

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held at Meeting Room 1, Berwick Leisure Centre, Northumberland Rd, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2AS on Thursday, 19 May 2022 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT

G Castle (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

G Hill
G Renner-Thompson
J Watson
I Hunter
M Swinbank

W Pattison
C Seymour
C Hardy
M Mather

OFFICERS

J Blenkinsopp
G Bucknall
R Campbell
B Hodgson
R Little
H Parkin
M Payne
E Sinnamon

Solicitor
Highways Delivery Area Manager
Senior Planning Officer
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager
Assistant Democratic Services Officer
FCERM Officer
Consultant Engineer
Development Service Manager

Around 20 members of the press and public were present.

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1 **MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Membership and Terms of Reference for the North Northumberland Local Area Council, as agreed at Full Council on 4 May 2022 were provided for information.

RESOLVED that this was noted.

2 **MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE - NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL (RIGHTS OF WAY) SUBCOMMITTEE**

Members agreed that the North Northumberland Local Area Council (Rights of Way) Subcommittee would be:

G. Castle (Chair)
C. Hardy
M. Mather
G. Renner-Thompson
C. Seymour
M. Swinbank

RESOLVED that this was noted.

3 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor S. Bridgett, Councillor T. Clark, and Councillor T. Thorne.

4 **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Hill advised the committee that she had a personal but non prejudicial interest in item 7 of the agenda, 21/01355/FUL.

5 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday, 24 February 2022, and Thursday, 24 March 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

Councillor Hardy (Vice Chair – Planning), in the Chair.

6 **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 this was noted.

7 **21/01355/FUL**

D. Love – Senior Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation. After showing the site videos, D. Love gave the following updates:

- The report should have consistently read: “That this application be approved, subject to conditions and section a s106 agreement to secure affordable housing, open space, healthcare contribution and coastal mitigation strategy payments
- Paragraph 7.92 in the report should have read £615 not £600.
- Advice from the Housing Enabling Officer indicated that the tenure mix, and type of housing should have been flexible, the offer of four onside flats could have been amended to include a single house, the committee would be asked to authorise delegation to negotiate the make-up of the affordable housing contribution.
- There was an addition of two conditions covering consistency with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and a suspensive condition for a CEMP.
- The Lead Local Flood Authority and the EA agent had agreed their respective positions and there had not been anything missed in the assessment.

N. Craig, spoke in support of this application and gave the following information:

- GMC were a family run business based in Berwick, and had previously developed 150 homes in the town, using local workforce and supply chain.
- GMC had previously acquired brown field sites and turned them into successful properties, including the former council officers.
- The development would complement the area, and had been designed with Historic England, the Conservation Officer, and the Lead Planner. They had confirmed that the design complied with planning legislation and was appropriate for the area.
- The project would include job stability for the GMC team and local network, including sub-contractors, suppliers, and professionals, keeping money within the micro-economy of Berwick Upon Tweed.
- The site would include river defenders, which would require maintenance and some rebuilding, the defences were secured for the life of the development with the homeowners paying for the upkeep and maintenance of the river defence.
- There had been a flood risk report and a contamination report, these had been scrutinised by Public Health, LLFA and Environmental Agency and had been approved by the statutory consultees.

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Following questions from Members to the planning officers, the following information was provided:

- The site was a brownfield site, and that the Building Conservation Officer considered that the impact from the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm.
- There would be 27 conditions on the development which would be rigorously monitored.
- The materials that would be used in the development were stone and zinc, however there was a condition in the report to agree materials in line with the local vernacular.
- The application included breaking up the original big block development into three separate blocks with different heights, which would suit the vernacular of the town.
- The site could potentially be used as a storage facility if the application were to be refused.
- There was a condition for EV charging points, but the number had not been confirmed at the time of the application.

Councillor Renner-Thompson proposed to approve the application, with the conditions set out in the report, including the two additional conditions with specific wording directed to the director of planning in consultation with the chair and subject to a section 106 agreement to secure contributions totalling £79,705.47 towards healthcare contribution, open space, affordable housing, and coastal service mitigation contribution. This was seconded by Councillor Watson.

