

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held at Meeting Space - Block 1, Floor 2 - County Hall on Tuesday, 4 January 2022 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

T Thorne (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

C Ball
B Flux
G Hill
J Lang
M Robinson
M Swinbank

L Darwin
J Foster
JI Hutchinson
J Reid
G Stewart
A Watson

OFFICERS

M Bulman
D Feige
R Greally
G Halliday
J Hitching
R Laughton
L Little
R Murfin
M.Payne
T Wood

Solicitor
Environment and Design Team Manager
Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Consultant Planner
Senior Sustainable Drainage Officer
Planning Officer
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Director of Planning
Consultant Engineer
Senior Planning Officer

Around 6 members of the press and public were present.

54 **PROCEDURE AT PLANNING COMMITTEES**

The Chair outlined the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

55 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Dodd, Renner-Thompson and Wallace.

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56 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 2 November 2021, as circulated, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

57 **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Reid advised that he had an interest in application number 21/01796/REM and would leave the meeting when the application was considered.

58 **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.

59 **21/00878/CCD**

Construction of a two platform railway station including: pedestrian lifts, stepped and ramped pedestrian access, upgrade of existing junction to provide signalised access to station; modifications to highways including pedestrian footways; provision of parking for buses, cars, electric vehicles, motorcycles, cycles, and taxis; works to public rights of way ; construction of a pedestrian and cycle bridge, facilities ancillary to the station including, lighting, soft and hard landscaping, surface and subsurface drainage, utilities and other services, boundary treatment and other associated works.

Land South of Heather Lea, Errington Street, Bebside, Northumberland

G Halliday, Consultant Planner provided a comprehensive introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation outlining the key issues for consideration. Updates were provided as follows:-

- Following publication of the agenda Building Conservation had advised that they were in support of the application.
- The wording at the beginning of condition 10 should be changed to read: "Unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority development shall take place in full accordance with the mitigation measures detailed in the report"

A Heally, Planning Consultant on behalf of the applicant addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Her comments included the following:-

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- The station was one of six new stations proposed as part of plans for the reintroduction of passenger services between Newcastle and Ashington with an anticipated half hourly service.
- The application had been the subject of extensive consultations with officers and other stakeholders both before and after the planning submission.
- A significant public consultation had also taken place with 215 representations specifically supporting the proposals at Bebside.
- A foot and cycle bridge was proposed to provide connectivity from the station to the existing public right of way network and residential properties to the east which would minimise conflict for pedestrians and cyclists with other vehicles by avoiding the need to cross Bebside roundabout.
- The applicant recognised the concerns raised by residents related to highways capacity and had undertaken an extended period of engagement with the local highways authority to ensure concerns were mitigated and additional modelling being undertaken during the determination of the application. Highways Officers had considered the proposed highways improvements appropriate and were content to recommend approval subject to conditions as outlined in the report.
- The station and wider scheme would deliver the transport infrastructure required to attract inward investment into Blyth and South East Northumberland and would support Blyth's role as a key employment site.
- Policies within both the adopted Blyth Valley Local Plan and emerging Northumberland Local Plan identified Bebside as a safeguarded location for a future railway station.
- There were no objections to the application from statutory consultees and when balancing objections against the significant economic, social and environmental benefits of the scheme, the scheme should be approved.

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

- The level crossing downtime would be shorter for passenger trains than that experienced for the freight trains currently using the rail line. Whilst there would be more instances of level crossing down time, these would be of a shorter duration and a recommended condition would require further investigations to be undertaken should a longer down time be experienced than at present. The Highways Officer was not aware of any complaints regarding the current level of downtime at the level crossing. No mitigation had been proposed at the current time as any interventions required would be determined by the study.
- A reminder was provided that the application was for the station and it was the impact of any increased traffic due to the provision of the station which should be considered.
- The route of the proposed cycle/footpath was due to the topography of the land and it would be ensured that a lighting scheme for this was pursued as part of the conditions.
- The effect of any additional traffic travelling to the station via the roundabout had been considered as part of the application. In the event of any diversion required from the A189 across the roundabout different protocols would be put in place as part of an emergency planning response.

