

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Planning Committee** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Monday, 11 March 2024 at 4.00 pm.

#### PRESENT

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

#### MEMBERS

J Beynon  
S Dickinson  
L Dunn  
M Murphy

L Darwin  
R Dodd  
V Jones  
G Sanderson

#### OFFICERS

M Bulman  
L Little  
E Sinnamon  
R Soulsby

Solicitor  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Head of Planning  
Senior Planning Officer

There was 1 member of the press/public present.

#### 49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Towns and Wearmouth.

#### 50 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Planning Committee held on Monday 12 February 2024, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record, and be signed by the Chair with the following amendments noted:

Apologies for Absence – remove Councillor Towns and add Councillor Darwin.

#### 51 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

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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.

52 **23/02165/FUL**

**Development of 32 no. affordable homes with associated infrastructure, drainage and open space  
Land South of 15-47 Stakeford Crescent, Stakeford Crescent, Stakeford, Northumberland**

An addendum report was circulated to Members and time allowed for this to be read. The addendum report would also be uploaded to the website and filed with the signed minutes.

An introduction to the report was provided by R Soulsby, Senior Planning Officer with the aid of a power point presentation including photographs of the site.

Craig Stewart addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments included the following:-

- When the application had been put online in October, everyone had objected in relation to the top left corner of the site which was a wildlife area with lots of nesting birds, foxes and deer using the area.
- Just after October a third party desecrated the ground with everything being ripped up by the roots and spread around to look like weeds. The site was now being used for fly tipping and looked like wasteland.
- He questioned how planning permission for this destruction had been allowed without any residents being advised. There were rumours that this had been undertaken in order to allow samples to be undertaken.
- It looked as if the plans had already been signed off and there was no point in any consultation taking place and when they asked about the access, were told this would be considered at the planning phase. One of the photographs shown on the presentation had actually been taken from his driveway.

Lesley Allsopp also addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. Her comments included the following:-

- She lived on Stakeford Lane and she had concerns regarding the increased traffic that would be generated with the construction traffic and then residential traffic.
- Her own family had four vehicles and had on two occasions had vehicles written off due to them being hit outside her property.
- Would it take a child being seriously injured before anything was done to reduce the speed vehicles travelled on that stretch of road. The increased vehicles numbers from the development would increase the risk to pedestrians.
- The increased number of vehicles on a narrow road posed a risk especially plant and machinery accessing the site.

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- Development must be sustainable, and she questioned where the leisure and community facilities were.
- Highway safety was a major concern with vehicles already being damaged in the area.
- There was already a strain on the healthcare system in the area.

Alistair Willis, Agent on behalf of the applicant addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- He endorsed the officer report and summary of the application. All aspects of the application had been considered and details challenged in order to ensure it was entirely compliant with the relevant Local Plan policies.
- There were no outstanding consultee objections to the proposed development.
- The application had been prepared in partnership with Bernicia and would provide 100% affordable housing for local needs. The range of house types proposed was in direct response to local needs.
- Initial public consultation had been undertaken in 2019 where a number of local issues had been identified and which the applicant had sought to address through the application.
- An independent parking survey conducted outside of school holidays and over Wednesday to Saturday was also undertaken which had shown that the busiest period was around 7pm but was not at a level which would make the development unacceptable. To address one of the concerns regarding access from Stakeford Crescent and existing parking on that street, six additional off-street parking spaces specifically for residents of Stakeford Crescent would be provided in the area of the site access. Highways Officers had not considered there to be an issue and had in fact requested that the additional spaces be removed, but the applicant considered it was better to retain these additional parking spaces.
- An updated review of local accident data had been provided which had confirmed there had been no accidents along Stakeford Crescent or its junction with Stakeford Lane.
- Overall, with the reduced parking on Stakeford Crescent the proposed development would offer a betterment to the existing situation.
- Bernicia owned a significant amount of affordable housing stock within the wider south-east Northumberland area, however a large amount of historic stock had been lost through right to buy purchases significantly reducing the ability of local families to access good quality, secure, affordable housing.
- The level of interest in properties which became available significantly exceeded the supply and there was a need for further affordable housing provision. These figures had been monitored since 2019 and whilst the figures were consistently high the need was increasing year on year and could only be met through schemes such as this. The delivery of 32 affordable homes for local needs secured through legal agreement was a significant material consideration in the determination of the application.

