



# Northumberland

## County Council

COMMITTEE : PETITIONS

DATE: 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023

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**TITLE OF REPORT: PETITION AGAINST ON-GOING PLANNING ISSUES OF PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS TO LOCAL SERVICES AT ARCOT MANOR/THE FAIRWAYS, CRAMLINGTON**

**Report of (Officer Name)** Rob Murfin, Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Colin Horncastle

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### **Purpose of report**

A report was brought before Members of the Petitions Committee on 27th October 2022 in respect of a petition received from the residents of Arcot Manor/The Fairways in respect of ongoing planning issues. The purpose of the report was to agree the Council's response. This report is to provide Members with an update on the agreed outcomes from the meeting in October.

### **Recommendations**

The Petitions Committee is recommended to note:

- The issues raised in the petition
- The explanation of the role of planning and how planning decisions are made
- The progress in relation to the agreed outcomes and actions required as defined at the Petitions Committee of 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

The issues raised in the petition and the Council's response to the petition are indirectly relevant to priorities included in the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 as follows:

- 'how' - The Council faces tough decisions that will not be universally popular. These are not taken lightly and the council pledges to listen and consider views
- 'enjoying' - the Council wants to protect and improve quality places, but also make sure that the places where people live, work and play continue to evolve and grow whilst retaining and deepening their appeal.

## **Key issues**

- The residents of Arcot Manor/The Fairways submitted a petition raising a series of concerns pertaining to connectivity from these residential areas to the town centre and neighbouring areas. The residents felt that they had no safe point to cross a very busy road and no pedestrian or cycle access to local services.
- The only access onto the housing estate is via Fisher Lane where residents, including the elderly and school children, are expected to cross a very busy 50mph road to access bus services into Cramlington and Blyth and from Newcastle. The residents considered that the design of the roundabout was poor with cars often exceeding the speed limit and driving dangerously and there are no road signs advising road users of the crossing point.
- The residents have stated that in order to access local services, they were expected to walk 1/3 mile stretch of road where cars can travel at 50mph before reaching a footpath at Northumberlandia and access the footpath and cycle network by crossing 70mph carriageway on the A1068 on Fisher Lane. The residents believed that this left many of them isolated.
- The residents have requested immediate action to prevent injury or loss of life as a result of not creating adequate infrastructure to a growing development, which currently has over 300 occupied properties. They also requested safer crossing points together with appropriate signs and a temporary or permanent footpath giving residents access to local services. The petition contained 292 names.
- The Council takes the matters raised very seriously. This report outlines how decisions are currently made and why and, where relevant, identifies some matters which the Council will look to pursue to improve and refine the planning decision-making process.

## **Background**

1. Arcot Manor/The Fairways is located on land to the south and West of Beacon Lane, Cramlington.
2. A series of planning applications have been received pertaining to development across this site. The site in question was granted outline planning permission in 2016 and was for the development of up to 1600 dwellings (excluding flats over A1/A2 units), two form entry primary school, a new local centre comprising convenience store (Use Class A1), medical centre (Use Class D1), public house (Use Class A4) other ancillary local centre uses (Use Classes A1/A2/D1) and flats over A1/A2 units (Use Class C3) and associated infrastructure and landscaping. All matters reserved except access (for the avoidance of doubt access meaning to the site, with access arrangements within each phase reserved).
3. The 1600 units were to be spread across the south west sector of Cramlington spanning a number of years for completion.
4. The Arcot Manor/The Fairways site comprises 400 units as part of Phase 1, which is still under construction. Around 300 dwellings are now occupied.
5. As part of the planning permission, a Section 106 was agreed which secured affordable housing, education land and education contributions, a local centre, community sports funding, local school funding and funding highways and connectivity.

6. To date, £50,000 has been received by the Council to fund local community sports activities in the south west of Cramlington and £147,500 has been received by the Council to fund and maintain 3 x local junior sports pitches within Cramlington.
7. As with all S106 agreements, there are trigger points by which certain actions are to take place or funding is to be submitted to the Council. In this case, for the sport contributions a further £147,500 is due to be received by the Council on completion of the 540th dwelling (2023-24) and the final £147,400 due on completion of the 860th dwelling (2026).
8. In relation to highways and connectivity £383,000 has been received by the Council in relation to improvements to Beacon Lane (re- surfacing with a bound surface and lighting); improvements to Beaconhill Green (new 3m wide footpath/cycleway with lighting to link with existing footpath/cycleway beneath A1172); an improved link from Beacon Lane to Beaconhill Primary School (new section of 3m wide footpath/cycleway with lighting to create a more direct crossing of existing park, increase width of existing sections of footpath from 2-3m and upgrade to existing lighting). The design of these highway works is currently well underway.
9. £250,000 for Education has been paid and the first healthcare payments are pending and the triggers for the remainder financial contributions have not yet been reached.

