

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Committee** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Monday, 11 September 2023 at 4.00 pm.

**PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS**

J Beynon  
R Dodd  
V Jones  
R Wearmouth

S Dickinson  
L Dunn  
G Sanderson

**OFFICERS**

H Dunleavy  
D Hadden  
L Little  
J Murphy

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

Around 25 members of the press and public were present.

**25 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Vice Chair (Planning) advised of a change to the order of the agenda with items 9 and 10 being taken as the first and second substantial items.

**26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Darwin, Murphy and Towns.

**27 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Committee held on Monday 10 July 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

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**(a) Receive New Petitions** – No new petitions were received.

**(b) Petitions Previously Received – Ongoing planning issues and unfinished works on the Nursery Gardens Site, Stannington Station**

An introduction to the report was provided by J Murphy, Area Planning Manager and photographs of the site were provided. She advised that further discussions had taken place with Mr Straker on behalf of the Developer since the report had been produced and they had been informed that a report from Northumbria Water was awaited before work could commence on the roads. Highways had also spoken to Mr Straker and had asked that the Contractor contact them directly. There had been a little progress since Mr Straker had been advised that the Council were considering issuing a Breach of Conditions Notice, with some work being undertaken although the quality of this was in doubt. Clarification would need to be provided if a Breach of Condition Notice was to be issued as to what works were outstanding. Officers were recommending that a further report be brought to Committee in two months on progress and if the work was not completed then the Breach of Condition Notice be issued.

The Lead Petitioner addressed the Committee in respect of the petition. She thanked Officers and Councillor Darwin for their assistance in the matter. The report had covered most of the grievances that residents had with Ludgate who were trading as Willow Homes, however there had been no mention of SURGO who had been the main contractor. They had been told that work would commence in August, however they were now being told that it would be September. A great deal of remedial work would need to be undertaken on the roads and paths before any actual work could be done. She asked what assurances could be given that the work would actually start in September and that it would be carried out to an acceptable standard given that the contractor had previously advised that 12 to 18 inches of top soil would be required, however the majority of this was still in bunds on the site and water was already pooling on the paths that had been provided. Residents had received flyers through their doors from SURGO and then Ludgate giving dates for works to be undertaken but no action had actually been taken until this latest intervention. Residents wanted the work to be completed. SURGO had used the dispute with Ludgate as an excuse not to complete snagging work which had been reported with residents suffering as a result of this and they were also concerned regarding the timescale and standard of development.

Councillor Sanderson thanked the petitioners for bringing this matter to the Council's attention and their time in attending the meeting. He also thanked officers and Councillor Darwin for their work in trying to resolve the situation. He did however consider that it was time to make a stand and set an example as he felt that there was a limit as to what the Local Planning Authority could do and this had been reached. He proposed that a Breach of Condition Notice be issued immediately. Councillor Wearmouth queried if it would be sensible to set a deadline of 2 to 3 weeks to allow the developer to complete the works before the issuing of the Breach of Condition Notice. Officers advised that the deadline they had set for the completion of the works was approaching without the works being done. Councillor Sanderson confirmed that his proposal was that the Breach of

Condition Notice be issued immediately and this was then seconded by Councillor Wearmouth.

In response to a question it was clarified that any decision made by this Committee did not need to be referred to the Petitions Committee.

Councillors advised that they supported the proposal to issue a Breach of Condition Notice as residents had purchased their properties in good faith on the basis that all necessary amenities would be provided. Current enforcement action being taken in relation to the works had not resulted in the necessary works being carried out in a timely manner. It was confirmed that following the issuing of a Breach of Condition Notice the developer would need to complete the work or receive a heavy fine and possible court proceedings. Officers would need to ascertain which conditions had been breached and liaise with Legal to ensure that the wording for the Notice was correct.

A vote was taken on the proposal to issue a Breach of Condition Notice to the developer and it was unanimously:

**RESOLVED** that a Breach of Condition Notice be issued to the developer.

**(c ) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered** – There were no updates.

## 29 THE TOBY HENDERSON TRUST

Lynda Richardson and Sheila Davies were in attendance to provide a presentation on the background and the work of The Toby Henderson Trust (TTHT), a charity which supported autistic children, young people and their families and carers, which was now based in Bedlington. TTHT was set up over 20 years ago by Lesley Henderson the CEO after fund raising to attend the Son Rise programme in America in order to support her son Toby as there were no services available here. Following her return the fund raising continued and she was able to bring the Son Rise programme back here and she set up the Trust in her son's name to help deliver the programme to Toby and other children and their families.

TTHT provided holistic support to families pre-diagnosis; throughout the diagnostic process and post diagnosis. Services were offered virtually and face to face with family support sessions which were tailored for each family; a family support group via zoom; a rolling programme of targeted webinars for a whole range of topics; a quarterly newsletter advising of what was happening within the trust and any events along with updates being provided on social media. Regular check-ins with families was done by email and telephone. Previously there had been some psychotherapy provided through grant funding but unfortunately this had ceased as there was no funding at the current time.