In relation to Councillors declaring an interest in an application, Councillor Dodd advised that it would be useful for information to be provided on the applicant or

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who the site belonged to rather than just the details of the agent. He highlighted that he had previously served on the Board of Bernicia.

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

- Officers were satisfied in relation to highways safety and Members were assured that a robust highways assessment had been undertaken along with a parking survey.
- No permission was required to remove vegetation on private land, there were no protected trees on the land in question and it was not in a conservation area. Part of the site had been required to be cleared of vegetation in order for the archaeological test to be undertaken but not the whole site. The clearance of the whole site was a matter for the applicant and no formal permission was required.
- Officers could not confirm the age of the existing properties on Stakeford Crescent or when and why the bollards preventing through access had been erected. Councillor Foster advised that the properties were in existence in 1977 and the bollards had been erected prior to 2008 due to the volume of traffic using Stakeford Crescent. It was clarified that the existing bollards would not be removed, and the only additional traffic would be that generated by the properties on the new estate.

Councillor Murphy proposed refusal of the application due to the material impact and traffic which was seconded by Councillor Foster. Members were advised that a specific reason for refusal would be required.

In response to a concern expressed by Councillor Sanderson in relation to Councillor Foster Chairing the meeting and also being the Ward Member, Members were informed that advice had been taken and as she had no interest in the application, no family or friends living in the street and had only previously lived in the general vicinity of the application site, there was no interest to declare.

In response to a query on what additional information would be needed to refuse on highways grounds if an assessment had already been provided, the Head of Planning advised that a robust highways assessment had been undertaken in line with national standards and this had found that there was not sufficient impact to justify a refusal of the application. Members were reminded of the tests included in the NPPF in relation to unacceptable highways impacts or cumulative impacts on roads. Advice was provided that the technical information provided, and previous experience of the appeals process would make it extremely difficult to argue that refusal of this application on highways grounds would be acceptable.

Members reminded the Committee of the consequences of not having robust reasons for refusal and the difficulties that would be encountered in defending any Appeal along with the need for affordable housing, however they did recognise the concerns raised by residents. The Committee were advised that there was an issue with speeding vehicles on Stakeford Lane and Highways had been approached regarding a scheme for road cushions to be provided.

Councillor Murphy stated that if the provision of affordable housing was considered by itself the application would be fine, however there were issues with

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the access to the site. On paper the scheme looked excellent, however in reality the road was narrow, had bollards and a turning circle and was not suitable for the additional traffic which would be generated with 32 additional homes, and she did not believe that the impact would be minimal. She highlighted the restrictions which were coming into force in certain areas of the Country in relation to pavement parking and that no account had been taken should it happen in this area. She did not accept that it was an appropriate access point.

The Head of Planning clarified that in view of Councillor Murphy’s comments the reason for refusal would be “That the application should be refused on highways grounds due to the unacceptable impact on highways safety and the cumulative severe impacts on road safety”. She continued by stating that this was a 100% affordable housing scheme in line with the Northumberland Local Plan. The houses were being provided in an area where they were wanted and met the criteria set out and this carried significant weight. Members also needed to take account of the technical assessments undertaken including highways. She advised that a lot of work had been undertaken by the applicant in relation to highways and the Planning Team were of the opinion that taking all material planning considerations into account recommended that the application should be approved.

A vote was taken on the motion to refuse the application on highways grounds due to the unacceptable impact on highways safety and the cumulative severe impacts on road safety as follows: FOR 2; AGAINST 5; ABSTAIN 2.

Councillor Dodd then proposed that the application be approved in line with the recommendation as set out in the report which was seconded by Councillor Sanderson. A vote was taken on the proposal as follows: FOR 5; AGAINST 2; ABSTAIN 2.

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report and amended in the addendum report subject to a section 106 agreement securing relevant contributions (£19,680 coastal mitigation, £20,400 healthcare, £96,000 education and £20,968.74 open space).

53 **PLANNING APPEALS**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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