

## 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, 11 July 2022 at 4.00 pm.

#### PRESENT

J Beynon (Chair) (in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

R Dodd  
M Murphy

J Foster

#### OFFICERS

J Blenkinsopp  
V Cartmell

M King  
L Little  
P Lowes  
R McCartney  
N Snowdon

R Soulsby

Solicitor  
Planning Area Manager - Development  
Management  
Highways Delivery Area Manager  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Neighbourhood Services Area Manager  
Highways Infrastructure Manager  
Principal Programme Officer (Highways  
Improvement)  
Planning Officer

Around 11 members of the press and public were present.

#### 15 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Councillor J Foster, Vice-Chair Planning, in the Chair for the planning items, advised that as she would have to declare a personal and prejudicial interest in items 8 and 13 on the agenda the meeting would become inquorate for those items and therefore a decision had been made to withdraw them and they would be rescheduled for future meetings. She apologised to the members of public in attendance for these those items and allowed a short recess to allow them to leave if they so wished.

#### 16 PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT PLANNING MEETINGS

Members were reminded of the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

#### 17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Darwin, Dunn, Dickinson, Jones, Towns and Wearmouth.

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18 **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday 9 May 2022 and 13 June 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

19 **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Foster advised that she had a personal and prejudicial interest in item 8, planning application 22/00075/FUL as a close personal friend lived in a property affected by this application and whilst the issue had not been discussed she felt it best to withdraw for this item. In respect of item 13, appointments to outside bodies and the nominees to the Stakeford and Bomarsund Welfare Committee she advise that she was the Chair of Trustees and was also on the Parish Council, therefore she also had a personal and prejudicial interest and would need to withdraw for that item.

Councillor Murphy also advised that she was a Trustee of the Stakeford and Bomarsund Welfare Committee and therefore had a personal and prejudicial interest and would also need to withdraw for item 13.

20 **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.

21 **22/01086/FUL**

**Full planning application for change of use of existing agricultural field for forestry and community education uses including creation of planting amphitheatre and associated infrastructure  
Land to The North of Eland Lane, Ponteland, Northumberland**

R Soulsby, Planning Officer provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation. Members were informed that a late representation from Ponteland Town Council had been received which read as follows:

“The Council has concerns over access; parking on a narrow country lane; blocking a road that is used regularly by the neighbouring farm and residents; litter; safety with such a proximity to the river; vandalism; the risk of antisocial behaviour; the remoteness of this facility and the risk that it could become a 'hangout' area for youths resulting in antisocial behaviour.”

The Planning Officer advised that whilst objectors had raised concerns regarding the site potentially resulting in an increase in antisocial behaviour and litter within the area, these were not material planning considerations.

Mr C Jackson addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application.

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His comments included the following:-

- This was a retrospective application for previously productive agricultural land and it was incomprehensible that Bellway continued to develop and change the use when it could be productive agricultural land.
- There was no reference to the current condition of the land.
- The proposal was unnecessary.
- No educational body had been consulted or expressed a need for this facility.
- The developer had based this on the Miyawaki method which was particularly suitable for urban areas and this was not an urban area, and therefore there was no basis to support the application.
- The placement of the trees 2 to 3 metres apart was inconsistent with the size site as a much larger site would be required for the number of trees and therefore the proposals were inappropriate.
- There had been no engagement with community groups and the educational aspect was not valid.
- The application failed to consider or meet the objectives set out in Northumberland's Local Plan (NLP)- Policy STP1, in particular sub bullet g; Policy STP3; Policy STP4; Policy STP5, bullet 2, in particular sub bullets, a, f and g and extracts of the NLP were read out to the Committee.
- In respect of Policy STP6 the land was already well maintained farm land and there was no attempt to meet any of the planning objectives outlined in the report. Agricultural use on the site was already well managed and there would be no net biodiversity gain, but in fact there would be a net loss.
- The clear ecological benefit had not been outlined.
- The developer had rubbished the concerns from residents in relation to fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour on the site.
- STP5 stated that you must not create an area which does not promote, support and enhance the health and wellbeing of communities and must support the wider issue of public safety and the Police have not endorsed this development.

Eilidh Paul, Agent on behalf of the applicant addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Her comments included the following information:-

- Thanked Members for the opportunity to speak and Officers for the report.
- Ponteland would be the first tiny forest created by Bellway in the country and would also act as an educational tool for community and educational groups. The forest funded by Bellway had already had groups on site.
- There would be 300 trees provided requiring low maintenance and would enhance the green infrastructure and provide ecological enhancements to the site.
- The site would not typically require planning permission as it was a small site and the development could be undertaken under permitted development rights which would also allow for use of the site for up to 28 days per year.
- Bellway had sought consent to remove the 28 day limit and the application would also give the Council more control of the development and maintenance of the site.

