

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council** held at Netherton Social Club, 1a Netherton Lane, Bedlington, NE22 6DP on Wednesday, 23 March 2022 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

S Lee (Vice-Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

L Bowman
P Ezhilchelvan
B Flux
M Robinson

C Dunbar
D Ferguson
C Taylor

OTHER COUNCILLORS

W Ploszaj

OFFICERS

M Bulman
M Carle
T Gribbin
L Little
J Murphy
R O'Farrell

Solicitor
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager
Neighbourhood Services Manager
Senior Democratic Services Officer
South East DM Area Manager
Executive Director - Corporate services -
Planning & Economy
Planning Officer

Around 14 members of the press and public were present.

69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors W Daley, M Swinburn and R Wilczek.

70 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Taylor advised that she had taken part in discussions at West Bedlington Town Council in respect of planning application 21/04021/FUL and therefore would take no part in the application and would leave the room when the item was discussed.

71 DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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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.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Councillor Taylor left the room at this point.

72 **21/04021/FUL**

**Proposed supported living accommodation comprising construction of new building comprising of 12 self-contained 1-bedroom apartments (use class c3) for specialised independent supported living with associated external works and car parking
86 - 88 Front Street East, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 5AB**

R Soulsby, Planning Officer provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation. He advised of an amendment to made to paragraph 2.4 of the report which referred to previous planning applications and advised that it should only refer to application 17/02932/FUL.

A Hogg, addressed the Committee speaking on behalf of West Bedlington Town Council in objection to the application. His comments included the following:-

- The suggested parking places, behind the former Council Offices and using the public spaces behind the Laird's House, were totally inadequate and highlighted the pre-pandemic proposals for the redevelopment of the Council Offices.
- The woefully inadequate number of on-site parking spaces, just 4 spaces outdoors and a further 3 underneath the building all for 12 apartments. There were also the support staff to consider, social care, nurses, doctors, visiting relatives etc, by the very nature of this facility it would automatically generate a large number of vehicle journeys.
- There was no dedicated provision for ambulance parking therefore they would need to park on double yellow lines.
- Problems would also be exacerbated on refuse collection days.
- If residents were wheel chair bound where was their access from whatever form of transport they arrived in. Parking to the rear, spaces permitting, was probably not practical, the lift was accessed internally so the obvious choice would mean parking on the main road on double yellow lines to access the front entrance. This was also the narrowest part of Front Street East.
- The size of the building was considerable and was within the Conservation Area and was not supported by the Building Conservation Officer.
- Properties to the rear could be adversely affected by loss of light, particularly 1 & 2 Perry Stone Mews and 4 Vicarage Gardens and of the windows at the rear of the building would also overlook these properties.
- There had been no information provided on the specific type of support to be provided by the end user.

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- The Town Council asked that the application be refused for the reasons stated. It was the wrong development for the location.

T Foster and K Pimblott addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Their comments included the following:-

- The concerns raised by the Town Council had been addressed. Highways had advised that the parking provision was adequate.
- The size of the proposed building had not increased over the previously approved application with the number of windows and doors also the same.
- There would be no increased adverse impact over what had previously been approved.
- There was a proven demand for this type of development with 3,000 vulnerable adults in Northumberland and work had been undertaken with the Adult Social Care Team in relation to the design to provide fit for purpose accommodation which would help to improve care and relieve budget pressures.
- The development would provide wider benefits such as employment both through the construction period and care facility and bring back into use a brownfield site.
- This application was an uplift from the previously approved 11 bedroomed scheme and would not increase the size of the overall development.
- The style of the building remained the same and would use the same high quality materials as previously approved.
- The use of a brownfield site which currently was a gap on the street would enhance the street scene and was encouraged by policies and would not be detrimental to any heritage assets.
- Parking would be concealed and had been assessed as adequate.
- Whilst the Building Conservation Officer's comments were noted, the planning balance outweighed any harm and would provide much needed accommodation and employment.
- The development would reinstate a frontage on the brownfield site.

