

At a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (HETTON, HOUGHTON AND WASHINGTON) SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 3RD MARCH, 2009 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Fletcher in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Heron, Miller, Scaplehorn, J. Scott, Snowdon, Tate, Wakefield and D. Wilson.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Tate and Blackburn declared personal interests in Application No. 08/04021/FUL as Members of Hetton Town Council.

Councillors Heron and D. Wilson declared personal and prejudicial interests in Application No. 08/04694/FUL as Council appointed representatives on the board of Gentoo Sunderland Limited and left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Snowdon declared a personal interest in Application No. 08/04694/FUL as her husband is Director of Gentoo Sunderland Management Committee.

Councillors Tate and Blackburn declared personal interests in items 1, 2 and 3 on the matrix of items for information as Members of Hetton Town Council.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the Committee on behalf of Councillors Chamberlin, I. Cuthbert, I. Richardson and Wake.

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

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report together with a supplementary report and a report for circulation (copies circulated) which related to Hetton, Houghton and Washington areas, copies of which had also been forwarded to each Member of the Cabinet upon applications made under the Town and Country Planning Acts and Regulations made thereunder.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The representative of the Director of Development and Regeneration advised Members that Application Nos. 08/0402/FUL and 08/4425/OUT had been withdrawn, therefore consideration moved to:

08/04694/FUL – Erection of an extra care facility comprising of 40 No. 2 bed apartments, staff and communal areas with associated parking and landscaping works, including stopping up and realignment of existing highway. Land to the east of Hall Lane, Houghton-le-Spring.

1. RESOLVED that the application be granted approval for the reasons set out in the report and subject to the 17 conditions as outlined in the supplementary report.

09/00057/TEX – Installation of a 12m high monopole accommodating 3 No. antennas within GRP strand (overall height 13.6m), 1 No. meter Cabinet within a compound surrounded by a 1.8m high palisade fence (cell i.d. 46835B). Masonic Bungalow, Station Road, Penshaw, Houghton-le-Spring.

Several Members raised concerns over the potential health risks that the mast may have on surrounding residents.

The representative of the Director of Development and Regeneration advised that the Committee were to judge the application on its planning merits as stated in the Planning Policy Guidance and the health issues cannot be used as a reason to refuse planning permission.

Councillor J. Scott enquired if there were any existing masts that could have been used.

Ginnie Hall, a representative of Vodafone, advised that there was only one Vodafone mast in the area, but this was at maximum capacity.

In response to Councillor Scott's query, Ms. Hall also advised it would be the only Vodafone mast installed in the area.

Councillor Wakefield felt that it was deplorable the Committee could not take into account health concerns as representatives for the community.

Councillor Wakefield also commented that the report likened the mast to a street light, yet street lights do not have unattractive fencing around them.

Ms. Hall advised that the fence had been a requirement imposed on Vodafone.

Councillor Heron commented that Government Guidance stated companies should share masts where appropriate and that this particular area was being blanketed with masts.

Ms. Hall advised that Vodafone check the site finder and site telecoms database but unfortunately these structures cannot be shared.

Sharing of the masts was possible with 2G networks but not 3G networks. Ms. Hall also informed the Committee that the mast coverage needs to overlap, otherwise it would result in dropped calls.

Councillor D. Wilson enquired when issues on health, factor into the decision.

The representative of the Director of Development and Regeneration advised that the Government is of a firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure, it should not be necessary for a local planning authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them.

Councillor Miller enquired as to what other sites had been considered.

Ms. Hall advised that the NEDL mast had been considered as well as Trinity Methodist Church, Our Lady Queen of Peace Church and Station Road/Gretna Avenue.

Councillor Miller referred to the supporting information mentioned in the report and asked that this be included in future reports so Councillors are fully aware of all the facts.

Councillor Miller also agreed with Members' concerns over the health issues but noted that there was a high demand of phone usage.

Councillor J. Scott enquired if there were any plans for further masts in the area.

Ms. Hall advised there was a big rollout across the UK.

Councillor Scaplehorn enquired as to who decides when the mast is no longer required.

The representative of the Director of Development and Regeneration advised that it would be a commercial decision and the company would decide when the mast is no longer required.

Ms. Hall also advised that Vodafone representatives would be happy to meet with Members to discuss any concerns.

2. RESOLVED that the application be granted approval for the reasons set out in the report and subject to the two conditions as outlined in the report for circulation.

09/00152/LAP – Erection of single storey extension to provide sheltered play area. Lambton Village Primary School, Lambton Village Centre, Washington.

3. RESOLVED that the application be granted approval for the reasons set out in the report and subject to the two conditions as outlined in the report.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Appeals

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) concerning the above for the period 1st January, 2009 to 31st January, 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

(Signed) J. FLETCHER,
Chairman.