

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Monday, 13 March 2023 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

J Beynon (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| D Bawn | L Darwin |
| R Dodd | L Dunn |
| J Foster | V Jones |
| M Murphy | G Sanderson |
| D Towns | R Wearmouth |

OFFICERS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| J Blenkinsopp | Solicitor |
| R Laughton | Senior Planning Officer |
| L Little | Senior Democratic Services Officer |
| P Lowes | Neighbourhood Services Area Manager |
| S McMillan | Service Director |
| E Sinnamon | Development Service Manager |
| N Snowdon | Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) |

Around 2 members of the press and public were present.

92 PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT PLANNING MEETINGS

Councillor J Foster, Vice-Chair Planning in the Chair advised of the procedure to be followed during the planning part of the meeting.

93 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dickinson.

94 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday 13 February 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

Ch.'s Initials.....

95 **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.

96 **20/01585/OUT**
Outline permission for the erection of up to 9 no. residential units (C3 use)
(All Matters Reserved)
Butley Ben, North Lane End, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2JR

An introduction to the report was provided by R Laughton, Senior Planning Officer with the aid of a power point presentation.

Councillor A Byard addressed the Committee speaking on behalf of Morpeth Town Council (MTC). Her comments included the following:-

- The Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan highlighted that the approaches to Morpeth were open and green, with development largely screened from the roads right into the heart of the built-up area.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Corridor policy, amongst others, sought to retain the character of those approaches within the Settlement Boundary. It was not thought necessary to extend that principle beyond the Settlement Boundary into open countryside.
- MTC's objection was mainly an attempt to preserve the openness of these approaches and avoid development which made this part of the road network feel as though it was in a built-up area. Otherwise, this land seemed to be largely unprotected by planning policy as Neighbourhood Planning relating to development inside the settlement boundary (supporting the character of the town) did not apply and nor did the Open Countryside policy.
- The other main concern was that this outline permission would establish the principle of building, but with such comprehensive reserved matters, that the end product could not be effectively controlled by planning policy (including factors such as the final number of houses and character of development).
- MTC would be prepared to withdraw their objection if several aspects were removed from reserved matters and conditioned in the outline permission, namely:
 - A firm limit on the total number of houses.
 - A layout screening the development from the road which at least met the requirements of the NP landscape corridor policy.

Ch.'s Initials.....

- A layout which recognised the Wildlife Corridor along the edge of the site, and that the area was also a “wildlife reservoir” which feeds and supports the town wildlife corridors. The NP Wildlife Corridor policy was relevant.
- The character of the development reflected the character of Morpeth. The town had suffered from housing planning consents granted before the Neighbourhood Plan or Local Plan were made, which had led to developments that eroded the character of the town and it was hoped to halt this trend if possible.

In response to questions from Members the following information was noted:-

- This application would establish the principle of development and everything else would be considered at the reserved matters stage.
- The application was for up to 9 properties, anything over this number would require a new planning application to be made.
- Previously this site had been within the Green Belt which was the reason an appeal had been refused. However following the adoption of the Local Plan the site was no longer within the Green Belt, nor were any of the other edges of the roundabout. In relation to the sense of arrival into Morpeth, design codes could be requested as a condition on this application and a conversation could be held with the applicant in relation to the landscaping, design and materials to be used.
- Consultation had been undertaken with the Housing Enabling Officer in relation to affordable housing who had advised that a commuted sum would be acceptable for this scheme. Unfortunately it was not possible to advise on why it was acceptable for housing to be delivered this way.

Councillor Towns proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application subject to the conditions in the report along with an additional condition seeking compliance with a design code in relation to screening/ approach and materials with the exact wording of the condition to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth. A vote was taken on the proposal and it was unanimously:

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report with an additional condition seeking compliance with a design code in relation to screening/ approach and materials with the exact wording of the condition to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee.

A request was made by the Vice-Chair (Planning) that the Housing Enabling Officer attend a future meeting to give advice in relation to affordable housing.

97 **APPEALS UPDATE**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

A short break was held at this point in order to allow officers to leave/join the meeting. Councillor Jones joined the meeting at this point.

98 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been submitted.

99 **PETITIONS**

(a) Receive New Petitions – A petition had been received regarding the Island outside Blossom Park, Pegswood with details provided for Members information.

RESOLVED that the petition be accepted and that a report would be provided at the meeting on Monday 15 May 2023.

(b) Petitions Previously Received – Margaret Street Road Repair and One Way System

A petition with 129 signatories had been received requesting road repairs and a one-way system to be provided at Margaret Street, Widdrington Station. The petition recognised the efforts of Councillor Dickinson in trying to resolve the issues regarding road condition but residents had felt that they had no option but to petition for this work to be carried out. An introduction to the report was provided by N Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer. The requests for road repairs and a one-way system would be considered for inclusion in a future Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme and assessed and further prioritised alongside similar requests across Northumberland.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted and that the proposed actions be supported.

