

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At the meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held at Meeting Space - Block 1, Floor 2 - County Hall on Monday, 8 November 2021 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

J Beynon (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

L Darwin
L Dunn
V Jones
G Sanderson
R Wearmouth

R Dodd
J Foster
M Murphy
D Towns

OTHER COUNCILLORS

OFFICERS

J Blenkinsopp
M Bulman
L Dixon
M King
W Laing
L Little
E Richardson

E Sinnamon
R Soulsby
M Taylor

S Wardle

Solicitor
Solicitor
Democratic Services Assistant
Highways Delivery Area Manager
Planning Officer
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Senior Manager Specialist Services -
Poverty Lead
Development Service Manager
Planning Officer
Director - Business Development (Care
Services)
Neighbourhood Services Divisional Manager

Around 3 members of the press and public were present.

55 **PROCEDURE AT PLANNING MEETINGS**

J Foster, Vice-Chair (Planning) (in the Chair) outlined the procedure which would be followed at the meeting.

56 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dickinson, and M

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Stoneman, Project Manager, National Highways.

57 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday 13 September 2021 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

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.

The Chair confirmed that all Members had been able to view the site visit videos and there were no questions on these.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

M Bulman, Solicitor left the meeting this point.

59 **20/03851/COU**

**Change of use from field to construct a riding arena 22 metres x 40 metres for private use
Land North West of Hulwane, U6003 Ulgham to Ulgham Park Junction,
Ulgham, Northumberland**

An introduction to the report was provided by W Laing, Planning Officer with the aid of a power point presentation.

D Moore addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. Her comments included the following information:

- There were still inaccuracies in the report e.g. the stables were located to the east not the north and there was no bridleway.
- From the north end of the forest access track you could walk south and look down on undulating landscape with the relatively unobtrusive green roof of the stable block tucked away at the south east. If you looked south west the topography of ridges and furrows would be broken by 880m² of black rubber on view and to the west of the public footpath.
- Recent approved arena applications all appeared within the curtilage of associated steadings unlike this one.
- Policy C1 stated that development in the open countryside beyond settlement boundaries would not be permitted unless essential or allowed by alternative policies. The alternative policies quoted had no relevance to this site. The inset map 31 showed that the field formed part of a wildlife corridor which continued east towards Meadows Nature Reserve.
- Env2(iii)(a) stated that permission would be refused unless it could be

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demonstrated the benefits clearly outweighed the harm to the nature conservation value of the site. 2m excavation for drainage and rubber surface contravened this.

- The field was less than 2 acres yet the arena would take up 12% of it.
- This was not sustainable development as it did not contribute anything to the surrounding area or environment.
- Rubber took at least 50 years to break down and leached pollutants into the soil, was toxic to flora and fauna and would be dragged into the surrounding wildlife environment.
- Env3(i)(e) stated that the contribution of the landscape to Northumberland's landscape would be recognised; and (iii) stated that ensuring that new development on the edge of the settlement should not harm the landscape character of the settlement edge and where possible it has a net positive impact; and (v) stated the potential impact of small scale development could have on the landscape in sensitive rural landscapes would be assessed.
- This arena did not sit well in the surrounding topography and did not add anything to it or to the community who used the footpath. It would have a net negative cumulative impact on the landscape character.
- STP7(b) safeguarded the countryside from encroachment and this application created piecemeal development by it being situated away from the existing stables. This could also be later infilled by other developments which was against STP4(vii) and could set a precedent.
- Policy STP8(i)(a) that development in the Green Belt would not be supported unless very special circumstances outweighed the potential harm to the Green Belt and other harm to the proposal.
- In relation to QOP1 the application did not make a positive contribution to the character including landform or topography. It did not integrate the build form of the development with the site as it was unrelated to it and users would need to pass through 3 gates travel north on the public footpath and go through another gate before entering the arena.
- Policy QOP2(ii) stated that development which had adverse impacts on neighbouring users, in terms of individual or cumulative impacts would not be supported.
- The application was visually obtrusive from the forest track, adjacent road and footpath. Easy access/exit was required from the forest track unhindered by parked vehicles.
- The application created a stand alone development in the Green Belt and wildlife corridor which altered the topography of the landscape; it would introduce rubber into the rural environment; it would be a dominating structure viewed from the footpath and proliferated urban sprawl and did not enhance and improve the local environment and this could be mitigated against by having the arena in the curtilage of the stables.

