

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Committee** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Monday, 10 July 2023 at 4.00 pm.

**PRESENT**

J Beynon (Chair) (in the Chair)

**MEMBERS**

L Darwin  
L Dunn  
R Wearmouth

R Dodd  
M Murphy

**OFFICERS**

A Deary-Francis  
Easton  
M King  
L Little  
P Lowes  
J Murphy  
E Sinnamon  
N Snowdon

Ecologist  
Public Transport Manager  
Highways Delivery Area Manager  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager  
South East DM Area Manager  
Planning Manager  
Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement)

Around 40 members of the press and public were present.

**9 PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT PLANNING MEETINGS**

The Chair advised of the procedure to be followed during the planning part of the meeting.

**10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dickinson, Foster, Jones, Sanderson and Towns.

**11 MINUTES**

**15 May 2023**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area

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Council held on Monday 15 May 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

**12 June 2023**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday 12 June 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

**12 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

Councillor Darwin advised that he was the Ward Member for both planning applications and whilst he had spoken to residents in respect of these he had remained neutral in order to allow him to take part in deciding the applications. During the first application Councillor Wearmouth advised that the public speaker who spoke in objection to the application was an employee at Advance Northumberland during the time that he had been the Chair of the Board however this was the only capacity he knew the person and this was not prejudicial.

**13 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.

**14 22/02923/FUL**

**Provision of playing field, including pitch drainage, and landscaping of viewing mounds.**

**St Marys Hospital Development Site, St Marys Hospital Drive, Stannington, Northumberland, NE61 6BL**

J Murphy, Planning Area Manager provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. Updates were provided as follows:-

- A change to the recommendation was required as Sport England had not removed their objection.
- Two changes were also proposed in condition no.4, and the condition would now read:

*“Within 3 months of the date of the decision notice a revised plan for the landscape planting of the site shall be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall detail the species and the number of trees including fruit trees, hedgerows, shrubs and use only Northumberland native species.”*

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- It was also suggested that an additional condition be added as follows:

“Within 3 months of the decision notice a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall apply to all ground and earth works and vegetation clearance and include the following considerations.

1. Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
2. Inclusion of an appropriate plan identifying the sensitive habitats/features to inform contractors working on site.
3. Practical measures (both physical measures such as warning signs and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction.
4. Details for storage and disposal of any waste arising from the works (e.g. excavated soil).
5. Details of remediation works and methods, e.g., making good ground disturbed during construction.
6. Identification of, and remediation measures for, any contamination such as inert building waste in landscaped areas.
7. Responsible persons and lines of communication.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that adverse effects on the environment from construction activities are avoided and minimised.”

- The recommendation was now:

*To grant planning permission subject to the conditions in the report with the update to condition 4 as outlined and an additional condition, a S106 agreement to secure £240,566.00 for the loss of playing pitches and £45,447.00 for alternative pavilion provision with the S106 agreement to be finalised within 3 months of the date of this meeting and delegated authority provided to officers for the exact wording of the additional condition.*

N Turnbull, Vice-Chair of the St Mary Park Residents Association, addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments included the following:-

- This application represented Bellway’s attempt to find a compromise between appeasing the residents of the village whilst minimising their commercial outlay to deliver an exit strategy from their planning obligations.
- Residents were aware of the scenic nature of the village which drew most purchasers to this location when Bellway sold residents the dream of the environment complete with the cricket pitch, pub, church, water fountain etc. Whilst some elements had been delivered the ecological and environmental damage inflicted upon the sports pitches amounted to an act of vandalism by Bellway that the residents had been forced to live with

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for the last 10 years.