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

- The proposed changes were for minor external amendments and internal alterations in response to the additional need identified.
- There were 4 parking spaces to the rear of the building and 3 below and were expected to be utilised by staff. It was expected that future occupiers of the building would not be car owners and would rely on sustainable transport.
- Parking was restricted on Perry Stone Mews, however there were no restrictions on Front Street East which could be used for taxi pick up/drop off.
- The entrance to Perry Stone Mews was highlighted as being to right of the proposed development.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

Whilst Members expressed sympathy for the concerns raised by some in respect of parking in the area it was considered that the extra one bedroom over that already permitted would not have an impact on parking or traffic and would not

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stand up as a reason for refusal if the applicant should appeal.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application as follows:- FOR 6; AGAINST 1; ABSTAIN 0.

RESOLVED that the application be **APPROVED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report.

Councillor Taylor returned to the room at this point.

73 **APPEALS UPDATE**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

A short recess was held at this point.

74 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been submitted in writing.

A Hogg thanked the Council for returning to holding public meetings in public. He advised that there had been an accident at the traffic island beside the new development of 500 houses north of Chesters and questioned if this was a safety issue. M Carle advised that he would investigate if any remedial work was required and discuss with the Integrated Transport Team.

B Oliver had been advised by Police that photographs should be taken of any indiscriminate parking and uploaded to the Council's website for investigation. He asked where he was able to do this as there was a problem with cars parking on the footpath outside a beauty salon which blocked the view for vehicles turning into Vulcan Place. M Carle advised that he was not aware of this being available on the Council's website, but he would report this to the Area Office.

B Oliver advised of concerns with the parking of cars for sales on the footpaths around Redburn Motor Company at Bebside with cars having to cross the hatched part of the road to pass and that he had witnessed a child having to ride on the road to get past the obstructions. M Carle advised that an Inspector would be asked to visit the business to ask for the practice to cease as this was an obstruction of the highway.

75 **PETITIONS**

There were no new petitions or any updates for petitions previously reported to the Committee.

76 **LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

M Carle, Lead Highways Delivery Manager provided an update to the Committee advising that gully wagons had been fully employed with additional resources deployed following Storm Arwen. Details of completed and schemes which were being undertaken in respect of resurfacing, patching, footpaths, footpaths and dropped kerbs were provided. Winter services would end on 4 April, however

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monitoring would continue throughout April. Repairs would be undertaken to the fleet during the summer months.

A response would be sought from Open Spaces for Councillor Ezhilchelvan so information could be passed to residents on when repairs would be undertaken to a previously reported issue. It was confirmed that whilst it had been a milder winter and less grit had been used, temperatures had been marginal and gritting was undertaken in response to forecasts. The long range forecast for the next week had indicated that there could be further inclement weather.

In response to a question of why the resurfacing work undertaken as part of works at the roundabout at Seaton Delaval had not been extended to allow the repair of a pot hole, it was clarified that whilst the pedestrian crossing might have deteriorated it could still be deemed to be safe and work was dictated by budgets.

Councillor Bowman highlighted an issue with white line markings in Elsdon Avenue and parking in the bus stop at the junction of Elsdon Avenue/Tillmouth Avenue. It was confirmed that an Inspector would be asked to visit in respect of the white lines to see if these required a refresh, however a TRO would be required to provide a yellow box for the bus stop.

M Carle advised that he would discuss with Planning Officers the road and footway surface beside the Longridge development which was highlighted by Councillor Robinson.

T Gribbin, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager provided an update to Members which advised that restrictions were still in place at the crematorium, however the numbers of services had stabilised in recent weeks. Winter works continued and scheduled works were on target to be completed. A move would be made shortly to summer working hours and recruitment for seasonal grounds maintenance positions was underway. The final stages of preparation for the upcoming grass cutting season was underway and weed control activities would be undertaken in-house using blue dye. It was anticipated that the increased footfall in town centres seen as part of the staycation last year would reduce and therefore reduce pressures on cleansing teams with a return to core standards following the removal of additional government funding.

Elevated tonnages of domestic waste were still being seen due to people continuing to work from home and additional investment would be made to waste services with 2 additional RCV's and crews due to the rate of house growth. Initial take up for the garden waste collection had been high and a glass collection trial has been extended by 12 months. A food waste collection trial was currently being trialled with more information provided to Members when plans were finalised.