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

- The recognised use as an arena for horses would trigger a material change of use of the land, however it did not introduce any structure, it would remain a green field site and would not become a brownfield site which was able to be used for housing etc. The land would remain in the Green Belt and any future application would need to be considered in line

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with Green Belt policies.

- The use of rubber was proposed by the applicant however if members were happy with the principle of the development on the site but had concerns regarding the visual appearance or the toxicity of the surface, then a condition could be imposed on any permission granted to provide further details of the material to be used with the applicant.
- Concerns raised in respect of the Right of Way having been diverted without any consultation were outside of this application and the applicant was not proposing any new fencing, hardstanding or diversion of any routes through the site.

Councillor Dodd proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report which was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth.

Members in debating the application felt that they would be more able to support an approval of the application if a condition was added to any permission granted which required the details of the colour and materials to be used in relation to the riding arena surface to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Advice was provided by the Development Service Manager that whilst the colour of the proposed material was a planning consideration in terms of the visual impact, there was currently no planning legislation related to the toxicity of the material and could be an appealable part of the decision.

Councillor Wearmouth suggested that Councillor Dodd amend his proposal to approve the application and to include a condition which would require an alternative colour of the rubber surface which would need to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Councillor Dodd advised that he would be happy to do this in order to progress the application and this was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application subject to the conditions as outlined in the report with an additional condition relating to the colour of the rubber surface to be used in the riding arena surface by the Local Planning Authority with delegated authority for the wording of the condition to the Director of Planning and it was unanimously:

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reasons and with the conditions as outlined in the report with an additional condition stating that the colour of the rubber surface to be used was to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority with delegated authority for the wording of the condition to the Director of Planning.

M Bulman returned to the room and J Blenkinsopp left.

60

21/01703/FUL

Retrospective works to dwelling including removal of car port and garage, alterations to roof, windows and door openings and construction of outbuilding.

Greenfield House, Hepscoth, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 6LH

An introduction was provided to the report by R Soulsby, Planning Officer with the

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aid of a power point presentation.

Councillor P Ashmore, Chair of Hepscott Parish Council addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. His comments included the following information:

- He wished to address the one remaining issue in respect of this application, the issue of village and neighbour amenity and in particular ecological amenity. It was a material planning consideration and was referred to in condition 3.
- It was dreadful what this application and the aftermath had done to the green wildlife corridor of the Hepscott Burn, which was supposed to be protected by the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan. This once lovely, wooded site occupied 1.2 acres in the centre of the wildlife corridor. The removal of more 25 mature trees, the bird habitat and the destruction of the bat colony had seriously diminished the village's amenity.
- Some of this lost amenity could be regained through Condition 3 and the mitigation of the destruction of the bat colony when the roof was removed which the applicant was fully aware was a criminal act.
- The wording of Condition 3 was outlined, however it was considered that this would not happen as:
 - (1) The overwhelming evidence was that the putting up of the bird and bat boxes had still not happened 15 months after the outline permission was granted.
 - (2) The applicant had been reported to the police in 2020 for his destruction of the bat boxes by Northumberland County Council and nothing had happened since.
 - (3) The police did not appear to see it as a priority.
 - (4) A pre-commencement planning condition was placed on the outline planning application – condition 9 “no development should take place unless in accordance with the mitigation measures detailed in the ecological report. Development had started but still no mitigation measures.
 - (5) In June 2021 NCC's own ecology department said that due to the loss of the bat roost which was seen as a significant impact the requirement for further details on mitigation should not be left to a planning condition.
- It should be ensured that mitigation measures should be pre-commencement and carried out before any further work on site began.
- This Committee could not restore the bat roost or bring felled trees back to life but it could help restore some amenity to the village and the wildlife corridor by changing the wording of condition 3 to ensure that the mitigation measures were carried out before any further work was started. This would be the only way it could be ensured that the work was carried out. With this amendment Hepscott Parish Council would not oppose the application.

H. Wafer, Agent on behalf of the applicant addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Her comments included the following:-

- The application was a retrospective application for an existing residence and the principle of development was acceptable.