The committee agreed that the area needed aspirational housing, the application including breaking up the original large block into separate units and the developer had submitted a quality development, the committee agreed that it would be a fantastic addition to the town.

A vote was taken as follows: FOR; 8, AGAINST; 0, ABSTIAN;2

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** subject the conditions outlined in the report and the additional conditions proposed by officers along with a section 106 agreement as set out in the report.

8 **21/00346/OUT**

R. Campbell – Senior planning officer, introduced the application with the aid of site videos and a PowerPoint presentation, there had been no further updates since the submission of the report to the committee.

A. Hinchcliffe spoke in objection to the application and gave members the following information:

- The site should be for one of two low-rise homes similar to the existing bungalow. Four houses on the site was unacceptable.
- The design of the application was based on the design on the three semi-detached houses to the immediate south, which were built around 1940 with no space to take vehicles between the houses.
- The submitted design code contains inaccuracies which gave false

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impression of the proposal and comparative proportions to the existing semi-detached houses were incorrect.

- Beach View mainly consisted of low-height and low-density bungalows that were sat within a generous garden, an important characteristic of the village.
- Boulmer had suffered from high levels of visitor parking, further resident parking on Beach Road would add to an already problematic situation.
- Of the last eleven properties that were added to the housing market in Boulmer, nine had gone for second homes or holiday lets.

C. Bradshaw, spoke as a parish councillor in the Longhoughton & Boulmer area and gave the following information:

- The site was not a suitable size to hold four dwellings.
- The application was out of character and scale for the street.
- The rest of the properties on the street were bungalows.
- Parking was inadequate.
- Developments would need to attract young families.
- Developments would need to be sympathetic and enhance the character of the village.

D. Puttick, spoke in support of the application and gave the following information:

- The application was an all matters reserved application.
- The application plans were detailed and supported by the Planning Officers.
- The applicant planned to use old building styles to keep the development in characteristic of the village.
- Highways had commented that the application site would have sufficient parking.

Following questions from members to the planning officers, further information was provided:

- The committee could not impose conditions relating to second homes as the Parish did not have large amount of second homes, based on census data and in accordance with the Local Plan.
- If approved, the committee could ask to have the reserved matters application brought before members, which would include parking, this would be considered through the chair referral process.
- Planning officers were satisfied that the site could provide up to four dwellings.
- Planning Officers had worked with the AONB, and the developer was aware of the concerns raised.
- The street scene did not contain only bungalows.

Councillor Pattison proposed to refuse the application for the following reasons: Harmful visual impact on neighbouring amenity and general visual amenity, failure to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB, failure to demonstrate sufficient car parking and over development of the site. This was seconded by Councillor Hill.

After a small debate from members, a vote was taken as follows: FOR; 6,

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AGAINST; 4, ABSTAIN; 0.

RESOLVED that the application was **REFUSED** for harmful visual impact on neighbouring amenity, impact on the AONB (harm on area of outstanding beauty), concerns around parking and over development of the site.

9 **TREE PRESERVATION ORDER**

The Planning Officer introduced the preservation order with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

There were no questions from members.

Councillor Watson proposed to accept the officer's recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Castle.

A vote was taken as follows: FOR; 9, AGAINST; 1, ABSTAIN; 0

RESOLVED that the Tree Preservation Order is confirmed without modification for the reasons set out in paragraphs 7.1 - 7.3 in the report.

10 **APPEALS UPDATE**

RESOLVED that this was noted.

11 **SECTION 106**

RESOLVED that this was noted.

*A comfort break was announced for officers to change over.
Councillor Castle (Chair) – In the Chair*

12 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been submitted in writing.

Q.

L. Robson, local resident, asked where they were able to recycle printer cartridges as there had been no recycling scheme available from the supplier since the Covid-19 pandemic.

A.

The chair explained that a full written response would be provided to Mr Robson, with some members suggesting local recycling points.

Q.

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B. Darling, local resident, asked where he could report illegal and fraudulent land sales that Northumberland County Council may be caught up in.

A.

The chair explained that if the resident believed there was illegal activity occurring then they should contact the police in the first instance or if they were concerned with suspicious practice then they could also contact their local member.

