

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Tuesday, 5 July 2022 at 4.00 pm.

#### PRESENT

T Thorne (Chair) (in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

L Darwin  
JI Hutchinson  
J Reid  
G Stewart  
A Wallace

G Hill  
J Lang  
M Robinson  
M Swinbank  
A Watson

#### OFFICERS

M Bulman  
L Little  
D Love  
E Sinnamon

Solicitor  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Senior Planning Officer  
Development Service Manager

Around 3 members of the press and public were present.

#### 13 PROCEDURE AT PLANNING COMMITTEES

The Chair outlined the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### 14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Ball, Dodd, Flux and Renner-Thompson.

#### 15 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Stewart declared a personal interest in application 21/02926/VARYCO as he was the Ward Councillor. He advised that he had no conflict on the application and would take part in the decision, however he had spoken to residents, the applicant and planning officers.

Councillor A Watson advised that whilst she was a member of Blyth Town Council she had taken no part in any debate on this matter or the comments made by the

Ch.'s Initials.....

Town Council and she would take part in the decision.

## 16 **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.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 17 **22/00702/FUL**

**Full planning application for construction of new SEND school, with associated access, car-parking, landscaping, MUGA and outdoor playground space**

**Site of Former Princess Louise Adult Learning Centre, Princess Louise Road, Blyth, Northumberland**

D Love, Senior Planning Officer provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation. As a result of additional information provided by the application after the report had been published, an updated list of conditions had been circulated to Members of the Committee and uploaded to the Council's website in advance of the meeting. The additional conditions would also be filed with the signed minutes of the meeting.

J Patterson, Associate Director of DPP addressed the Committee on behalf of the applicant in support of the application. Her comments included the following:-

- The Development complied with planning policy at a national and local level and would deliver 80 school places for pupils aged 11-16 with Autism and/or Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. The need for these school places for pupils with special educational needs had been established and the development was strongly supported by Northumberland County Council's education team.
- The site was split into two land parcels; the site containing the school was located on the southern side of Princess Louise Road which was previously occupied by Blyth Princess Louise First School prior to its demolition, and historic foundations, hard standing and services remained on the site.
- The site would have a Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) and an outdoor learning and play space alongside integrated soft landscaping. The delivery of sports and recreation facilities in association with the school accords with adopted policies as the existing open space would be replaced by an area of better quality open space. The MUGA would also be available for community use.
- The new school building would be located back from the Princess Louise Road frontage enabling a dedicated drop-off/pick-up area to the front of the school to accommodate mini buses, taxis and cars for the operational safeguarding of a SEND school. The development would also include secure cycle parking facilities for staff and pupils.

Ch.'s Initials.....

- The car park was to be located on the north side of Princess Louise Road and would result in 40 spaces on the parcel of land next to existing car parking for Blyth Sport Centre and would be for the exclusive use by the school.
- The principle of educational uses on the site had been established by the former educational use and was in accordance with adopted development plan policies.
- The proposed school was policy compliant and would contribute significantly to the Council's established need for SEND pupil places in the County.

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

- The design process which informed the way in which the access and exit was to be provided was not known. The proposals had been assessed by Highways Development who were satisfied in relation to road safety, and condition 17 to be attached to any permission granted required a full school travel plan to be submitted and agreed by the Local Planning Authority.
- The noise mitigation measures for the MUGA were not to hand but it was understood that these included fencing to absorb noise and had been considered appropriate by Public Protection. The use of the MUGA would also be limited to daylight hours as no lighting was proposed. The noise of a ball hitting a fence and causing a nuisance to nearby residents would be borne in mind when discharging the condition for additional evidence.
- Officers were not aware of any formal control of use of the staff car park but condition 15 required that details be provided and would allow further assessment if there were concerns that it would be used as an overspill for Blyth Sports Centre.
- In relation to a vertical assessment of the evacuation of the building, it was clarified that the applicant had submitted their vertical evacuation process which stated that "the building was designed with appropriate refuges in staircases to allow for managed and assisted evacuation. All refuge areas would feature an intercom link and the school would develop a personal emergency evacuation plan for any student or member of staff with mobility and/or cognitive impairments and the procedure should be practiced during the fire drill." It was requested by a Member that the applicant look at this again, as it was felt this was an inhumane and outdated way of evacuating and one emergency lift should be provided for every 10 people.
- It was confirmed that net gain biodiversity would be provided on the site with the provision of bat boxes and mature vegetation.
- The use of the MUGA was not conditioned through this planning application as the community use would be run by the Council's Education Department and would be set up by them in conjunction with Active Northumberland.
- Full details of the cycle storage would be provided and assessed by Highways as part of a condition.