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- All technical matters have been addressed and are suitable subject to conditions.
- There were no statutory objections apart from the Parish Council which had concerns regards to the scale of the works and works being carried out before permission had been granted.
- The applicant wished it to be noted that whilst the work would increase the height of the dwelling it was considered suitable for the surrounding area and similar to those in the reserved matters applications.
- Whilst the works had been carried out without consent the applicant was taking steps to rectify this and that the works to the roof had been carried out following advice that it was rotting and dangerous.
- The proposed development had been assessed by Officers against planning policy and had found it to be acceptable.
- With respect to ecology whilst a bat roost had been impacted, ecology plans had been submitted to address these concerns and these had been addressed by a condition.
- The applicant requested that the application be granted consent in line with the recommendations in the report

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

- It was not possible to include a pre commencement condition as the works had already commenced and conditions could not be attached to an alternative permission. In relation to enforcement action, a decision had to be made on whether any breaches could be regulated through the application of conditions and it was considered in this instance that it could be.
- If it was felt more appropriate then Members could change the timescale of condition 3 from 6 months to 3 months for the monitoring report to be submitted, however it had been Ecology who had requested the 6 month period.
- The fact that the application was for retrospective permission was not a material consideration and should not influence how the application was assessed.

Councillor Sanderson proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application with a change to condition 3 that the timescale to submit the monitoring report should be reduced from 6 months to 3 months. He also asked that a note be prepared and submitted to the Director of Finance requesting that the raising of charges for retrospective planning applications be looked at as part of the budget proposals.

The Committee were advised that fees were set by Government and Local Authorities had no powers to change these. Councillor Sanderson advised that he would lobby Government on this.

Councillor Wearmouth seconded Councillor Sanderson's proposal.

During debate the appropriate timescale for the monitoring report was discussed as it was suggested that Ecology may have requested six months for a specific reason. Members were advised that the ecological breach would be dealt with

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under separate legislation by the Police and whilst this was a material consideration on balance it did not outweigh the Planning policy support for the proposal. Members considered that 3 month timescale would be suitable to allow Officers to ensure that all mitigation had been implemented.

A vote was taken on the proposal to accept the recommendation to approve the recommendation with the change to condition 3 which requested the monitoring report to be submitted within 3 months and it was unanimously:

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** for the reason and with the conditions as outlined in the report and amended above.

61

21/01426/FUL

Change of use of land and the siting of a repurposed train carriage to provide 2no holiday let properties.

R Soulsby, Planning Officer provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. He advised that a further condition was proposed to be included to any permission granted as follows:

“The development hereby approved shall solely be used for the purposes of holiday let accommodation and shall not be used for any other purpose unless written approval from the local planning authority advises otherwise.

Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring residents in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.”

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

- The site remained on Green Belt any development would not remove that status.
- Highways had been consulted and they had not stated that the development would impact on the highway and its current speed limit of 40 mph.
- It would a decision for Members to take on whether they considered that visual amenity had been harmed, however the railway carriage was not readily visible from the highway and was only visible once within the curtilage of the site itself.
- Additional details could be requested in respect of any proposed accessible access to the development or a ramped access could be conditioned.
- No changes had been proposed to the external appearance of the railway carriage however a condition could be added regarding the external appearance.
- The proposal complied both with the principle of development and also the Castle Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan in that it supported tourism and was also acceptable within the Green Belt. Members however might consider that the visual amenity outweighed those principles, however taking account the setting of the area, on Station Road and adjacent to the railway Officers considered there was some connectivity. Conditions could be used to ensure that if it was not used then it should be removed and to control the colour and appearance.

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Councillor Towns proposed acceptance of the recommendation with the conditions as outlined in the report and with the additional condition as outlined above and with additional conditions related to:

- (1) the external appearance and maintenance of the railway carriage.
- (2) a robust condition regarding landscaping and that the carriageway should not be visible from the road or other residential properties.
- (3) its removal and the land to be restored to its former green space if the railway carriage ceases to be used for holiday accommodation for a period of 12 months or more.
- (4) additional information to be provided in relation to suitable accessible access to the railway carriage.

With the precise wording of the conditions to be delegated to the Director of Planning.