J. Thomas, local resident, asked several questions:

Q1)

Mr Thomas questioned the effectiveness between Parish Councils and had raised a number of concerns with the democratic process which received no formal response.

A1)

The chair explained that previous questions may have not been permitted and that only questions which adhere to the public question time policy would guarantee a written response.

Q2)

Storm Arwen, there were no public requests for direct feedback for any fact finding. Mr Thomas had requested help and support from Northumberland County Council but had been denied and no feedback was gathered.

A2)

The chair explained that there had been a Storm Arwen working group and there had been a dedicated email address for any Storm Arwen concerns or feedback. The working group had agreed recommendations in principle, and they had used feedback and comments from local members, town and Parish Councils as well as members of the public, these recommendations were to be heard by full council in due course.

Q3)

Mr Thomas believed that the public drop-in sessions for the Berwick Education Review were “woefully short”, and he was concerned that no full public consultation was completed.

A3)

Councillor Renner-Thompson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, explained that the consultation had been completed formally and legally, with schools and the teaching staff consultation proceeding for four years previous. Councillor Renner-Thompson explained that he had confidence in officers that had completed the consultation but expressed that there could have been more in-person consultations, however explained that there was also an online platform where residents could express their views.

Q4)

Mr Thomas explained that there has been an issue with the roads in Lowick Village due to the speed of traffic and size of vehicles passing, the road gullies were inadequate and had not been serviced, they had raised this with the local member for the area but received no reply.

A4)

The chair explained that Mr Thomas would receive a full written response to this question.

13 PETITIONS

(a) Receive any new petitions:

There had been no new petitions received.

(b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

There were no reports presented on previous petitions.

(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered:

There were no updates.

14 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Highways

Resurfacing

Three schemes had been completed of the 2022/23 LTP, those were:

- Swansfield Park Road – Alnwick
- Trehitt Hall
- Barmoor to Doddington

There would be a total of 41 resurfacing schemes to deliver in the North Northumberland area, including eight additional schemes, two micro surfacing schemes and 14 on the surface dressing programme.

The schemes to complete next were:

Canongate Bridge – Alnwick
Knocklaw – Rothbury
Brewery Road – Wooler
Harwood Village

The highways team had also been delivering a major car park scheme in Amble

Maintenance

The maintenance teams had the use of two hot box loans, making it three in total.

There would shortly have two gully tankers

The jet patcher was due to arrive the week after the meeting for roughly eight weeks.

All of the gullies on the A697 from Weldon Bridge to Coldstream had recently been cleared, along with all the gullies on the A698 from Cornhill to Berwick and all of the gullies on the A1068 Druridge to Alnwick. This process would continue on all of the major roads and then move onto the secondary roads.

Members noted that Highways Inspectors were continuing to deal with hundreds

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of complaints every week about potholes and noted that it was a struggle to deal with these while trying to complete their routine inspections

Following the update from G. Bucknall – Lead Highways Delivery Manager, members were invited to ask questions, in which the following information was provided:

- The list of C roads to be completed would be circulated to members after the meeting.
- The sign team had been suspended as there had been an issue with getting poles.
- The new gully wagon would be full time.
- The jet patcher blows out all the water, ready for the mix to be inputted for filling potholes.

Members thanked Graham and the team for their continued hard work.

Neighbourhood Services

Waste Services

Residual and Recycling waste collection services were continuing to perform well. Demand for the bulky waste services were high but the service had been performing well after making some adjustments to meet demand, Garden Waste service had also been performing well, with 440 new customers in the North Northumberland area.

Grass Cutting

Seasonal staff had been appointed and the team had started cutting late March/early April.

Start of the grass cutting season saw a few interruptions from wet weather and the Easter bank holiday which elongated the gap between cut one and two, but the teams recovered well.

Weed Control

Area weed spraying was underway, including the spraying of obstacles.

Verge Cutting

Work was predicted to start shortly and would take approximately two months to complete.

There was 6.8 million sq. meters of verge to be cut in the county, and the team planned to engage local farmers and contractors to help reduce the significant workload.

