

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held virtually
on **Tuesday 1 December 2020** at **4.00 pm**

PRESENT

Councillor CW Horncastle
(Chair in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Armstrong E	Lang J
Bowman L	Reid J
Dodd R	Renner-Thompson
Flux B	Robinson M
Foster J	Stewart G
Gibson R	Swithenbank ICF
Gobin J	Thorne T
Hepple A	

OFFICERS

Bulman M	Solicitor
Cartmell V	Principal Planning Officer
Dixon L	Democratic Services Assistant
Little L	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Murfin R	Director of Planning Principal Highways
Thompson C	Development Management Officer
Williams M	Team Leader - ICT Practitioner SIFA

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor C Seymour	Ward Councillor
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124. PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT A VIRTUAL STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Chair outlined the procedure which would be followed at the virtual meeting and of the changes to the public speaking protocol. He also advised Members that if their connection was lost during consideration of an application and it was not possible for a short recap to be provided then the Member would not be allowed to vote on the application.

125. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 3 November 2020, as circulated, be agreed as true record and signed by the Chair.

126. 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.

127. 20/01882/FULES

Demolition of existing Berwick Infirmary and erection of new Community Hospital (Use Class C2) with integrated healthcare and clinical facilities including a GP surgery (Use Class D1), together with associated hard and soft landscaping, access arrangements, servicing and retention of existing Bell Tower.

Berwick Infirmary, Well Close Square, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 1LT

There were no questions in relation to the site visit videos which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

V Cartmell, Principal Planning Officer introduced the application to the Committee with the aid of a power point presentation. An addendum report had been circulated in advance of the meeting which detailed changes to conditions 2, 6, 21, 23 and 40. A further update was provided in relation to Section 7. In the consultee responses it stated that Public Protection objected on the grounds of ground gas and odour and it should state that Public Protection had no objections. A change to the wordings of conditions 4, 6, 7, 8, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 32, 34 and 42 to substitute the words "Prior to Occupation" with "The proposed development should not be brought into use" was also advised.

The written statements in objection to the application provided by E Paterson, T Stewart and R Banyard were read out by L Little, Senior Democratic Services Officer. These would be attached to the signed copy of the minutes and uploaded to the Council's website.

Councillor Seymour addressed the Committee speaking as the Ward Councillor advising that she supported the recommendation to approve the application and welcomed the retention of the Bell Tower. The plans had been many years in the making with secured funding of £25m from the Council to the Trust. Previous plans for a shared site with the Leisure Centre for an integrated health facility had not been welcomed by the Community. The Trust and CCG had listened to concerns regarding location and services to be provided. After consultations it had been announced that the proposed new hospital would be built on the current hospital site after looking at

various other locations in Berwick. The design focussed on flexibility embracing new technology and would be future proofed to provide a first class health facility for the people of Berwick. She had read all consultee and residents comments, met on site and attended consultations and had met the Trust for updates on the proposals, however despite requests a model of the proposed development had not been provided in order to see how the development would fit on the site and its context within the neighbourhood. She read out comments received in respect of the use of local stone and gulls nesting on the flat roof, although it was understood that the flat roof had been provided to reduce the height of the building in order that the light was not adversely affected to the Low Greens area. Other comments referenced the retention of the stone walls surrounding the site and retention of trees which should be replaced if any were removed. Berwick Infirmary had served the town for 150 years and was located in the Conservation Area adjacent to the Heritage Grade 1 Town Walls. She understood that the existing buildings were not fit for purpose but would have liked to have seen them kept but she did welcome the retention of the Bell Tower. The proposal would create a fit for purpose facility which would include a GP Surgery. The development would provide significant investment within the Town which had not been seen for generations.

A written statement in support of the application by the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust was read out by L Little, Senior Democratic Services Officer. The statement would be filed with the signed copy of the minutes and uploaded to the Council's website.