Clarification was sought on the external appearance, in that it was to be maintained in the existing colour or whether it was required to be painted a different colour. Councillor Towns stated that he was proposing that the colour remain as existing and the condition would be more to ensure that the external appearance was not allowed to deteriorate and it be kept in good condition. Councillor Darwin advised he would second the proposal if a slight amendment was made in relation to the removal of the carriage if it ceased to be used for holiday accommodation for a period of 12 months and remove “and more” which would provide a definitive timeframe.

Further discussion took place on the condition regarding the appearance and it was stated that it should be made clear that any change of colour would need to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority. In relation to the landscaping, following discussion Councillor Towns agreed to withdraw his proposal in respect of not being able to see the carriageway and would rely on condition 7 as outlined in the report. Councillor Darwin advised that he was happy with this. Further debate also took place on the proposal regarding the railway carriage to be accessible as it was considered that if the carriage was not accessible then this was not a reason to refuse the application. It was suggested that if the Committee were minded to approve the application this could be subject to the applicant submitting a revised plan to deal with the accessibility and other conditions and if acceptable the Director of Planning could grant permission.

The proposal was clarified as:

Members be minded to grant permission with the conditions in the report and additional condition regarding the use as holiday let accommodation only and the following additional conditions related to:

- (1) the external appearance and maintenance of the railway carriage
- (2) the railway carriage should be removed and the land to be restored to its former green space if the railway carriage ceased to be used for holiday accommodation for a period of 12 months
- (3) additional information to be provided in relation to the suitability of the railway carriage in relation to being DDA compliant and on receipt of this information permission be issued by the Director of Planning, with

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delegated authority to the Director of Planning and the Chair to agree the precise wording of the additional conditions

A vote was taken on the proposal as follows: FOR 9: AGAINST 0; ABSTENSIONS 1.

RESOLVED that members be **MINDED TO GRANT PERMISSION** for the reasons and with the conditions outlined in the report and additional condition regarding the use as holiday let accommodation only as above and the following additional conditions related to:

- (1) the external appearance and maintenance of the railway carriage
- (2) the railway carriage should be removed and the land to be restored to its former green space if the railway carriage ceased to be used for holiday accommodation for a period of 12 months
- (3) additional information to be provided in relation to the suitability of the railway carriage in relation to being DDA compliant and on receipt of this information permission be issued by the Director of Planning, with delegated authority to the Director of Planning and the Chair to agree the precise wording of the additional conditions

62 **APPEALS UPDATE**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

A short break was held at this point and Councillor Sanderson left. The meeting reconvened at 5.45 pm with Councillor J Beynon, in the Chair.

63 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been submitted.

64 **PETITIONS**

It was noted that an e-petition had been opened titled "Community campaign to amend the use of Military Road B6318". Members were advised that as the petition spanned more than one Local Area Council area then should it reach the number of signatures required a report would be prepared for the Petitions Committee in due course.

65 **LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES**

The Chair advised that any questions on the Winter Services report should be asked during this section.

Neighbourhood Services

S Wardle, Neighbourhood Services Division Manager provided an update as follows:

- Grass cutting had had some challenging periods with the warm wet weather however the season ended at the standard that was expected.

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Routes were now under review.

- Street sweeping work was now being carried out on leaf hotspots and Members were asked to report any issues.
- The winter works programme was underway with core works to be carried out before moving on to the prioritised lists. Members were asked to report any issues.
- Waste collection and recycling were working well. There had been some pressure in relation to garden waste and the annual review would be undertaken shortly after the last collections at the end of the month. Income from garden, household and recycling all exceeded targets.
- The NEAT teams would be attending all war memorials to respectfully bring them to their best for the remembrance day services.
- Northumberland gained 11 green flag awards for their parks with success once again for Carlisle Park in Morpeth.

Presentation rates and yield exceeded expectations for the glass trial and a decision was awaited on extending the trial for a further year which would also include a further 1,000 properties to allow for more understanding and await the outcome of the Environment Bill which would inform what would happen going forward.

Officers were thanked for their prompt response to issues raised by Members over the previous period.

Highways

M King, Highway Delivery Area Manager was in attendance to provide an update as follows:-

- Covid practices were still in operation with no reported cases within the Castle Morpeth area team to date.
- The Highways Maintenance Engineer post had been filled by Lee Dundas and the Highways Inspector post by Eddy Mutton.
- Routine maintenance inspections were ongoing with a backlog due to the level of third party requests which were being received which impacted on the ability to undertake routine inspections. Investigations were ongoing into the high number of third party requests within the Castle Morpeth area.
- The routine gully maintenance programme was continuing with an overview of the routes and inspection frequency being undertaken.