The team planned to react quickly if any re-visits were necessary for any visibility sightlines.

Holy Island Public Conveniences had opened since the previous North Northumberland Local Area Committee meeting in March 2022.

Following the update from B. Hodgson – Neighbourhood Services Area Manager, members were invited to ask questions, which then the following information was provided:

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- There had been more staffing planned for the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend to cover for public litter bins.
- Litter bins were the responsibility of the Town and Parish councils to clean, however the Neighbourhood Services Team would be willing to complete this upon request.
- The accessible toilets in Holy Island and Seahouses has been registered with changing place facilities.
- Neighbourhood Services team were legally allowed to spray active weeds only and were not allowed to blanket spray full paths, they have also trialled other weed control measures such as steam, vinegar, and acid.

Councillor Mather stated that he would like a report to go to Cabinet regarding the stoppage of spending for clean-up after storm Arwen. Councillor Mather also suggested that there should be communication to land owners explaining their responsibility with fallen trees, this was agreed by the rest of the committee for a report to cabinet and communications to land owners.

Members thanked Bob and the team for their continued hard work.

Members agreed to suspend standing orders at this point to allow the meeting to continue over 3 hours.

15 **TWEED VALLEY RAILWAY CAMPAIGN**

J. Boulton – Chairman, Tweed Valley Railway Campaign, and A. Russell – Secretary, Tweed Valley Railway Campaign introduced themselves and explained the background behind the Tweed Valley Railway Campaign with the aid of a PowerPoint Presentation, and stating the three-point plan for the Campaign:

1. Generate Support
2. Feasibility Study
3. Build it

The campaign objective was to establish a railway between Tweedbank and Berwick Upon Tweed, this would be a 34-mile route, with half in Northumberland and half in the Scottish Borders.

J. Boulton explained the reasons behind the idea, including:

- Resilience - To assist with scheduled maintenance, poor weather, or any other unscheduled events.
- Tourism & Leisure - To allow members of the public to access all that Northumberland and the Scottish Borders have to offer, without needing a motor vehicle.
- Active Travel - To encourage the public to explore the region, with cycle paths nearby the line.
- Access to Work, Education & Healthcare - To assist those without the use of a car or decent modes of public transport. Better public access to education and workplace encourages younger generations to stay within the region, encouraging it to develop and grow.

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- Attracting Investment – A 21st Century railway would attract investment in the form of housing, local amenities, car parks and cycle spaces.
- Sustainable Transport – Reduces dependency on cars and fossil fuels. Increases the use of trains for freight.

J. Boulton explained what the campaign had achieved so far, including securing the funding for Year 1 from the Scottish Borders Council, transport strategy responses and building the stakeholder network.

Councillor Mather started the discussion welcoming the idea, stating that the roads were struggling, and it would save roads being so congested, with Councillors Seymour, Hunter and Renner-Thompson agreeing that it would better connect the East and West side of the county and bring more employment to the region.

Councillor Castle advised J. Boulton and A. Russell to contact the old Valley Railway and learn from previous attempts, and that the campaign would need a driving force.

Councillor Watson suggested contacting expert officers in Northumberland County Council who have previously worked with Borderlands and questioned about the sustainability of the line with daily journeys.

Councillor Hill declared that she was part of the campaign and explained that there had been a large population shift in the previous 20 years and that North Northumberland appreciated the Scottish links to the county and that it would benefit tourism to both Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

The committee thanked J. Boulton and A. Russell for attending and wished them well on the Tweed Valley Railway Campaign.

16 **OUTSIDE BODIES**

The following changes were made to the outside body appointments:

- Glendale Gateway Trust no longer required a NCC appointment.
- North Sunderland Harbour Commission were weeks away from signing a new Harbour Order which would no longer require a NCC representative. The committee declined to appoint a member.
- Councillor Nick Morphet had been allocated to sit on Northumberland National Park Joint Local Access Forum.
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17 **MEMBERS LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2021-2025**

RESOLVED that this was noted.

18 **LOCAL AREA WORK PROGRAMME**

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RESOLVED that this was noted.

19 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that this was noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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