asked that the application be approved.

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

- Previously pedestrian crossings had only been provided where it could be demonstrated there was a considerable safety benefit due to the costs of maintenance. Recently rules had been relaxed and if a request to incorporate a pedestrian crossing had been made an earlier stage this was something that could have been considered.
- The application had taken a long time to get to this point for various reasons, with further information provided in relation to highways with proposed improvements made to bus stops and layout with consultations undertaken with both the local Highways Authority and Highways England in connection with the A69. The Highways Authority could only assess 5 years data and in that period only one

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minor collision had occurred. Whilst the road would be busier there was nothing which would support the view that it would not be safe.

- Whilst there would be additional traffic on Park Road this would not cause capacity problems and the existing parking on Park Road would not be exacerbated by the development. The development met parking standards with the addition of garages and additional visitor parking and therefore would not result in an out-spill to Park Road.
- The housing need as demonstrated by the SHMA and outlined in paragraph 7.27 stated there was a need for 3 bedroom properties, however there was also the possibility of a rebalance of mix of house types across the outline permission site. An informative would be included in any permission granted to encourage the application to have pre-application discussions on housing mix.
- In relation to density, the Tynedale Local Core Strategy had set out 30 dwellings per hectare and this was lower at 25 per hectare with open areas including the watercourse and SUDs areas and the provision of sports and play provision would be a condition of the outline permission. It was not thought to be out of scale with the character of the area in terms of density.
- It was acknowledged that this was a change in the current open green space character of the land, however the site for the full permission had long been allocated for housing with an expectation that this would come forward.
- The references in objections to alternative sites included some brownfield land at Hadrian Enterprise Park, however this was designated employment land which it was proposed to take forward in the emerging Local Plan. It was not proposed to carry forward the allocated employment land in relation to the other part of this application within the Local Plan.
- A significant amount of work had been undertaken to provide reasonable connectivity to the town centre which would be secured under Condition 14. The condition could be strengthened to include all types of sustainable routes, not just pedestrian routes. A condition regarding the provision of electric vehicle charging points could also be provided if required.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the Officer's recommendation to approve the application with the conditions as outlined in the report and update to condition 2 as above with an additional condition regarding electric vehicle charging points to be provided at 50% of properties on the full application, the wording of which to be delegated to the Director of Planning and Chair of Strategic Planning and the condition regarding cycling to be strengthened along with the S106 agreement. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Stewart.

During debate of the application, and in response to statements regarding the allocation of land, it was clarified that within the emerging Local Plan 100% of the site was allocated as housing land and whilst full weight to this was not able to be given, it did give the direction of travel. Whilst the full mix of house types as identified in the SHMA was not being provided on the Full application, this could be looked in more detailed during the reserved matters of the Outline part of the application site.

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Members highlighted that the town had a strong economy and additional housing would be beneficial and this was a green field site and not Green Belt. Following discussion on the wording to strengthen the condition in relation to cycling it was agreed that an additional bullet point should be added to Condition 14 to read:

- Signage for the promotion of walking and cycling

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application as outlined above as follows: FOR 11; AGAINST 2; ABSTENSIONS 0.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and subject to the conditions as outlined in the report, amendment to condition 2 and additional bullet point to condition 14, an additional condition related to electric vehicle charging points to be installed on 50% of properties on the Full application site with delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Chair of Strategic Planning Committee to agree the wording, and Section 106 agreement to secure planning obligations in respect of affordable housing, education, healthcare and sport and play.

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21/00387/CCD

Construction of a new single platform railway station including pedestrian lift, new highway access; modifications to existing highways including pedestrian footways; provision of parking for cars, electric vehicles, motorcycles, cycles and taxis and other associated works including new crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. Construction of facilities ancillary to the station including lighting, soft and hard landscaping, surface and subsurface drainage, utilities and other services, boundary treatment and other associated works.

Station Yard Car Park North, Wansbeck Square, Station Road, Ashington, Northumberland. NE643 9XH

G Halliday, Consultant Planner provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation. Updates were provided as follows:-

- An additional letter of objection had been received from Mr Billingham on behalf of residents in Seaton Delaval which had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting and uploaded to the planning portal, setting out their opposition to the proposed car parking arrangements.
- The report stated that no response had been received from Ashington Town Council. The Town Clerk telephoned Mr Halliday to state verbally that Ashington Town Council had no objection and fully supported the opening of the Northumberland Line and the development of the station. This had not been received in writing, although it had been requested.
- Paragraph 7.38 – the first sentence should be deleted.
- Condition 6 – the last sentence should be amended to read no later than the first planting season *and completed not later than the third planting season* after the development is brought into use.

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

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- The Grampian condition related to the land acquisition had been included in the recommended conditions as the car parking as assessed formed an integral part of the development and currently the land was not owned by the applicant. It was appropriate to have this condition as the development of the car park could not commence until the land was acquired.
- It was thought that the proposed car park would be well used, regardless of the Cabinet decision to review the no-charging policy after 12 months of use and was of an appropriate size for the intended number of passengers wishing to park in addition to visitors to the town centre.
- The appearance and design of the stations had been through a variety of development and consultation stages and the proposals were as submitted. The design of the stations and their facilities were similar to those used at some Metro stations.
- The proposed car park would service both the new station and the town centre. No decision had been made on the management of the new car parks on the line and it was possible it would not be the same at each location. The current car park at this location was managed by NCC. Any changes to the charging strategy would need to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority.
- Various conditions were recommended by the Highways Authority for the safe ingress and egress from surroundings roads and the operation of the car park. The number of electric vehicle charging points was in line with national policy however an informative attached to the permission advised that the demand could change to reflect the take up of electric vehicles.
- The planting of trees at People's Park would not encroach on any of the land used for sport or recreational uses and the condition would ensure that trees were replaced if necessary within the two years.

Councillors Flux, Hill and Renner-Thompson left at this point – 5.57 pm

- Pedestrian access to Wansbeck Square would be maintained but did not form part of this scheme as it was outside the red line boundary
- Highways recognised that the streets surrounding the proposed station would be busier at certain times of the day but there was nothing to suggest that there would be capacity issues or additional on-street parking. The road was of a sufficient width to allow two-way traffic and the proposals would not jeopardise traffic movement within Ashington.
- The Highways team had spoken to the Local Infrastructure Team regarding cycling and walking connectivity to the Station and were keen to see a strategy come forward. This was the site of the previous station and was well served with bus routes, was close to the town centre and was the most sustainable location to serve the needs of Ashington. It was noted that trains only had the capacity to allow two cycles on at the current time with Ashington on the national cycling route and Northumberland Association of Local Councils keen to increase routes in the area.

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Councillor Wallace proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the officer's report with the amendments to condition 6 as outlined above, which was seconded by Councillor Dodd.

Members welcomed the proposals for the station and the opening of the Northumberland Line which had been through many stages to get to this point and acknowledged and thanked those involved for their work. This was important for South East Northumberland and the economic benefit it would bring was highlighted.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report and amendment to Condition 6.

32 **APPEALS UPDATE**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

33 **S106 AGREEMENTS UPDATE REPORT**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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