

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Petitions Committee** held at Committee Room 2 - County Hall on Thursday, 26 January 2023 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT

R Dodd (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

B Flux
L Bowman
M Swinburn

C Ball
T Cessford
C Taylor

OFFICERS

J Murphy
N Turnbull

South East DM Area Manager
Democratic Services Officer

1 member of the press and 2 members of the public were present.

5 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Reid and Scott.

6 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Petitions Committee held on Wednesday, 27 October 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

7 **REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND LOCAL SERVICES**

The Petitions Committee received an update on the petition received from residents of Arcot Manor/The Fairways in respect of on-going planning issues. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Judith Murphy, Development Management Area Manager (South East) provided a brief summary of the petition which related to the lack of pedestrian or cycle access to local services with no safe crossing point across Fisher Lane, which residents felt was dangerous and poorly designed.

Under the terms of the Section 106 agreement, the developers were obliged to undertake certain actions when trigger points were reached. With regard to the pedestrian link between the development and Beacon Lane, this was not required

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until 800 houses were occupied, and they were therefore not in breach of the Section 106 agreement.

She provided the following update on actions since the meeting on 27 October 2022:

- Discussions had been held with Persimmon and had been positive although access for residents could not be given on the site where construction was ongoing.
- Stage 1 and 2 road safety audits had been undertaken in May 2014, April 2015, October 2015 with a stage 3 audit in July 2019. These had resulted in amendments to the road network in that area including an extension of the 50mph to the south of the access roundabout to the development.
- It was reported that there had been a minor collision recorded in January 2019 to the north of the roundabout but outside of the scope of the roundabout works and no collisions at the roundabout since July 2019.
- Highways did not have any safety concern as the requirements of the road safety audits had been met and the engineers considered that the signage for the area was appropriate. However, they would reassess whether additional signage was required, including pedestrian crossing lights and signage. Chevrons had also been added to deter overtaking on the roundabout. All of the issues raised by residents had been considered as part of the previous road safety audits and construction of the roundabout and pedestrian access to the bus stops which were in accordance with highways regulations and deemed to be safe.
- Options had been explored to create a footpath link to the north of the estate which would come out near to Azure Garden Centre on land owned by the council. This would be explored further if Members supported the proposal, although clarification of how this would be funded was being sought from the Interim Director of Planning and Local Services and Strategic Estates Manager.

The following comments were made by members:

- A temporary footpath on council land should be created as soon as possible so residents could more easily access the town centre with connections to established routes.
- There were legacy issues with a number of developments around the county.
- If there were any 'heras type' fencing on council land, it should be removed so the residents could cross the field if they wanted. The local member commented that a path would need to be laid to enable use by cyclists, pedestrians with pushchairs and those using wheelchairs as it was rough ground.
- Local members drove along Fisher Lane regularly and noted that some motorists exceeded the legal speed limit, 'flying past' using the wrong lane at the 'Azure' roundabout. They enquired what could be done to manage speeds to prevent other users being put at risk, other than enforcement. Advice would need to be obtained from Highways with the matter being progressed by Cramlington Town Council.
- Reference was made to the pedestrian crossing on the A19 adjacent to Moor Farm roundabout and also roundabout and traffic light system for the new housing development off the A189 on the outskirts of Killingworth. These

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- were busy roads and worked well.
- Whether the speed limit should be reduced to 40 mph either side of the access roundabout on Fisher Lane.
- Some of the proposals being suggested had been raised by the local ward member as part of the LTP Programme consultation. There was frustration regarding the process and particularly local schemes which were not able to be progressed.
- There should be more enforcement.
- Some of the road safety audits had been carried out prior to construction on the estate starting and it was queried whether these need to be updated given the subsequent increase in vehicle movements.
- Speed indicator signs had found to be beneficial in other towns where speeding was an issue. There were moveable signs at other locations in Cramlington and it was suggested that the Town Council should have one relocated to Fisher Lane.
- Whether an average speed system would be beneficial as motorists slowed down for the cameras.
- There would be a significant cost (tens of thousands) for the installation of traffic lights.
- A representative from Highways be requested to attend the next meeting.

The following information was provided in response to questions:

- Section 106 monies were not due to be received by the Council until completion of the 540th and then 860th dwellings. It was believed that between 300-400 houses had been completed.
- The Interim Director of Planning and Local Services had acknowledged at the previous meeting that infrastructure needed to be in place earlier than was currently stipulated in the Section 106 agreement and this would be reflected in negotiations for future planning applications.
- Officers were continuing to work with the developers to see if the schedule could be brought forward or for a temporary footpath and connection point to be created which would be safe for residents to use.
- The temporary footpath needed to be 'designed' by the Highways design team which would be robust enough for use by pedestrians and cyclists. Information would be obtained regarding materials and provided to the local member.
- When clarification was being obtained about the ownership of the land where the temporary footpath was proposed, both Persimmon and Bellway had confirmed that the location of the proposed temporary footpath was suitable. It was currently an empty field on rough ground.
- The signage in place was in accordance with the road safety audits which was the required process to ensure safety.
- Access to the town centre would be greatly improved when construction was completed, although given the size of the estate, this would be a few years in the future.
- For health and safety reasons, members of the public could not access areas where construction was ongoing and therefore the temporary path adjacent to the Azure Garden Centre had been identified as the most appropriate route at the current time.
- It was not known whether traffic lights were considered when the road

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scheme was designed. It was unlikely that the roundabout would be removed and replaced with traffic lights, following the road safety audits, however highways engineers were looking to see what improvements could be made.

The Chair allowed the lead petitioner to address the committee. She stated that:

- The housing estate was now in place since the last road safety audit in July 2019.
- She disputed the suggestion that there was adequate signage as she stated there was none.
- There were no flashing speed signs near the estate.
- Residents on the Beaconhill estates were able to use subways to travel to the other side of the A1172 where the speed limit was only 40mph.
- Residents on the estate paid Council Tax but received few services except for the emptying of bins.
- What cost be put on someone's life.
- Traffic safety data was awaited from Northumbria Police. It was suggested that the data could be sent to the Democratic Services Officer for consideration by the Petition Committee / officers, if valid.
- There was concern about the impact of a slump in the housing market.

The Chair sympathised with the issues raised by the lead petitioner and agreed that the issue would continue to be monitored to ensure that the problems were resolved, the cost of traffic lights be investigated and whether any monies from the developers could be utilised for their installation. He was unable to provide a time frame for how long this would take.

Councillor Flux reported that a lot of unseen work was happening in the behind the scenes. He suggested that the temporary path needed to be installed before April.

RESOLVED that the Petitions Committee:

- a) The issues raised in the petition, be noted.
- b) The explanation of the role of planning and how planning decisions were made, be noted.
- c) The progress in relation to the agreed outcomes and actions required as defined at the petitions Committee on 27 October 2022, be noted.
- d) Receive an update at the next meeting on 27 April 2023.
- e) The installation of a temporary footpath on land in the ownership of the council adjacent to Azure Garden Centre, be supported.

8 **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 27 April 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

CHAIR.....

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DATE.....

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