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- There were no technical objections and the application was recommended for approval.
- The development was in accordance with the NLP and the objections related to the risk of anti-social behaviour and vandalism were not within the remit of planning. There was no evidence that the development of the site would result in anti-social behaviour or vandalism and the Police had not objected to the application.
- The site would mainly be used by groups for educational purposes with the young people supervised whilst on the site.
- The proposal was sustainable development and would have ecological benefit, accorded with planning policies and Members were requested to approve the application.

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

- The applicant had set out that the site would be used as a learning tool for biodiversity and protected species and would be used by school and community groups. All that was being assessed as part of the application was the change of use to forestry from agricultural land.
- Works had been undertaken on the site but had not been approved and Officers were not aware of any specific project or timescales for the use of the site by the groups.

Councillor Dodd proposed refusal of the application as he felt that this was not a forest as it was no bigger than two back gardens and the description did not match up with what would be provided. He felt that the Committee were being conned regarding the change of use and as a farmer himself this was not a location where he would plant trees and considered they would be alien to what was already there.

Members were reminded by the Planning Area Manager that all Members were being asked to look at was the change of use so that planting could go ahead on the site and questioned what would be alien as trees could already be there. Councillor Dodd stated that if it had a purpose such as a shelter belt then that would be different but he considered that this was a trojan horse and felt that it would encourage anti-social behaviour on the site as there was a lot of this happening in Ponteland at the current time.

Members were reminded that any reason for refusal must be linked to a principle of development and whilst there was some sympathy that was not a planning reason for the refusal of the application. There was no building to object to and robust reasons for any refusal must be provided by the Committee linked to policies which would be defensible at any future appeal. There was a defined Green Belt boundary around the settlement of Ponteland however, the application site was located within the inset boundary and was therefore not located within designated Green Belt.

Councillor Dodd withdrew his proposal to refuse the application.

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Councillor Beynon then proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

Members suggested that if Bellway wished to offset their carbon footprint then it should be done on their own housing estates by the provision of more green areas with tree planting on them rather than by buying more land. They also highlighted the concerns that the Town Council had in respect of the application, and it was stated that the application would provide more community benefit in an urban environment rather than in Ponteland where it was not needed and this was something the NLP should look to encourage.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application as follows:- FOR 2; AGAINST 2; ABSTAIN 0. As this was a tied decision, the Vice-Chair Planning, in the Chair used her casting vote in favour of the proposal and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

22

**21/04875/FUL**

**New vehicular access to serve four permitted dwellings**

**Land North of Southcroft Stables, The Croft, Ulgham, Northumberland**

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

Councillor J Scott, Chair of Ulgham Parish Council addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments included the following:-

- The Parish council wished to object on the grounds of unnecessary development in the Green Belt.
- There was no justification for a new access as the existing access to the site was perfectly adequate, within the 30 mph limit and had approximately 75m clear view in either direction.
- Any new entrance could have only one purpose which would be to allow access for a future large scale development. An application for which had already been refused.
- The proposed new access was well outside the line of the brownfield site which already had permission for four dwellings.
- The Highways report, which was fully supported, went into far more detail and left no doubt that the application should be refused.

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

- In terms of the Green Belt and the NPPF, this was an acceptable form of development within the Green Belt and would not impact on the openness of the area. Highways had no objection to the application on highway safety grounds, subject to the imposition of conditions.
- The road was public highway and as part of a Section 78 agreement must be approved to a certain standard.
- There was an application for the development of houses, however this was refused and all Members had to consider today was the actual access

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being proposed. The site and surrounding area was outside of the settlement boundary for Ulgham and within designated Green Belt therefore there was not policy support for residential development within this area.

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

## 23 **APPEALS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

A short recess was held at this point, and Councillor J Beynon took the Chair when the meeting recommenced.

## 24 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been submitted.

## 25 **PETITIONS**

**(a) Receive New Petitions** – no new petitions had been received.

**(b) Petitions Previously Received – Request for footpath/cycleway connecting Red Row Drive to Barrington Road, Bedlington Station**

A report had been provided responding to the paper and e-petition and the lead petitioner, Mrs M Trotter had been invited to attend and provide a response. Her comments included the following:-

- The body of the report deviated towards the existing pedestrian access to Bedlington Station over the Welwyn Bridge and via Stakeford Road, with statements made suggesting that the bridge was not fit for purpose. This was an objective assessment where it had been identified as unsuitable but mitigated by adding traffic lights.
- It is not defensible to state that no accidents had occurred so it cannot be justified. Near misses were not recorded, therefore it was not that there was no risk, it was just that the risk was not recorded.
- An accident in which she had been involved happened on the bridge in December 2019 which resulted in her receiving a fractured wrist. The Council were informed of this accident and whilst no one contacted her in respect of this, the cause of the accident was removed the following week.
- One of the primary objectives as a local authority was a duty of care and to take proactive action to minimise risk to life, therefore was this an appropriate alternative route to allow children to ride their bikes safely; expect less able and wheelchair users to attempt the route; and allow parents with pushchairs to experience difficulties crossing.
- Residents needed to be able to travel to access local amenities and link

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communities together and were not always walking towards Bedlington Station, but trying to access a wider range of activities in the opposite direction.