A complete list of works undertaken in the Castle Morpeth area would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

Councillor Dodd highlighted an issue with traffic emerging from the Walton beside the Morpeth Golf Club and queuing traffic and questioned anything could be done to improve the situation. This would be forwarded to the Highway Safety Team. Councillor Jones requested that Great Whittingham Village be included on a winter gritting route as whilst it was not a bus route it was a school bus route.

Officers were thanked for their work over the previous period.

66 **DUALLING OF THE A1 - UPDATE BY HIGHWAYS ENGLAND**

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S Cully, Community Relations Manager and P Sheils, Community Relations Officer at Costain Jacobs Partnership were in attendance to provide a presentation to the Committee on the progress of the dualling of the A1. Apologies had been received from M Stoneman, Project Manager, National Highways. The Committee were advised of the works which would be needed to be undertaken over both the Morpeth to Felton and Alnwick to Ellingham phases. The application for the Development Consent Order had been submitted in July 2020 and had been subject to a public examination between January to July 2021. A decision was expected from the Secretary of State in January 2022 with works hoping to commence in the summer of 2022 and the road to be open to traffic in 2024/25. Work would be carried out in order that the scheme would be able to progress as soon as a decision was forthcoming. It was confirmed that as much compensatory woodland as possible would be planted to replace that lost during the construction of the road.

The Chair thanked Mr Culley and Ms Sheils for their attendance and update. A copy of the power point presentation would be filed with the signed minutes.

A short recess was taken at this point.

67 **NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER**

M Taylor, Executive Director Wellbeing – Adult Services, and E Richardson, Senior Manager Specialist Services - Poverty Lead, were in attendance to provide a presentation on the work of Northumberland Communities Together. A copy of the power point presentation would be filed with the signed minutes.

Members were advised that Northumberland Communities Together (NCT), which had been formed in order to provide support to residents and communities at the beginning of the Pandemic had become an inclusive community and multi-disciplinary team approach which responded to specific and emerging needs. NCT supported working together and by working in and with communities could make a difference where and how it was needed.

NCT aimed to prevent residents of all ages becoming more vulnerable, addressing the social determinants of health which included access to healthcare, housing, transport, hunger, fuel etc and ensuring that help was available to those that needed assistance in whatever form it was required.

The team was split across front line operational delivery and programme and project delivery with details provided of the different roles and the type of work undertaken by each team. A number of events had been arranged which helped with community engagement and enrichment, with over 70 young leaders coming forward within various organisations within the County and 36 summer camps took place for over 1800 children.

The Council had been successful in a bid for funding from North of Tyne Combined Authority to establish community hubs, the first of which had been developed in Cramlington as there had been a Council owned building available to use. It was stressed that Hubs were not Council run, and engagement with local communities would assist in developing Hubs in other areas.

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Statistical information was provided in relation to statutory covid support including the direct support and welfare visits to clinically extremely vulnerable residents and distribution of emergency food parcels; distribution of statutory aid including the emergency assistance fund, winter support grants and others. Members would be contacted shortly regarding the distribution of the Household Support Fund which had just been received.

Anonymised case studies were given which provided information on the interventions and assistance provided which had helped residents maintain jobs and tenancies. Information was also provided on the focus and priorities over the forthcoming winter period.

In relation to concern from Members on the sufficiency of being able to respond to the extra demand that was anticipated over the winter period, Members were assured that due to an increase in funding, the establishment had been increased and Community Champions appointed. There were good teams in place in order to ensure that early intervention could be provided. Many of the staff involved had already been employed by the Council and had been pulled together as a Team with additional resources being agreed by Cabinet. Funding had gone out to the Communities as they were able to make it go much further and provide more targeting spending. There had been a huge community response and change for the good and this needed to be sustained.

Members thanked NCT for everything they had done and were continuing to do for the residents of the County and were extremely thankful and grateful for the excellent work being undertaken by all involved and recognising that this was a very good service and made a valuable contribution to the lives of residents.

68 WINTER SERVICES PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

The report provided an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services season.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

69 LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was attached and the Chair asked that should anyone have any items they would like to raise they should contact him.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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