- The so called viewing mounds on the cricket field were surplus spoil arising from the construction works. Bellway could have dumped this material on land they owned further south of the village or they could have removed it from the site entirely which would have been a costly operation. They however chose to trash the cricket field which had now become such a health and safety concern that Bellway themselves had fenced the entire area off and put up keep out signs. The area was strewn with glass, rubble, metal reinforcing bars and other debris. The decision to destroy the cricket pitch was made out of commercial expediency to save money and was an insult to residents.
- As well as dumping more than 25,000m<sup>3</sup> of material from the building site onto the cricket pitch they also imported contaminated waste from their site at Five Mile Park in Wideopen and dumped that on the two football pitches. For that action they were subsequently prosecuted by the Environment Agency, fined a significant amount of money and ordered to remove the contaminated material from the location at great inconvenience to some residents. They also dumped waste from their site at Killingworth Moor onto open space nearby and attracted a lot of negative publicity as a result.
- Bellway seemed to prioritise short term financial return to shareholders above the long term reputational damage that these irresponsible actions attracted.
- The Company had a responsibility and duty to deliver to its customers what they promised at the point of sale. It was disrespectful to both the Council and this Committee to ignore the original planning approval which sought to deal sympathetically with our historic open spaces and to literally dump construction waste on the village cricket field. That action had significantly reduced the amenity space that the village could enjoy with the 3m high spoil heaps not allowing a view of the trees at the cricket field and them not being accessible to everyone if there were allowed to remain.
- The Committee were asked to reject this compromise application which would result in the south and west mounds, which residents suspected might be contaminated, remaining insitu and instead give Bellway one month to re-submit a planning application which sought to remove all of the surplus spoil from the cricket field and return it to its former glory.

J Ridgeon addressed the Committee on behalf of the applicant in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- The playing pitches and pavilion had been outstanding issues about which Bellway Homes had been engaging with Northumberland County Council and Sport England since 2010. Bellway Homes had remained committed to resolving the position to the satisfaction of both the Council and Sport England, whilst being mindful of any impact on residents and being considerate of their concerns.
- A number of applications to agree the details in relation to condition 10 of the original planning permission for the site and the Section 106 legal agreement had been submitted and approved.
- A partial Discharge of Condition application for the pavilion was approved in September 2017, on the basis of a like-for-like replacement of the previously existing pavilion. This remained the fallback position. However, following discussions with the Council and Sport England it was agreed

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that instead of the Pavilion being erected with no end user in mind and to effectively stand empty, it would be beneficial for the Council to hold the money in trust to enable the residents of St Mary's to spend it how they considered it to be of most benefit on sports facilities. This application therefore included provision for a £45,447 contribution for a like-for-like replacement pavilion or alternative provision, which would be delivered by a Deed of Variation to the original S106 Legal Agreement.

- The additional details that were not approved related to the specification and management of the playing pitch. These details have been subject to ongoing discussions with the relevant stakeholders, as a balance was required to ensure that the pitch that was provided was suitable for the anticipated use whilst not being overly onerous or costly for the residents to maintain.
- The details of the proposed pitch design had been fully considered as part of the previously submitted Discharge of Condition application for condition 10, submitted in February 2019. The details included a full drainage design as prepared by TGMS Limited, a sports surface consultant, which had been updated and was submitted as part of this application. Sport England had requested further details and clarifications during the determination of this application, and the full revised details were now supported by Sport England.
- It was acknowledged that there was a loss of playing pitch area and Sport England carried out its own research regarding anticipated use and their conclusion was that this would be offset by a financial contribution which again, would be held in trust by the Council to enable the residents of St Mary's to spend it how they considered it to be of most benefit. As such, this application included a financial contribution for the sum of £240,566 for the loss of the playing pitches and again this would be delivered by the Deed of Variation to the original S106 Legal Agreement.
- The size and specification of the proposed pitch which was before Members today was considered by the Council and Sport England to be of an appropriate standard and fit for purpose. The pitches were sustainably located adjacent to the wider St Mary's development and the proposed pitch was designed to maximise multifunctional and wider community use, whilst balancing the proposals against the need for a suitable long-term management and maintenance arrangement. Whilst not a planning consideration, the mounds which were to remain in situ were arisings from digging foundations for the St Marys site and should be classified as non-hazardous, and therefore did not pose any risk in this regard.
- The fencing mentioned by the previous speaking was there because the site works had not been completed.
- In conclusion, after long on-going discussions with the Council and Sport England, Bellway Homes would like this matter resolved so that the works could be undertaken as soon as possible for the benefit of the existing residents. Whilst it was appreciated that this might not be the preference for all residents on St Mary's, Bellway considered it to be the most suitable course of action with minimal disruption to residents, whilst broadly maintaining the principles agreed through the original planning approval.
- It was hoped that Members could support the Officer's recommendation, including the proposed amended conditions, and approve this application today.