Councillor Watson proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report with the updated conditions which was seconded by Councillor Reid.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Members expressed their support for the application and welcomed the opportunity to provide additional SEND places which was much needed in the County. They did however express some concerns regarding the arrangements for staff parking on the north site and access/egress to the south site. A vote was taken on the proposal and it was unanimously:-

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

18

**21/02926/VARYCO**

**Variation of condition 1 on approved application 20/00571/VARYCO in order to Move Plot Numbers 208 – 222 (15 no Market Sales units) from the Western location on the Masterplan to the Central location occupied by plot numbers 363-393 and alter the house type mix and move Plot Numbers 363-393 (31 no Affordable units) from the Central location on the Masterplan to the Western location occupied by plot numbers 207-222.**

**Former Prudhoe Hospital, Prudhoe Hospital Drive, Prudhoe, Northumberland NE42 5NT**

D Love, Senior Planning Officer provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation. Updates were provided as follows:-

- Paragraph 1.1 should read “This application is to be determined at Strategic Planning Committee given that it relates to a development that is of Strategic importance.
- Paragraph 8.1 should read “The proposal represents an appropriate form of development that would not have an adverse impact on the street scene, ecology, or the amenity of nearby residents or users of the site. Those objections which were material had been addressed and the proposal is in accordance with local and national planning policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

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

- There was no change proposed to the size of the affordable housing units or of their tenure.
- The reason for the change was not definitively known, however it was a possible reaction to market conditions at the current time with the company looking to provide larger homes as more people were working from home and wishing to move to more rural areas.
- An updated Ecological Impact Assessment had to be provided as part of this application as development was moving closer to the wildlife corridor. The County Ecologist was happy with the proposals subject to the conditions previously attached would be carried forward to this application, and that has been done. The number of units at 31 was the same as consented, the number of bedrooms was also staying the same and tenure mix was remaining, therefore there would be no further impact on the wildlife corridor or the footpath previously affected.
- The viability of the scheme had not been reassessed as there was no change in the number of units being built.
- Whilst the modern national design code brief advocates affordable housing

Ch.’s Initials.....

throughout a development in order to create communities, however the original approval pre-dates this and the scheme has evolved as it has progressed. It could be considered that the new location of the affordable housing was improved as it now backed onto woodland. The delivery of the affordable housing must be provided as part of the phasing plan and this was probably the extent of the changes to affordable housing that would be acceptable.

- The plot sizes for the affordable houses remained the same as the existing, they had simply been moved to a different location. The new site location for the affordable housing was to be made larger to accommodate the increase in house numbers for that site which is why there had been a need to update the ecology assessment.

The question of revisiting the S106 agreement to ascertain if was possible to request additional funds be provided due to viability and any triggers attached to this in response to the larger house types proposed and increased market value since the original application was raised by Members of the Committee. Advice was provided by the Solicitor that the S106 agreement contained a section 73 clause which allowed the S106 to apply through all variations of the original application and provided details of what had been requested and timescales as part of the S106 agreement. The Development Services Manager suggested that should Members be minded to approve the application delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning in conjunction with the Chair to allow the S106 agreement to be checked to see if there were any clauses which would allow clawback or to revisit the viability as a result of the changes in house types as part of this application.

Councillor Darwin proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application in line with the Officer's report subject to a review of the Section 106 agreement by the Director of Planning in conjunction with the Chair and if any changes were required the application would be brought back to Committee if no amendments were required then a decision notice would be issued. This was seconded by Councillor Hutchinson.

Councillor Stewart expressed disappointment at the lack of consideration and communication with the residents of Humbles Wood in particular but welcomed the other Members input regarding the S106 contribution, a point which had also been raised by residents within his Ward. He advised that he had had a number of issues with this development stating that the proposed playpark in Humbles Wood was causing concern for residents. He was in regular contact with the developer. at the behest of residents, asking for this application to be withdrawn. The residents of Humbles Wood would now have 5 properties behind their own properties instead of the one which had previously been agreed. There would be increased traffic in that area due to the increase in the number of properties and the limited access to footpaths and public transport in that particular area of the development which would impact on the climate.

Members expressed their support for the proposal that the S106 be looked at and highlighted concerns with the affordable housing all being in one place, however it was suggested that there were no grounds for refusing the application and that social housing providers often preferred to have their properties in one location.

The Solicitor read out the proposal and a vote was recorded as follows: FOR 9; AGAINST 2; ABSTAIN 0.

Ch.'s Initials.....

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report subject to a review of the Section 106 agreement by the Director of Planning in conjunction with the Chair and if any changes were required the application would be brought back to Committee or if no amendments were required then a decision notice would be issued.

19 **APPEALS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

Ch.'s Initials.....