(c) Updates on Petitions previously received – No updates were provided.

100 **LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

P Lowes, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager provided an update as follows:-

- Winter works were drawing to a close and on target to complete all scheduled winter works tasks. Members were asked to report any work they believed had not been completed.
- Grounds staff were still working reduced hours but they would change to summer hours in a few weeks.
- Preparations had been finalised for the upcoming grass cutting season with all grass cutting equipment serviced and ready to go. All routes had been reviewed with only very minor changes made in the Castle Morpeth area.
- Interviews had been undertaken for seasonal grounds maintenance staff and the pre-appointment process was being worked through. It was hoped

Ch.'s Initials.....

to have everything in place to get the seasonal staff started at the beginning of April.

- Weed control activities would be undertaken in-house again this year and blue dye would again be used.
- Street sweeping had been affected by the recent cold weather with staff deployed to support gritting activities.
- Garden waste collections started on 6th March. In order to keep up with the demands of the service, the Morpeth depot had deployed an additional collection vehicle this season. Routes were thoroughly reviewed over the winter and collection areas taken from other depots in order to best utilise the new resource and deal with new housing and increased demand for the service. Initial take up for the service was high and the scheme remained popular.

It was asked if delaying the first grass cut of the season had been considered following environmental charities advising that this would help with bee populations. In response it was advised that this had not been considered, however, to do that would have a knock on effect on the cutting programme and it would take additional time for the cuts to make areas look acceptable. Four native areas had been introduced last season in the Castle Morpeth area and all but one of these would go ahead again this year following feedback from residents.

There was no representative from Highways present to provide an update. Councillor Dodd advised that he had a number of queries which he had hoped to have been able to raise including fly tipping and again requested that directional lines be provided on the roundabout used to join the A69. It was expected that officers would attend future meetings and any queries should also be emailed to the Central Highways Inbox for a response.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Councillor Dunn left the meeting at this point and Councillor Sanderson joined during the next item.

101 **DEVOLUTION CONSULTATION**

G Sanderson, Leader of the Council and S McMillan, Service Director provided a presentation on the North East Devolution Consultation. A copy of the presentation had been circulated with the papers, uploaded to the website and a copy filed with the signed minutes. It was explained that a number of consultation events had been undertaken across the County involving Members, stakeholders, residents and businesses, and consultations were also ongoing across all the involved authorities in the North East. The deal which was being put forward would see both NECA (North East Combined Authority) and NTCA (North of Tyne Combined Authority) cease to operate with a new combined authority formed to cover the seven local areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland and would be headed up by a Metro Mayor. The deal would bring significantly more power and money with a potential £4.2bn of investment into the region over 30 years, made up of a number of different elements which were outlined. It was clarified that

Ch.'s Initials.....

devolution would not impact on the way Northumberland County Council operated and it would continue to provide the services it did at present.

Public consultation would continue until 23 March following which feedback would be reviewed and individual Councils would decide if they wished to proceed. If all agreed then a summary of the consultations would be prepared and once approved by all Cabinets it would be submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, who would decide if the statutory criteria had been met before making the statutory order to create a new MCA (Mayoral Combined Authority). If successful, it would be likely that a new MCA would be created and an election held in May 2024 to appoint a Mayor.

In light of the size of the proposed MCA, it was queried whether a specific Cabinet role would need to be created with responsibility for the MCA and if there would need to be a rethink of how the Council operated. The Leader clarified that the Council would be responsible for making its own decisions and that there was currently a good and respectful relationship between the different authorities which had been shown to work well and it was expected that this would continue allowing all to move forward in a positive way. As the MCA would operate on a wider geographical footprint than the current NTCA it would have louder voice in Government and would have more power to do more than at present. The consultation being carried out followed the Government's requirements to ensure that the Secretary of State could be assured that the process had been undertaken correctly and those taking part had been given the opportunity to include their own views and suggested ideas. An analysis of the responses from across the whole region would be undertaken by a team at North Tyneside Council which would then be fed back to individual Councils in order for them to make their decision on whether to proceed.

In response to a question on whether rural Northumberland would have a voice or be overtaken by the larger urban areas, it was expected that the successful partnership working already demonstrated through the NTCA would continue and the relationship would be built upon. Northumberland had benefited from investment and had proactively influenced the strategic approach to reflect our priorities and this would continue. It was clarified that under the DEFRA definition for rural the majority of the County was classed as rural.

The Chair thanked S McMillan and Councillor Sanderson for the presentation and answers.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

102 LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

103 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The meeting of the Local Area Council was scheduled for 4.00 pm on Tuesday 11 April, however consideration was currently being given to changing the date due to the Easter holidays. Members would be advised accordingly.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Ch.'s Initials.....