In response to questions from Members, Officers provided the following information:-

- It was now proposed that the mounds remain in place and advice from the developer was that they were not hazardous or contaminated. Their entire removal would be a large change and result in a major disruption to residents. Permission requested to leave these in place to minimise disruption to residents and also incorporate additional landscaping.
- Concerns from residents were understood however there had been some interesting ecological developments on the site and the landscaping and ecological management plan would ensure that the mounds were established properly. The area on the mound was interesting for invertebrates and enhancing this would be desirable from an ecological point of view.
- The development of the site had been difficult with some enforcement work having to be carried out at the latter part. Planning legislation allowed for developers to ask for a new consent or a variation of conditions. In this application they were requesting to retain the spoil that had been deposited as it had ecological merit. Officers' view was that the ecological merits built up on the site along with the secured financial contribution meant that the application was acceptable, however it was up to Members to decide if they also took this view.
- Condition 2 of any permission granted would ensure that the cricket pitch must be installed within 12 months of the date of permission being granted and the S106 agreement must be signed within 3 months of the date of this meeting. Bellway wished to clear up the site and finish the work and the proposed timescales set would ensure a quick turnaround if approval was provided.
- Although Sport England had advised that they would prefer the S106 contribution to fund sport provision within the wider central area, the Developer would pay the funds to the Council and a decision would be made on how the funds were spent. Councillors could, if they wished to ensure that the money was spent in St Mary's, or surrounding area. There would be 3 months in which to enter the S106, upon receipt of the planning contributions, funding would be held for one year and then allocated to a non-profit making organisation in the Stannington area i.e. a Club or the Parish Council with a time limit of 9 years for use by Groups etc. The funding would need to be returned if it was not used within 10 years.
- The information provided by Bellway in relation to the material in the mounds stated that there was no longer any contamination on the site, and whilst there had been a successful prosecution by the Environment Agency this was not a material planning consideration and Members must decide on the appropriateness of the mounds being left in place.

Councillor Darwin advised that he did not think that the application was in keeping with the original plans for the site and proposed refusal of the application. Following some discussion on the exact reasons for Councillor Darwin proposing refusal he confirmed that this was due to the impact on amenity and loss of open space and play provision with exact wording for the reasons for refusal to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee which was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth.

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Members suggested that the application could be deferred in order that the composition of the mounds could be provided before any decision was taken, as they felt that the other parts of the application were acceptable, however they were reminded that a proposal to refuse the application had been made and seconded and this was required to be dealt with before any proposal for deferring the application could be made. Advice was also provided that Members could not decide which parts of an application they would like to see taken forward and they deal with the application which was before them. Deferral could allow an opportunity to see if there was any risk from materials in the mounds which could also be used as a further reason for refusal and it would also allow an opportunity for further discussions to be undertaken with the Developer. Members were also advised that experience on other developments where sporting sites had been provided was that when large clubs took over the running of the facilities this had meant that the facilities were no longer available for local children and residents to use.

Members highlighted the very high level of public feeling against this application in relation to the retention of the mounds and that their removal would increase the level of open space available for residents.

A vote was taken on the proposal to refuse the application as outlined above as follows:- FOR 4; AGAINST 0; ABSTAIN 2.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **REFUSED** due to the impact on amenity, loss of open space and play provision with the exact wording for the reasons for refusal to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning.

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**22/02924/VARYCO**

**Removal of Condition 10 on approved planning application CM/20060893 in order to omit the Condition to submit a scheme for the restoration and/or provision of playing fields.**

**St Marys Hospital, St Marys Hospital Drive, Stannington, Northumberland NE61 6AP**

J Murphy, Planning Area Manager provided an introduction to the report advising that this application was to remove condition 10 attached to the original approved planning application. However following the refusal of planning application **22/02923/FUL**, this application could no longer be recommended for approval and therefore the recommendation was amended to "Refuse permission".