## **MATTERS TO BE ACTIONED**

**The Petition expressed an urgency to see a safer crossing point together with appropriate signs and a temporary or permanent footpath giving residents access to local services.**

10. Planning for the good of 'society' or communities rather than individuals at the very core of the planning system. The Council delivers a planning service which achieves such a balance. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there will always be planning policies or developments which have adverse impacts. Planning is about balancing up many different considerations, harms and benefits in the pursuit of 'sustainable development'. Planning is acknowledged to be consistently and inherently controversial and the Planning service is committed to balancing the competing material planning considerations and detailing those considerations within the officer reports.
11. The Council agrees that the connectivity of new developments to nearby facilities is key in ensuring developments integrate effectively into their surroundings and minimise negative impacts on surrounding homes and residential amenity.
12. The Government maintains a strong focus on a greater emphasis on design, and creating high quality places, which is supported in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. These can be used to guide planning decisions.
13. The Council wishes to embrace this renewed emphasis on design and is keen to produce a Northumberland Design Guide, and potentially more local level design guides in the future. In acknowledgment of the matters raised in the petition, the Council will look to see how best to address the key issues experienced by the residents of Arcot

Manor/The Fairways in respect of connectivity. It may well involve specific advice from experts to achieve this.

14. To address the concerns of the residents, the Highways Development Management Team (HDM) has been in discussion with Persimmon Homes, the local area Councillor and planning officers to explore potential remedies.
15. A number of factors have, however, been identified which will hinder that process. With regards to the proposed pedestrian link between the development and Beacon Lane, this cannot be installed for approximately 3 years due to the construction works being undertaken and some of the land being privately owned. For safety reasons, this cannot be developed at this point. Alongside this, the planning permission stipulates that no more than 800 of the dwellings shall be occupied prior to the establishment of a continuous route from Fisher Land to Beacon Lane. The developer is not obliged to fulfil that stipulation any earlier.
16. Notwithstanding this, the issues raised by the residents remain a serious concern and the Council are willing to assist with addressing these as soon as possible. HDM are now seeking measures to influence the delivery of highways connections sooner than the agreed trigger points listed above. In addition to the areas of work already underway (point 8 above) HDM are also committed to addressing the points of signage, safer crossing points and potential for any temporary footpaths as an interim measure. Persimmon Homes have equally agreed to expedite these timings where possible and will continue to engage with the planning officers and HDM in respect of the delivery of the pedestrian routes.

### **Actions since Petitions Committee 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

17. Officers of the Planning Department met with Persimmon to discuss the matters raised. In respect of connectivity to the bus stops on Fisher Lane, a footpath is in place leading from the estate to the bus stop on the east side. The footpath continues to the south leading up to the point where pedestrians need to cross to reach the set down pedestrian island, which is located centrally between the north and south carriageways of Fisher Lane. The island allows pedestrians to wait to cross safely to the west side of Fisher Lane where a footpath continues to the bus stop. It is acknowledged that this island sits quite close to the main roundabout, however, a point was made that traffic naturally slows down on the approach to and exit from the main Fisher Lane roundabout. This was also approved as being a safe crossing point prior to construction when taken in context with the speed restrictions in place. It is also acknowledged that speed is a concern in this area and the potential for more signage is under discussion. Members will be updated on progress at committee on 26<sup>th</sup> January.
18. Turning to pedestrian access links to Beacon Lane, an area of land has been identified that is within the ownership of Barratts/Keepmoat, as a potential temporary route through to Beacon Lane, as shown on the map below in red. Discussions thus far have been positive and are making progress. Members will, again, be fully updated on further progress at committee.



19. Involved officers of the Council will keep the residents informed of progress and would suggest key contacts within the Council and the residents/local area councillor are established to enable this process to flow as positively as possible.

**Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	Planning decisions are made in the context of national and local level planning policies. The report discusses the new Northumberland Local Plan, against which future planning decisions are expected to be made.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	There are no finance and value for money considerations.
<b>Legal</b>	The determination of planning applications is governed by planning and associated legislation including the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no direct procurement considerations.
<b>Human Resources</b>	None significant
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b>	An Equalities Impact Assessment is not considered necessary given the proposals included in this report

(Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	N/A
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The response set out in this report has been prepared in response to customer concerns. It seeks to respond to the matters raised and where appropriate seek improvements
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Climate change is inherently part of the planning system however, the specific matters raised in the petition do not directly influence carbon reduction
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	N/A
<b>Wards</b>	Cramlington West

**Background papers:**

Planning Applications ref: 15/00901/OUTES

**Report sign off.**

***Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:***

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	
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