Whilst the majority of services were funded by charity, TTHT had now been commissioned to provide a post diagnostic support service within Northumberland. This was currently only for under 18 year olds, however the hope was that it would be commissioned for adults in the future. The charity also

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provided further support for children with autism outside of school time through MATES (Meet At Toby's and Engage Socially) which were sessions for Mini MATES for ages 6-9; MATES Juniors for ages 10-12; MATES Seniors for ages 13+; and a pilot project was now being run called Miss MATES for girls only, however funding for this was to cease in November and ways to keep this running through charitable donations was being explored. The Autism Sibling Support Group, Sibling Superstars provided support for siblings aged 6+ and was heavily subscribed. This allowed children to undertake activities or have days out which were not disrupted or had to be cut short by the needs of their autistic siblings and for them to understand that there were other families just like theirs and they were not alone.

A scheme which allowed sensory toys to be borrowed was also in operation giving children the opportunity of trying toys to see what they liked to play with rather than parents and carers buying expensive toys which were not suitable. The charity had also opened Toby's Magical Garden which was available for a family to hire giving a safe space for children to play.

It was clarified that there were no limitations on the geographical area which the charity covered as a lot of the work was now done online, which had been a positive change since covid. There was also now a TTHT hub in South Shields. If parents or carers were prepared to travel to join the group sessions then they were welcomed and if there was a high demand for a session in a particular area then it might be possible for this to be set up.

The Chair and Members of the Committee thanked the TTHT for their fantastic presentation on the work undertaken by the Charity which had been of great interest and very enlightening.

### 30 **PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT PLANNING MEETINGS**

The Vice-Chair (Planning) advised of the procedure to be followed during the planning part of the meeting.

### 31 **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.

### 32 **23/01593/FUL Proposed Single Storey Extension Burnside, Grange Avenue, Stamfordham, Northumberland, NE18 0PG**

H Dunleavy, Planning Technician provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. She advised that a further objection had been

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received from the neighbouring property Sunny Brae reiterating the points made in their original objection and included the following:-

- The development would clearly have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of their property resulting in; overshadowing, unacceptable loss of daylight/sunlight, privacy, outlook and loss of line of sight.
- It would be visually obstructive and have an overbearing impact.
- The overshadowing and loss of daylight would have a direct impact on how their kitchen was used with additional kitchen lighting being required increasing bills and their carbon footprint.
- Their property would not be visible from the road and emergency services could have difficulty in finding it in an emergency.
- This would be the biggest front extension in Grange Avenue and was out of proportion with the surrounding buildings.
- The extension windows would affect their privacy and if windows opened outwards would create a health and safety issue on the path.
- The building of the proposed extension would interfere with their only access to their property and was completely unacceptable.
- Street lighting around their front door area would effectively be completely blocked out.
- Sunny Brae would be boxed in, without light, creating a blind spot and areas that would feel unsafe and the lack of street lighting could lead to slips, trips and falls.

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

- The existing hedge would be removed and the proposed extension would extend beyond this.
- It would be a similar extension to that at Sunny Brae only it was slightly larger and would have a hipped roof.
- There were a number of properties in Grange Avenue with extensions, however this would be larger than any of the others.

Councillor Wearmouth proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Sanderson.

Members acknowledged that the design of the estate made it difficult to make alterations to the properties however there were similar extensions in the street. The street itself was very narrow and Sunny Brae was at the end of the road. Some concern was expressed that the proposed development would block the light for Sunny Brae, cause access problems during the development and make navigating down the narrow path difficult. A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application in line with the recommendation in the report as follows: FOR 5; AGAINST 2; ABSTAIN 1.

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

### 33 **APPEALS UPDATE**

Officers advised that as the number of planning applications being received had increased there had been a corresponding increase in the number of appeals being lodged. It was however clarified that appeal decisions in the most part supported the decisions of the Local Planning Authority.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

Councillor Sanderson left the meeting at this point.

### 34 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

AM Soulsby, Climate Champion for Morpeth was in attendance and asked the following questions:

1. As part of the Climate Emergency declared in 2019 and the Council's subsequent Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2023 there was a strong recommendation for all staff to undertake carbon literacy training. How many staff had undertaken the training?
2. Also as part of the Action Plan it was stated that all Councillors would undertake the carbon literacy training and a declaration would be made for each on the website to say that this had been undertaken, to date there are only two Councillors who have declared this. How many Councillors had undertaken the training?

Councillor Wearmouth advised that regular workshops and sessions were undertaken with the Council and its Members very much bought into achieving net zero by 2030. The Action Plan was being refreshed in order to ensure that it stayed relevant and it had received cross party support.

A written response would be provided in respect of the numbers of staff and Councillors who had undertaken the training.

### 35 **LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee was reminded of the need for the separation of the Local Area Committees from Planning Committees which had been agreed by Council as part of the recommendations from the LAC Review and the requirement to hold meetings in other parts of the LAC area. There was a budget of £500 for each LAC which was to be used to help publicise the meetings in order to attract more public engagement.

Members were advised that the Chair and Vice-Chair Planning were to meet with the Senior Democratic Services Officer immediately following this meeting to discuss this in more detail and Members would be advised of the dates and venues in due course.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted.

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36 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The meeting of the next Local Area Planning Committee was planning only and was scheduled for 4.00 pm on Monday 9 October 2023.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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