

At a meeting of the PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS (WEST) COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Plater Way on TUESDAY 1st MARCH, 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Thornton in the Chair.

Councillors Blackett, Fagan, G. Miller, Lauchlan, Peacock, Price and Warne.

Declarations of Interest

21/01805/FUL – Construction of 4 new dwellings – Land at 2 Wylam Close, Stephenson, Washington, NE37 3DR

Councillor Thornton made an open declaration as she was an acquaintance of the applicant therefore felt it appropriate to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Donaghy

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 1st February 2022.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 1st February, 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Applications made under the Town and Country Planning Acts and Regulations made thereunder

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copy circulated), which related to the West area of the City, copies of which had also been forwarded to each Member of the Council, upon applications made under the Town and Country Planning Acts and Regulations made thereunder.

(for copy reports – see original minutes)

21/00605/OU4 – Application for Outline Planning Permission with all matters reserved for the erection of industrial units for light industrial, general industrial and storage and distribution uses with ancillary office floorspace – Land to the East of Infiniti Drive, Washington

The Planning Officer representing the Executive Director of City Development outlined the proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

2. RESOLVED that Members grant consent for the development under Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Regulations) 1992 (as amended) subject to
 - i) Confirmation from the Agent/Applicant of the matters noted within the consultation response from the Council's ecology consultant
 - ii) The 30 draft conditions/legal agreement contained within the report

21/01805/FUL – Construction of 4 new dwellings – Land at 2 Wylam Close, Stephenson, Washington, NE37 3DR

As the Chairman withdrew from the meeting during this item, Councillor G. Miller took the Chair as Vice Chair of the Committee.

The Planning Officer representing the Executive Director of City Development outlined the proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

In response to Councillor Fagan's enquiry, the Planning Officer advised that they were not aware of the specific numbers of occupants who had used the land during winter periods and that the percentage of storage left on the land was that which was outside of the plots currently there and that the space to the south east of the proposal was now a soft play centre.

Councillor Lauchlan commented that he was confused with the assessment given and referred to the statement that bricks and mortar weren't acceptable on this site, despite there being two properties already built there. The Planning Officer informed that the two buildings on site had already been agreed before the Councils Core Strategy was approved, which safeguarded the land for Travelling Show People. As the new development proposed permanent bricks and mortar dwellings, this would compromise the provision of sites for travelling show people over the remainder of the development plan period up to 2033.

In relation to Councillor Lauchlan's further query that the proposed buildings were still to be used for the travelling community, the Planning Officer advised that the land was allocated for transient accommodation and that bricks and mortar building would sterilise the land. Under the Core Strategy the site had to be safeguarded to provide space for the transient accommodation to suit the mobile nature of Travelling Show people, including for the storage and repair of their equipment.

In response to the Chairman's enquiry, the Development Control Manager advised that the two previous buildings had been determined under the

Unitary Development Plan, which was a very old document and the policies had not been up to date. The Council now had an up to date Core Strategy.

The Chairman queried that having gone through extensive consultation on the Core Strategy, what sort of feedback did the Council receive from the travelling community for the proposals for this site. The Development Control Manager clarified that extensive consultations were carried out over the Core Strategy and its allocations and she was not aware of any objections to this site and was not subject to any examination in the public enquiry.

In response to Councillor Peacock's query as to if there were any grounds to be able to go against officer recommendation, the Development Control Manager advised that all policies had been applied and followed in determining the Officer recommendation.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Jill Fletcher, as Ward Councillor, who wished to speak in support of the proposal. Councillor Fletcher wished to inform the Committee that no travellers had ever set up on the site for the winter period and the land had been a derelict site.

Councillor Fletcher believed that a precedent had been set in allowing the construction of two family homes on the site previously and that these plans aimed to extend the provision of family homes for the applicants immediate family and a long serving member of staff.

The Land was owned by the Noble family and this was an opportunity to build 4 homes in total, all at the same time, which would stop any disruption to residents during construction.

Councillor Fletcher advised that the Noble family had a great involvement with charitable work within the community and that she believed Officers were misconstruing the difference between show people and travellers and that by denying this application the Council would be doing a disservice to this family therefore she hoped the Committee would look at reconsidering the recommendation.

The Chairman introduced Gavin Brown, the agent on behalf of the applicant to address the Committee. Mr Brown informed the Committee that the initial application had been for five homes which was reduced to four on the basis of the Coal Authorities report, who now had no objections to the proposal. The land had been purchased at a time when there was no covenant on the land and they could not understand how a piece of private land could be protected in such a way.

Mr Brown informed that he had spoken with his clients with regards to consultation and they had advised that they were never contacted directly over this proposal to designate the land as protected and they would have raised objections if they had been aware.

The Committee heard that the properties were for family members and members of staff and that the family were happy to work with the Council to find an alternative site for the travelling community allocation.

Mr Brown advised that they were keen to utilise local contractors in building the homes, creating economic benefits and employment opportunities and that it was felt the Council were relying on an outdated image of travelling show people and to deny this proposal was to put unfair restrictions on a private piece of land therefore he requested the Committee reconsider the recommendation put before them.

Upon being put to the Committee, with Councillor Lauchlan requesting his abstention be noted, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the application be refused planning permission for the reasons contained within the report.

Items for Information

Members gave consideration to the items for information contained within the matrix (agenda pages 49-55).

4. RESOLVED that the items for information as set out in the matrix be received and noted

The Chairman then thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) M. THORNTON,
(Chairman)