

**At a meeting of the PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2009 at 5.00 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor T. Martin in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Fletcher, M. Forbes, E. Gibson, G. Hall, Heron, Howe, T. Martin, Miller, Scaplehorn, J. Scott, Tye, Wakefield, Wood and A. Wright.

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ball, Chamberlin, Charlton, Copeland, I. Cuthbert, Francis, O'Connor and Snowdon.

**Minutes**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Report of the Meeting of the Development Control (North Sunderland) Sub-Committee**

The report of the meeting of the Development Control (North Sunderland) Sub-Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> June (copy circulated) was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Report of the Meetings of the Development Control (South Sunderland) Sub-Committee**

The report of the meeting of the Development Control (South Sunderland) Sub-Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 and 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 (copy circulated) was submitted.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Report of the Meeting of the Development Control (Hetton, Houghton and Washington) Sub-Committee**

The report of the meeting of the Development Control (Hetton, Houghton and Washington) Sub-Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 (copy circulated) was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Building Control Performance 2008/2009**

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised the Committee of the performance of the Building Control Service in year 2008/09.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Barry Coe, Building Control Technical Manager presented the report.

Councillor Wood referred to paragraph 3.3 of the report which stated that large scale schemes in the City were slow in coming forward to the point where a building regulations application was needed which focused attention on the further development of partnerships to enable Building Control to seek work outside of the City's boundaries and he queried how competitive the business was and the percentage of total workload that consisted of such work.

Mr Coe advised that the partnering scheme came into existence out of a need to keep the building control service within local authorities. Sunderland entered into the scheme early and 'partnered' with local firms and companies and therefore did comparatively better than other local authorities. Mr. Coe agreed to research the actual figure and provide it to Councillor Wood.

Councillor Wood queried the reason why there had been a sharp decline in the number of local land searches undertaken within the Council.

Mr Coe advised that a number of private businesses now provided land search services.

5. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

### **Development Control Performance 2008/2009**

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised the Committee of the performance of the Development Control Service over in the year 2008/09.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Mike Mattok, Development Control Manager presented the report.

Councillor Tye referred to paragraph 3.8 of the report and queried how many of the successful appeals had been against Committee decisions made contrary to the officer recommendation in the original report. He was advised that two upheld appeals were against the Officer recommendation.

Referring to the current vacancy for a Tree Officer within the Development Control Team, Councillor Wakefield questioned how this highly specialised role was being carried out in the absence of an expert.

Mr. Mattok advised that a technician in the Policy Team had previously been a Tree Officer and was assisting with TPO matters. Mr Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment also advised that the service drew on advice from Community and Cultural Services staff regarding the health of trees.

Councillor G. Hall questioned whether the new rules that came into force in respect of Permitted Development Rights for dwellings have affected performance.

Mr. Mattok advised that it was difficult to judge due to the general down turn in applications as a result of the current economic climate. All advice notes had been changed to inform members of the public about the marginal changes to the Permitted Development Order.

Councillor Wood commented that the reduction in the number of applications over the last 5 years was staggering even though the number of enquiries had remained static.

In response to a question from Councillor Wood regarding staffing, Mr. Lowes advised that it was difficult to fund salaries from fee income alone but the situation had been effectively managed since the downturn hit. Where possible, staff that were not funded through the revenue budget were being transferred elsewhere until the economic down-turn had eased.

6. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

### **Lisburn Terrace Triangle Development Framework**

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise the Committee of the responses received following public consultation on the Lisburn Terrace Triangle draft Development Framework and to seek the Committee's comments on the revised Development Framework.

In response to a question from Councillor Heron regarding the geographical boundary of the Framework, Mr Lowes advised that it related only to the south side and extended from the former glassworks site, taking in North East Auto's and the Gala Bingo Hall.

Referring to the consultation response which saw a return of 45 out of 1400 and a 9 to 10% return from private companies, Councillor G. Hall enquired why the response rate was so poor.

Mr. Lowes acknowledged that the response numbers were poor but advised that in terms of quality, they were extremely worthwhile. He stated that there was a need to improve the response rate, however within individual proposals there would be varying degrees to which the public would find them controversial and this would vary from area to area.

He also advised that the approval of the Lisburn Terrace Triangle Development Framework would provide a formal planning framework that would facilitate the redevelopment of the area by a private developer. The prospective private developer would use the Framework as a basis for preparing a Masterplan in light of the guidance set out in the Framework.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the Committee note the responses received and having welcomed the report agreed that it be recommended to the Cabinet that the Lisburn Terrace Triangle Development Framework be approved as supplementary planning guidance.

### **Planning Policy Statement 4 (Planning for Prosperous Economies): Response to Consultation**

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide information to the Committee on the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation paper on proposed new draft policy guidance on planning for sustainable economic development

(PPS4). The Committee's comments and agreement were being sought prior to submission as the Council's formal response.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Neil Cole, Planning Policy Manager presented the report.

Members raised the following issues:-

Councillor Bell commented that large retail applications may have a significant impact on local shops and this needed to be considered as part of the proposals.

Mr. Cole advised that the revised policy removed the 'needs test' in favour of a wider more sophisticated impact test which would go some way to removing the monopoly large retailers may previously have had and would give the Council a better tool to measure the wider positive and negative effects of retail related development. Using the new test the Council would be compelled to examine more factors including retail diversity and regeneration of the area.

Councillor M. Forbes referred to the possible competition between developers for land usage and queried what the main criteria would be for deciding which applicant was preferable.

Mr. Cole advised that retail and leisure developments were important employment generators and would therefore be given enhanced consideration.

In response to a question from Councillor M. Forbes regarding possible arguments for limiting developments, Mr. Lowes advised that the economic proposal of any development would be looked at in conjunction with environmental impact. Applications for economic development would be looked at more favourably unless there were very good reasons not to do so.

Referring to the removal of the needs test and introduction sequential test, Councillor G. Hall queried to what extent the proposed changes could affect development proposals for the former Vaux site.

Mr. Lowes advised that an important objective of the draft PPS4 continued to be the preservation and enhancement of the viability and vitality of existing town centres with a sequential hierarchy for the location of town centre uses.

8. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- i) Agree the consultation response as detailed within the report; and
- ii) a copy of this report be forwarded to the CLG as constituting the formal response of the City Council.

The Chairman closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) T. Martin  
Chairman.