J Ridgeon addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- This application had been made to remove condition 10 from the originally approved application in order to carry out works in accordance with the previous application above.
- The applicant had worked with the Council and Sport England for a long time in order to develop an appropriate vision for the pitch and sports provision.

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- If the mounds were to be removed then there would be no S106 contribution towards playing pitches.
- Compliance with Condition 10 would require further consultation with Sport England and it had taken a considerable period of time to get to the current position and now this had been refused.
- Bellway wanted to see the situation resolved and be able to restore the pitch and area for residents to use.
- It was felt that the proposed solution had been the best outcome for all parties. Comments made today would be taken away and Bellway would continue to work with officers to find a solution.

Councillor Wearmouth moved the recommendation to refuse the application as outlined above which was seconded by Councillor Darwin.

Members in recognising the work already undertaken by Bellway in trying to find a solution welcomed the message from Mr Ridgeon advising that the applicant would continue to work with officers as they considered that the application as it stood was not acceptable. Members considered that as a starting point the mounds should not be there and a solution had to be something that would be acceptable to residents.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously:

**RESOLVED** that the application be **REFUSED**.

## 16 **APPEALS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

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

## 17 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been submitted.

## 18 **PETITIONS**

**(a) Receive New Petitions** – No new petitions were received.

**(b) Petitions Previously Received – Address Speeding Between Jameson Estate (Old Police HQ Site and Grange Lea Care Home on North Road, Ponteland**

N Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) provided an introduction to the report which had been prepared in response to the e-petition which closed on 12 April 2023. He advised that following several earlier complaints a series of speed surveys had been undertaken with the results meeting the criteria required by the Northumbria Safety Roads Initiative for

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consideration of additional enforcement measures and the location had been added to the Operation Modero database. The site would now be further assessed by the Police and the Council would work with them to identify an appropriate enforcement strategy. It was also highlighted that it was the intention of Ponteland Town Council to introduce a speed indicator display on this section of road. Further speed surveys would be carried out following the period of enforcement and introduction of the speed indicator display to assess impact and determine if any further road safety measures were necessary.

Members advised that this road had been problematic for a number of years with some improvements carried out following the development of the new housing estate, however speeding continued along that stretch of road and beyond and this was also of concern due to the large number of cyclists also using the road.

It was clarified that there were a lot of areas on the Operation Modero database which meant that resources were spready thinly. Members requested that the Police be invited to a future meeting to discuss Operation Modero and other traffic related matters along with representatives from the three different Police areas which covered Castle Morpeth.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted and that the actions being proposed be supported with the Police being asked to attend a future meeting.

**(c ) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered –** There were no updates.

## 19 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

### Neighbourhood Services

P Lowes, Area Manager Neighbourhood Services provided an update which would be circulated after the meeting and included the following:-

- Waste collection services continued to perform well including both the glass and food waste trials.
- The early season for grass cutting had been challenging due to the weather and the bank holidays.
- Weed control was again being undertaken in-house with the first treatment almost complete.
- Verge cutting was ongoing and was on target for completion by the end of July. Visibility splays would continue to be monitored and Members were asked to report any areas of concern.

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

- There had been no change in policy in relation to verge cutting however the work might not be carried out in the same order as it been previously. One contractor had a problem following an injury being incurred, with other resources having to be utilised.
- The sweeper may need to be used following weed treatments but the treated weeds generally dissipate with the weather, any areas of concern

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can be reported and we will assess them as needed. A second treatment will be done if necessary but we can only treat weeds that are actively growing, Members were asked to report any areas of concern.

- There are some variations in how verges are cut, largely depending on the custom and practices of each area. New roads are maintained with as balanced an approach as possible, for example one cutter width either side of footpath with the rest being left to wild.

## Highways

M King, Area Manager Highways Services provided an update which would be circulated following the meeting and which included the following:-

- There had been a large increase in the number of third party reports requiring reactive maintenance following the introduction of the “Fix my Street” (FMS) system which had impacted on the normal routine maintenance work. Some inspection work had fallen behind and was not meeting the National Code of Practice at the current time.
- A large amount of insurance claims were still being dealt with following the winter period.
- Difficulties in the recruitment of staff were still being encountered with a shortage of suitable candidates.
- Works had been completed on Newgate Street in Morpeth. The improved communications and traffic management had worked well and this system would be utilised in the future.