- The request for a pavement/cycleway was to allow children to safely ride their bikes to schools, parks and leisure facilities; minimise the risk to the travelling public; strengthen inclusion by improving the highway and broadening outdoor opportunities for those less able and wheelchair users; link communities to the new rail link rather than them having to use the Welwyn Bridge, with its increased traffic heading to the station car parks; and allow residents the choice of a safer route.
- A supporting statement from Steve Patterson, Managing Director of Remondis was read out to the Committee in which, as a local employer, he advised that he strongly supported the scheme and had pledged a contribution of £1500 towards the cost of a scheme to should it be approved.

Officers advised that they appreciated the concerns and supported a scheme being put forward in the next round of the LTP, however it might still be difficult to prioritise this over other schemes, but it would be submitted and go through the normal process.

Councillor Foster advised that she would also be happy for this to be put forward for consideration as part of the LTP and make a contribution to any costs should it be successful. She highlighted the gradient of the bridge and advised that the petition route would be the route of choice as there was no gradient and it would be safer if it had a footpath. She highlighted that a lot of other areas had cycle lanes but there were none in Stakeford or Choppington.

It was clarified that the traffic lights on the bridge were put in when the schools in the area changed to two tier and whilst there was no data on the numbers using that route, an analysis could be undertaken and contact made with the schools in the area.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report and the actions to be taken be noted.

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

## 26 LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

M King, Highways Delivery Area Manager provided an update which included the following information:

- There was still a backlog in category 1 repairs following the winter storms, however routine work was now on schedule. Reactive third party requests continued to rise in the Castle Morpeth area and the reason for this would be investigated as it impacted on the category 1 work.
- A new hot box was now in use for the Castle Morpeth area and the impact on the backlog would be seen shortly.
- A large amount of work in relation to drainage had been identified and it was hoped that work would commence in August.
- New gully maintenance vehicles had arrived and a review of systems and new routes would be created.

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- Minor patching work was ongoing with schemes being extended if possible.
- A large patching scheme was being undertaken at Lancaster Park in Morpeth.
- Other work being undertaken included footpath work in Heddon, signage repaired or removed and verge safety work. It was hoped to commence work on the footpath in Lynemouth the following week.
- Work at Goosehill car park was going well, however there was an issue with a change of sub-contractor and it was likely the completion date would need to be extended with Members kept advised of any changes.
- There had been new staff recruited to join the Castle Morpeth team but difficulties in recruiting the right staff to deliver the best service were highlighted.

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

- Temporary lighting at the Goosehill site would be looked at.
- It was not thought there would be any impact on road surfaces in the County due to the level of heat expected, however if the level was raised to three, then there may be some impact on materials and the situation would be monitored. Staff who had to wear full protective equipment had been advised to take extra breaks, wear sun-tan lotion and keep hydrated and therefore a small dip in output might occur.
- N Snowdon would check the progress of the junction of Thornhill Road and North Road in Ponteland and report back to Councillor Dodd.
- In relation to the speed signs for Belsay guidance would be provided on what assistance the Parish Council could provide.
- In respect of signage requested for the roundabout at the junction beside the A69 requested by Councillor Dodd, this would be looked at again to determine if it was within Northumberland or Newcastle.
- N Snowdon advised that an update would be provided to Councillor Foster regarding the possibility of lighting being installed at the chicane on the C403 which had been replaced the previous week, and the team would also report back on whether works on Riverbank had been included in the U-roads schemes.
- The reporting process for the LTP schemes was currently being looked at in relation to how information was to be presented and how often, including the dates of any planned schemes.
- Councillor Dodd advised that a long term plan for the management of, or removal of Ash trees in the County was required as a number of these were dying and could impact powerlines and roads if they fell during storms. He would also raise this at Council.

Paul Lowes, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager provided the following information:-

- Residual, Recycling and bulky waste collection services continued to perform well with the garden waste service also performing well with over 7000 customers signed up so far this year.
- Grass Cutting was now on cut 7. There had been some staffing issues recently but work had been undertaken to keep any disruption to a

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minimum. The first application of weed treatment was also complete. Members should report any areas of concern.

- Verges Cutting works started on schedule again this year with 6.8 million sq. metres of verges to cut in the county. For some of this local farmers had been engaged to help get through the significant workload and some was done in-house. Despite some issues with equipment in the Coopies Lane Depot, all works were on target to be completed by the end of July. If members or residents had any safety concerns please report them and they would be looked at as a priority.
- The glass trial extension was ongoing. There had been almost 300 tonnes collected in the initial trial period and over 200 tonnes collected in the extension period so far.
- Some delays had been experienced with the implementation of the food waste trial in terms of securing the required equipment but this was being progressed as quickly as possible.

**27 LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair advised that the work programme was for information and should Members wish to ask for any items to be added to the agenda, then they contact either himself or Democratic Services.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**28 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 8 August 2022 and would be planning only.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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