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- It was considered that the development of the station would not materially increase the level of traffic on Cowpen Road as existing road users would use the road to access the station rather than making the longer journey into Newcastle.
- No “residents only” parking scheme had been requested. If in the future car parking charges were imposed and parking on residential streets became an issue mitigation would be investigated at that point.
- The footbridge to be provided would be designed in accordance with relevant specifications and requirements.
- Likely travel patterns for both the proposed stations at Newsham and Bebside had been taken into account with the travel surveys undertaken in 2018/2019 prior to Covid and a further assessment had been done in June 2021. It was thought that the levels of traffic already using the network would remain approximately the same it would just be the destination that was different.
- An assessment of the operation of the level crossing was required in advance of the commencement of passenger rail services as part of Condition 23 of any permission granted.
- In relation to the animal sanctuary it was reported that an agreement was close to being reached. The original proposal had been to purchase all the land, however following representations from the animal sanctuary advance negotiations were underway for the purchase of only 2 hectares rather than the whole site. It was stated that negotiations were going well.
- Existing issues with traffic on Cowpen Road was at peak periods only and modelling work on cars arriving at the station car park had been undertaken and taken into account. The traffic survey had included traffic flows and Highways were content with the data. The impact of the barrier down time would depend on how long the road was closed however at peak times this would only happen twice within an hour. The condition to be attached to any permission granted would give some element of control on the barrier down time. Evidence and modelling had shown that the continued use of a barrier crossing was appropriate and a bridge was not required at this time, however this could be revisited with options explored should it be needed in the future.
- There were no plans for signage on the A189 to say that there could be queuing traffic however this could be provided as part of any mitigation if it was found that traffic was queuing down the slip road. The A189 and slip road had been assessed and evidence did not suggest that this would occur as a new issue caused by the provision of a station. There was a condition in relation to directional signage.
- The proposed Blyth link road was still being progressed, however modelling had shown that any additional impact on Cowpen Road from the proposed station did not warrant any further interventions at the present time. Conditions would allow aspects of how the station was working to be revisited, however Members were reminded that there would be the same number of barrier down times at the rail crossing should the Bebside station not be developed.
- Normally the policy would be to reduce parking on new developments, however the provision of a station was against the norm as the aim was to cut longer journeys being made by car with shorter journeys being made to the station.
- There were no proposals to change restrictions at the Asda Car park.

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- The road to the car park was approximately 400m long and of sufficient length for cars queuing to exit the car park. The views of businesses along that stretch of road had been taken into account and they would benefit from an improved road and some parking provision provided, which was not available at the current time.
- The construction method statement was conditioned to be agreed prior to commencement on the site and would provide precise details of how vehicles would access the site and how any prefabricated units would be brought onto site. As part of the Transport Works Act Order there was included provision for temporary access should the Inquiry approve that, however that was outside of this application.
- The proximity of the station and the slowing down of trains approaching the station had been taken into account when considering the barrier down time at the crossing.
- The modelling on projected numbers of cyclists accessing the station showed sufficient cycle parking provision however this could be monitored and increased if necessary and CCTV coverage of the area conditioned.
- Net biodiversity gain was to be provided as part of the overall Northumberland Line scheme rather than individual stations. Scrubland was good for wildlife and Officers were happy that mitigation of the lost scrubland could be provided at Potland Burn, Ashington in conjunction with other developments such as BritishVolt and at other locations.
- It was not proposed that the whole length of the private road be adopted, but it was a possibility for a short part at the front. Condition 22 would secure the future monitoring and maintenance of the road by a relevant party.
- Analysis undertaken had shown that improvements on Cowpen Road and the roundabout were not warranted and could not be justified at the current time as part of this development, however improvements could be implemented in the future if evidenced that these were required.

Councillor Robinson proposed acceptance of the recommendation to grant permission as outlined in the report with the amendment to condition 10 as detailed by the Officer which was seconded by Councillor Darwin.