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

- It was difficult to offer more flexible working practices, i.e. part time or flexible hours on routine work as these required specialist staff to undertake the roles. There was a national shortage of HGV drivers and other organisations i.e. supermarkets etc, were able to pay more than the Council who were restricted by the national pay structure in place.
- The increase in FMS requests would allow evidence to be provided for a business case to be made for an increase in the number of staff needed within the Castle Morpeth area which had always received more third party requests than other areas.

N Snowdon advised that there had been no response received from Newcastle City Council in respect of providing road markings at the roundabout leading to the A69 which had been raised a number of times at this meeting.

Officers were thanked for their attendance.

## 20 **COLLINGWOOD SCHOOL, MORPETH**

Gillian Linkleter, the Headteacher of Collingwood School and Media Arts College in Morpeth was in attendance to provide a presentation to the Committee. Collingwood School was designated to meet the needs of students aged 2-19 years with speech, language and communication difficulties, autism and

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behaviour and emotional disorders. The school shared its largest site in Morpeth with Stobhill First School and following substantial refurbishment and building programmes now offered specialist high quality facilities. It also currently operated a sixth form college at the FUSE in Prudhoe, a community teaching service and Personal Education Centre. The school was also opening an Outdoor Learning and Vocational Centre – The Woodlands based at Hepscoth Park, in September 2023. This was a pilot project initially for one year.

All pupils who attended the school had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and had access to a three way curriculum model of education and a Wellbeing Centre offering therapeutic interventions which was based at Morpeth served all the school sites. Students were also involved in many community activities. A copy of the full presentation would be circulated to Members of the Committee and uploaded to the Council's website.

In response to a question in relation to the new facilities within Hepscoth Park and interaction with residents Members were advised that the centre was located adjacent to the existing horticultural unit and that a Woodlands Manager had been appointed who would be visiting residents to introduce themselves and explain the vision for a community hub.

Pupils were placed in Collingwood through the SEND panel so that it could be ensured that it could meet the individual needs of each child. Collingwood operated an open door policy for parents and tried to involve them as much as possible, although this had been more difficult during Covid. If pupils were not in a position to be able to attend the school, then the community teaching service would undertake the role until the child was ready to join the school.

The possibility of providing the presentation at all other LACs would be explored and a copy of the full presentation would be circulated to Members of the Committee and uploaded to the Council's website following the meeting.

Ms Linkleter was thanked for her attendance and presentation which Members had found most interesting and informative.

## 21 **NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL BUS BOARD**

The report requested a nomination for the Northumberland Local Bus Board from the LAC and provided information on the background to the establishment of the Local Bus Boards. The attached cabinet report also outlined the implications of the Bus Service Improvement Plan for Northumberland bus services and infrastructure. N Easton, Public Transport Manager was in attendance to answer any queries from Members of the Committee.

M Murphy expressed an interest in becoming the representative on the Board from this Committee and this would be confirmed following a discussion with N Easton outside of the meeting in relation to the commitment of time that would be required.

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**RESOLVED** that M Murphy be appointed as the representative from this Local Area Committee on the Northumberland Local Bus Board subject to satisfactory discussion regarding the commitment of time required.

22 **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

A list of appointments of Members of this Committee to Outside Bodies as agreed in October 2022 was circulated as part of the agenda to confirm if Members were happy to continue in these roles.

**RESOLVED** that the appointments be confirmed as follows:

Choppington Education Foundation	Mary Murphy
Druridge Bay Regeneration Partnership	Scott Dickinson
Friends of Morpeth Museum	David Bawn
Greater Morpeth Development Trust	Richard Wearmouth
Linton Village Hall Management Committee	Liz Dunn
Lynemouth Welfare Management Committee	Liz Dunn
Stakeford/Bomarsund Social Welfare Centre	Julie Foster Mary Murphy

23 **LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted.

24 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The meeting of the next Local Area Committee was planning only and was scheduled for 4.00 pm on Monday 14 August 2023.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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