It was clarified that markers within the Bedlington Cemetery was for a new site for Muslim burials and it was also being looked to improve the infrastructure within the site with an additional turning circle to be provided and possibly additional parking.

The location and procurement of bins was the responsibility of Town and Parish Councils, but they were serviced by NCC staff. The possible relocation of one at

the Avenue Head next to the bus stop would be discussed with the Community Council. Teams had been instructed not to take vehicles on the footpath/cycleway behind the Benedict Club in Cramlington. The ownership and responsibility for maintenance of the “wonky” roundabout was being discussed with colleagues and Councillor Robinson advised that he would be willing to use his funding for a scheme.

Members thanked the officers for their attendance and the work of their teams in responding to the Members requests.

77 **BEDLINGTON TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

A power point presentation was provided by A Mowbray from Advance Northumberland, supported by the other officers from Advance Northumberland along with Councillor Ploszaj, Cabinet Member. Members were advised of the background to the redevelopment; details of the post covid timetable; the challenges which had been encountered, including delays caused by asbestos being found under two properties, difficulties separating the building from the adjoining Market Tavern, cost increases and the falling retail interest due to the pandemic. It was reported that Phase 1 was complete and details of Phase 2 and the progress made were provided.

Councillor Wilczek had asked that in her absence the following questions be asked:

“Earlier this year, marketing boards appeared near our town centre site advertising three significant “Development Opportunities”. It is a welcome though disappointing update for those of us eagerly awaiting some news on the site. Disappointing in that after more than seven years only Greggs and Aldi have taken the opportunities offered by the site.

What is the Council doing, not only to blindly market the site to those passing through central Bedlington, but to attract businesses to our town?

And given that local people have had no say in what they would like to see in the town for at least five years, what are we going to do to ensure this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revitalise Bedlington is not lost to piecemeal investment that delivers for nobody?”

R O’Farrell, Interim Executive Director advised that a written response would be provided to Councillor Wilczek.

Councillors expressed their disappointment in the progress that had been made over the last 8 years and what was now being proposed with only four new retail units being provided on the frontage with only one being let to Greggs and the others remaining empty and the provision of six apartments. They questioned the proposals for the remaining areas which were previously to be developed. In response officers advised that initially there had been interest from retailers in the units, however this had changed following covid. Barker Proudlock continued to market the units and once confidence in the market started to build, it was hoped that the original interest would return. Aldi was the anchor store and it was hoped that this would help attract other retailers, however the retail sector had been

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particularly badly hit and all town centres were struggling. The planning application in 2015 had been retail led with some leisure and those opportunities were still being marketed however other development could also be looked at but no commitment could be given to further development until the market was known. An additional £2m Government funding had also been provided so the total investment was now £4.1m.

Councillors felt that development which had the backing of the community was required such as leisure facilities including a swimming pool, giving residents a reason to come into the town centre rather than the same retail offer available in Cramlington. It was commented that following the demolition of the facility at St Benet Biscop, the County Council should need to take a leading role in the provision of a pool rather than relying on the private sector.

In response to comments regarding the delays, officers clarified that the asbestos had been found underground so was in addition to that which was already known about and had previously been removed. Safe practices had been used when removing the asbestos from underground, although these were different to those previously used on site. Councillor Ploszaj advised that regular updates would be provided to West Bedlington Town Council in the future.

78 **MEMBERS LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES**

Detailed of the Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Members Local Improvement Schemes for the period 2021-22 were provided for information. Members had only just become aware that Reuban Morgan had retired and wished that their thanks for the work he had undertaken in responding to their requests be noted. Details of who Members should now contact would be requested.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

79 **LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

The latest version of the agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated. In response to a question regarding a presentation on the Youth Service, it was explained that this had been deferred in January due to staff shortages as a result of covid however Officers had now been advised that the Youth Service was now undergoing a review and as such it was not appropriate for a presentation to be provided at the current time.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

80 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 20 April 2022 and this would be a planning only meeting.

81 **URGENT BUSINESS**

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CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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