During debate of the application it was stated that a lot of detail had been provided on the application but it was still a difficult decision as a lot of the points made in relation to the traffic situation were fair, however there was a requirement to get people out of cars and this would encourage shorter car journeys. It was hoped that appropriate bus links to the station would be provided to further reduce the need for car journeys and good footways and cycleways would be provided to further help the green agenda. Whilst the majority of Members were in support of the station development, Councillor Reid advised that he did not think that people would use the station to travel to Ashington and would not be used by anyone travelling to Blyth to work.

A vote was taken on the proposal to grant permission with the conditions as outlined in the report and the amendment to Condition 10 as outlined above as follows; FOR 12; AGAINST 0; ABSTENTION 1.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report with the amendment to Condition 10.

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21/01619/VARYCO**Variation of conditions : 3 (approved plans) pursuant to planning approval 16/00994/FULES****Land West Of St Georges Hospital, Morpeth, Northumberland**

T Wood, Senior Planning Officer provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation. Updates were provided as follows:-

- A further email had been received from an original objector of the scheme, stating that whilst it was good to see an emphasis on the landscaping ecological corridor on the northern edge of the site there was nothing about the timing of the works. There was nothing in conditions regarding noise mitigation during construction to protect adjacent residents and wildlife and it was noted that the construction management statement did not have anything about noise and it was wished that further conditions as outlined in the email be tabled and added to any permission granted. The Senior Planning Officer in response advised that conditions 45-47 dealt with screening along the western and southern boundaries and these conditions had been added to protect residents from noise and dust; condition 8 restricted the timing of construction to also protect residents; condition 19 regarding landscaping attached to the original consent and was transferred to this application regarding the timing of the landscaping and no amendments were proposed for this. Fencing had been discussed with the County Ecologist but not included as it was thought that this would inhibit wildlife flow across the site.
- It was clarified that the Deed of Variation mentioned in paragraph 7.37 of the report was required to be dealt with as part of this application rather than afterwards and therefore a revised recommendation was proposed as follows:

“That this application be GRANTED permission subject to conditions in the report and a S106 Deed of Variation to reflect the amendments to Plans.”

M O'Brien, Planning and Enabling Manager at Homes England and Ian Cansfield, Planning Consultant for Homes England addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Their comments included the following:-

- Homes England, the Government's national housing agency, was increasingly taking a master developer approach to the delivery of major sites whereby it sought to invest significantly in upfront infrastructure to open up the site, to set a benchmark of quality design and to facilitate the acceleration of housing delivery.
- Homes England also had a renewed focus on design quality and a review of the proposals was taken on this site following the granting of planning consent in 2018. This concluded that there were opportunities to enhance design quality and create a stronger sense of place drawing upon the local character of Northumberland's towns and villages.
- A revised masterplan had been developed for the site which a specific focus on capturing opportunities to enhance design quality whilst aligning the masterplan with a master developer approach.

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- The design of the site's highways infrastructure had been revisited to achieve a less heavily engineered and more organic arrangement, giving greater priority to pedestrians and cyclists whilst better integrating highway design with landscaping features.
- Homes England would demonstrate its commitment to the delivery of the masterplan vision by investing in the upfront delivery of the spine road, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, sustainable drainage and structural landscaping. Subject to consent being given, this work was expected to commence in late summer 2022.
- Contracts were expected to be exchanged with a housing developer in March to deliver the first residential phase of around 250 homes, with a Reserved Matters application also expected to be submitted this summer.
- The applications presented for consideration reflected Homes England's enhanced masterplan vision for the site and, alongside the proposed master developer-based delivery strategy would maximise positive outcomes to be achieved through delivery of this site.
- The two applications at Committee seek to support Homes England's aspirations for the development of the site within the wider St Georges area. The first application for a variation of numerous conditions on the original hybrid application would ensure that the overall consent could deliver these aspirations and updates the approved plans and the precise wording of conditions to ensure that they meet these aspirations, updated phasing and the bolder design aspirations for the scheme.
- The second application was to seek approval for a much wider phase of supporting infrastructure than was previously envisaged in 2018. The original detailed application sought approval for the spine road by itself, whereas the reserved matters application at Committee today took an integrated approach to the design of primary and secondary roads, strategic open space and an integrated site wide drainage strategy which all helped to set the tone for the rest of the masterplan and the later reserved matters applications that would be submitted by housebuilders.
- Both applications together provided the foundations to enable the overall masterplan to come forward at pace and support the delivery of homes at St Georges.