It was clarified that whilst Councillor Swithenbank had a connection problem and had left the meeting for approximately one minute during the reading out of the supporter statement, all statements had previously been circulated to Members and he had read the statement in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Swithenbank advised at this point that whilst he had previously been a Board Member of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust at the initial planning stages of a replacement for Berwick Infirmary, he had not been a part of the liaison committee and had not been involved at all. He sought advice from the Solicitor if it was appropriate for him to be involved in deciding the application. M. Bulman, Solicitor clarified that he would not have an interest as he was no longer a Board Member and as long as he had an open mind and had not predetermined the application, he would be free to take part. Councillor Swithenbank confirmed that he had not predetermined the application and would take part. Councillor Hepple advised that he had been in the same position as Councillor Swithenbank and had sought clarification from the Solicitor prior to the meeting.

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

- The impact on the conservation area was referenced at paragraph 9.48 and 9.49 of the report with the Conservation Officer advising that whilst there would be some harm, the degree of harm to the heritage assets would be less than substantial and should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The public benefits were outlined in paragraph 9.53 and were considered to outweigh the concerns.

- There had been some concern from residents in relation to noise from the energy plant, but Public Protection had submitted no objection subject to restrictive conditions to ensure the cumulative noise impacts did not exceed background noise levels so it was considered that this could be controlled by conditions. The energy centre located on the North East of the site would be fully fitted with mechanical and electric installations and there would be an electricity substation to serve the hospital.
- A great deal of attention had been placed on the highways matters in relation to the application in terms of ambulance drop offs, road infrastructure and the existing problems in the area with waste vehicles having to reverse. Part of the reason for the delay in the application coming to Committee was in order to address all the highways issues with amended plans submitted which were conditioned and included all design changes to address the issues.
- There would be an increase of approximately 17 traffic movements during peak hours in the morning and afternoon. There were proposals to change and condense the parking in relation to the scheme and work carried out on the approach road with parking restrictions imposed. The carriageway would be tidied up but work would be limited. A condition survey would be undertaken to ensure that any damage caused on the road network during construction and demolition would be corrected by the Contractor. There would be an improvement to the existing highway.
- The information provided in relation to the Bell Tower stated that the Hospital Trust did not have a use for this but it would engage with the community to see if it would be suitable for a community group to use. The Bell Tower was a non-heritage asset in the conservation area and historical groups and residents were grateful it was being retained.
- In relation to overlooking it was clarified that 21m was acceptable between existing and proposed 2 storey developments and this was being achieved between the two storey part of the hospital and properties. The two storey part of the new development would be further away from the existing but the single storey would move closer however this was not subject to the same restriction due to the reduced capability of overlooking. The windows in the rear elevation of the single storey building were in rooms to be used for cleaning equipment and storage and would not be in constant use. There would also be boundary treatment provided.
- A full noise assessment had been submitted with appropriate monitoring points suggested. Public Protection had looked at this and concluded that the information provided was sufficient. The energy centre was controlled by its own conditions and addressed separately. In relation to enforcement, design changes because of the noise assessment had been made to the scheme. Conditions attached to the permission would allow this to be revisited should the scheme become problematic in the future. All parties were satisfied with the design proposals. The current hospital had no noise conditions attached and those proposed on the new building would meet modern expectations.

Councillor Thorne proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report with the conditions as amended which was seconded by Councillor Stewart.

Members in debating the application stated that whilst the design of the new hospital in terms of its location in such a sensitive area was not ideal it would provide a fit for purpose modern facility which the residents of Berwick deserved. It would allow more services to be provided which would be of benefit to residents in the North of the County in managing their health. It would also reduce the need to make longer journeys to Wansbeck or Cramlington, although it was commented that this would be a more general hospital and was not an emergency care facility.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application with the conditions in the report and as amended and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report and amended in line with the addendum report and as highlighted above.

128. APPEAL UPDATE REPORT

Information was provided on the progress of planning appeal and related to appeals throughout all 5 Local Area Council Planning Committee areas and the Strategic Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

129. S106 AGREEMENTS UPDATE REPORT

Information was provided on the monitoring and collection of S106 contributions in the planning process.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____