

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Planning Committee** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Monday, 12 February 2024 at 4.00 pm.

#### PRESENT

J Foster (Vice-Chair Planning) (in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

J Beynon  
L Dunn  
G Sanderson  
R Wearmouth

R Dodd  
M Murphy  
D Towns

#### OFFICERS

M Bulman  
L Little  
J Murphy  
R Soulsby

Solicitor  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
South East DM Area Manager  
Senior Planning Officer

There was 1 member of the press and public present.

#### 44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dickinson and Towns.

#### 45 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Planning Committee held on Monday 9 October 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record, and be signed by the Chair.

#### 46 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.

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**23/03804/VARYCO**

**Variation of Condition 14 (Occupancy) pursuant to planning permission 12/01313/COU to amend the wording as follows: -, 'The occupation of the caravan pitches shall be restricted to genuine holiday makers. A register of holidaymakers shall be kept and made available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Council at all reasonable times. Details of the alternative occupation of any caravan(s) that may be required shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to their first occupation, and shall thereafter be occupied in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.'**

**Morpeth Caravan Park, Longhirst, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 3HZ**

R Soulsby, Senior Planning Officer provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation.

Mr G Fahy, the applicant addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following:

- He understood that planning applications in open countryside were usually controversial and Longhirst was no different, however this site was a brownfield rateable site, formerly British Rail sidings and later a haulage yard. The Northumberland local plan placed the site and land east of the main east coast rail line as outside the Green Belt area. The original five-acre site had been split up decades ago. Approximately one acre was now a storage yard and garage, another acre was a plant hire business and the other three acres had been regenerated into his holiday rental business. The site is less than 50 metres away from the former UK Coal Potland surface mining site.
- The cottages might be in “open countryside,” but they were not in Green Belt and were certainly not in an area of outstanding beauty.
- The holiday business was their only source of income and neither himself nor his wife had any other employment. Information from their chartered accountant had been supplied to the planning department with the accounts for the last three years which showed an average profit of £7560 each.
- The cottages had been built on land attached to their own garden and there was no intention of selling to make a quick profit, they simply would like the chance to run a year-round business and allow their children to inherit the cottages.
- In addition to his wife and himself the business currently employed cleaning staff from Ashington and Blyth and supplied work for the local laundrette in Guidepost. If they were unable to extend the current six-month summer holiday let season, there was a likely that the holiday let business would close in the near future. Although holiday cottages on the coastline could often prolong their season by several months and charge a higher rate, they currently were unable to do this, and short-term winter rentals would be a lifeline for the business.
- There had been no objections at all to this planning application, with both immediate neighbours fully supporting the application and had written to

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the Planning Department to confirm this.

- The Parish Council's response was "no comment" but added that these properties already existed and currently operated as holiday homes and would not be new builds and if the properties were permanently occupied this would not adversely affect the infrastructure of the Parish.

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

- It was confirmed that the figures contained in paragraph 7.6 were the profit figures and not turnover. There was no definition in planning terms as to what was deemed a sustainable profit, however it was considered that it had been demonstrated that the business was still viable.
- In terms of imposing a condition restricting the use of the cottages for family or preventing individual sale on the open market, these were used in such instances in granting permissions for annexes to existing dwellings, which was different to this application. It would not be possible to attach a condition restricting sale on the open market and any long-term residential use was against Planning Policy.
- A separate application could be made to vary the existing condition restricting the use of the cottages to allow them to be let for holiday purposes for up to 9 or twelve months per year. However, this application was to remove the occupancy condition and allow the cottages to be used for private and residential use.

Councillor Dodd proposed acceptance of the recommendation to refuse the application as outlined in the report to allow Members to debate the application which was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

In debating the application there were some differing opinions in relation to the relevance of the profitability of the holiday rental business in planning terms with a suggestion made that the time period could be extended or that access to business and marketing support could be considered. Other Members stated that profitability was relevant with other applications being granted by this Committee for existing businesses who wished to supplement their income by diversifying. Reference was also made to the fact that the cottages were situated on a brownfield site and were in a location which was not a typical tourist area. It was clarified that there had been several applications since 2006 for residential use on the site and that permission had been given in 2012 for the use of short term holiday accommodation.

A vote was taken on the proposal to refuse the application as outlined in the report as follows: FOR 4; AGAINST 2; ABSTENTION 2.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **REFUSED** for the following reason:

The proposed alteration to the occupancy condition would allow unrestricted residential development within the open countryside, whilst also reducing the tourism provision within the locality. No justification has been provided to warrant the proposed change, thus ensuring conflict with policies STP 1, HOU 8, ECN 12 and ECN 15 of the Northumberland Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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48 **APPEALS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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