The following information was provided in response to questions from Members of the Committee:

- The number and types of houses to be provided remained the same as the original application however there would be different house designs.
- The application would allow more flexibility for smaller builders on the site.
- Drainage of the site was current split into four catchment areas with two draining to the Cotting Burn, one to the How Burn and the other going south towards Morpeth and it was recognised there had been issues with flooding, especially from the Cotting Burn. Suds basins and swales would be provided as part of the development and further details of paving etc to be used to slow the water rate down and mimic natural drainage would be provided. The site would drain to the same locations however attenuation would be provided on site to ensure water run off at the same rates.
- The Town Council had been given the required 21 days to respond to the consultation and could submit representations until the application was determined. Initially they had objected as there was not a 15m buffer as

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part of the scheme, this had now been secured as part of the changes to the scheme and Officers were content with this.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the recommendation to grant permission subject to the conditions as outlined in the report and a s106 Deed of Variation to reflect the amendments to Plans, which was seconded by Councillor Robinson.

Members considered that this application was innovative and different and would allow for good house designs which promoted a strong sense of place and community.

A vote was taken on the proposal and it was unanimously;

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** permission for the reasons and subject to conditions as outlined in the report and a s106 Deed of Variation to reflect the amendments to Plans.

61 **21/01625/REM**

Reserved Matters application for site wide infrastructure only, for approval of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale on approved application 16/00994/FULES, as amended by application 21/01619/VARYCO Land West Of St Georges Hospital, Morpeth, Northumberland

T Wood, Senior Planning Officer provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation.

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

- The landscaping and ecological management plan would ensure that management of the tree planting would be carried out throughout the lifetime of the development. A condition would ensure that the landscaping around the Suds basins was planted and maintained and this would be a matter for enforcement if this was not carried out.
- There would be no road link to King Edward VII scheme, Dark Lane or Cottingwood Lane as this would promote car use and the aim was to promote greener methods of travel such as walking or cycling.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the recommendation to grant permission as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Robinson.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously:

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

Councillor Reid left the meeting at this point.

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21/01796/REM

Phase 3 & 4 Reserved Matters application for appearance, layout, landscaping and scale for 152no. dwellings (Use Class C3) on approved application 14/03016/FUL

Land South of Aiden Grove and Lynemouth Road, Lynemouth Road, Ellington, Northumberland

R Laughton, Senior Planning Officer provided an introduction to the application with the aid of a power point presentation.

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

- The number of affordable housing units had been reduced in line with the reduction in the number of dwellings on the site, as the total number of units to be provided was a percentage of the overall scheme.
- The condition in relation to the provision of affordable housing had been imposed in order to ascertain where these were to be provided on the site and this has not yet been decided.
- Ascent Homes was a Council owned company.

Councillor Flux proposed acceptance of the recommendation to grant permission as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Robinson.

Councillor Ball expressed her disappointment in the reduction in the number of affordable homes on the site, as she considered that the Council should lead by example.

A vote was taken on the proposal to grant permission as follows: FOR 11; AGAINST 1; ABSTENTIONS 0.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** permission subject to the agreement of a S106 agreement securing a contribution for the Coastal Mitigation Scheme and conditions as outlined in the report.

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APPEALS UPDATE

Councillor Robinson questioned the outcome of the hearing for application 20/02488/FUL as he indicated that the site was now being built upon. Mr Murfin would ascertain the current situation and report back.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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S106 AGREEMENTS UPDATE REPORT

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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