

At a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (HETTON, HOUGHTON AND WASHINGTON) SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 5th JUNE, 2018 at 5.45 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Scullion in the Chair

Councillors Blackett, M. Dixon, Hodson, Jackson, Lauchlan, Porthouse and Turner

Also in Attendance:-

Councillors Heron and N. MacKnight

Declarations of Interest

17/01095/VAR – The Russell Foster Football Centre

Councillor Scullion made an open declaration in the application having been closely involved in a number of previous applications for the site. He commented that it could be seen that he may have predetermined this application and therefore left the meeting during its consideration.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were given on behalf of Councillor Scaplehorn

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

The Executive Director of Economy and Place submitted a report and late sheets (copies circulated), which related to Hetton, Houghton and Washington areas, 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 report – see original minutes)

Appointment of Chairman

Councillor Scullion having to leave the meeting for the first application moved that Councillor Jackson be appointed Chairman for consideration of that item. It having been seconded by Councillor Porthouse, and duly agreed it was:-

1. RESOLVED that Councillor Jackson be appointed Chairman.

17/01095/VAR – Variation of conditions 2 (no of pitches) and 3 (Hours of operations) attached to planning application 13/02636/VAR. Condition 2 seeks to vary the condition from 6 pitches to 12 pitches. Condition 3 seeks to vary hours of operation at the Russell Foster Football Centre, Staddon Way, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 4WL

The representative of the Executive Director of Economy and Place presented the application advising the Committee of the key issues to consider in determining the application and drawing Members attention to the update within the circulated late sheets, advising that there had been some late representations from the public and an additional petition which had been received at 1:00pm that day. The Officer informed the Committee that copies of the documents were available for circulation.

The Chairman introduced Mr. Kevin Hall who wished to speak in objection to the application. Mr. Hall commented that he had not had sight of the late sheets until arriving at the meeting and therefore was not able to raise any objection he may have in relation to them. He also commented that his presentation was quite detailed and requested an additional 30 seconds time to be able to present this to the Committee.

Mr. Hall opened in thanking the Committee for the opportunity to address them with objections in relation to the application. He advised that he spoke on behalf of the Tree and Wildlife Action Group and raised objections in relation to the following:-

- That the Council would be acting 'ultra vires' if the Committee proceeded to make a decision on the application;
- That the project which the application alludes to was declared a forestry project by a judgement handed down by the High Court in London in 2007 and therefore the application should be rejected;
- As a minimum, the application should have had an environmental impact assessment and this had not been undertaken;
- Documents being left off the planning portal;
- The increase in the no of pitches from 6 to 12;
- The extra traffic and journeys on the network that the extra hours of operation and pitches would have;
- The lack of parking provision for the increase in the number of users of the facility; and
- The lack of response to the concerns and objections that had been made to the application.

In closing, Mr. Hall asked that his formal objection to the circulation of the late sheets be recorded.

The Planning Officer responded to the objections and commented that they did apologise and acknowledge that two documents had been omitted from the planning portal but that this had been rectified once brought to their attention.

The Officer referred to the comments regarding environmental impact assessment development and commented that this was linked to the Forestry Commission decision and not the Council and that the Council had not considered it as EIA development in 2004 and did not now. The applicant was also seeking to vary the conditions of the 2013 application and not that of the 2004 application.

The Officer also commented that all of the representations within petitions received would be considered in objection to the application and advised that the late sheet for circulation today was simply to advise members of the representations that had been received since the publication of the agenda and to set out in clear table format the proposals against the existing operational hours and the new conditions as set out in the agenda report for members consideration.

The Highways Officer advised that as part of the variation to the original scheme for the twenty pitches a transport assessment had been undertaken and it was not therefore necessary to carry another out for a variation of conditions that was for the use of a lesser number of pitches. He commented that the only issue that was of concern was the parking along Staddon Way and discussions had been held with partners and Northumbria Police. As the applicant had now confirmed that the parking charges were to be removed should planning permission be granted then this would allow full use of the car park and alleviate the issues.

He advised the Committee that they had looked into placing a traffic regulation order along Staddon Way but residents had objected to it and therefore it had not gone ahead. There had still been an opportunity to look at a traffic regulation order for The Crofters, but on balance the money that would be spent on putting it in place would be better spent on upgrading the existing car park.

In response to a query from Councillor Hodson in relation to the applicant having broken previous conditions on operating hours, the Planning Officer advised that the arrangements for operating hours which had been agreed in 2013 were complex and the club had wished to extend and change the hours where they could use the facilities. The proposed operational hours were a more straightforward arrangement and would allow the facility to be used during the summer school holidays more. It would be difficult for any hours of extension to be used during the winter months as there were no floodlights and the dark nights would be here by then.

The Chairman then welcomed Councillor Heron to the Committee who advised that the whole area around the application site had completely changed over previous years with over 500 new homes being built in the surrounding area. She commented that it was felt the hours of extension to 9:00pm were too long for the site to be open and that it would not be good for the area.

Parking issues were still of concern in the area and on busy days the traffic would block dropped kerbs and people who used the facilities and site did not seem to care as to where they parked and whether they were causing an obstruction. There were very little users of the facility who used the onsite parking and due to erratic parking on the main road and children crossing to get to the facilities she felt the application should be refused on the grounds of health and safety.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Heron for her contributions and invited Councillor MacKnight to address the Committee.

Councillor MacKnight commented that he felt that the application was fundamentally flawed and in particular the numbers in relation to the increase in vehicles did not stack up. He commented that if you calculated the number of vehicles needed for each match and then multiplied by the number pitches it was well in excess of the number of car parking spaces available on site. He also stated that this was without taking into account change over periods and those who may arrive early to allow them to warm up and by his calculations that meant the site could attract from 600/700 cars at any one time.

In closing, he added that he lived very close to the application site and could verify that vehicles parked without consideration all the way along the road and onto the roundabout which could cause a hazard for other vehicles using the road and for any emergency vehicles that may need to pass.

The Highways Officer advised that when applications for development were received as part of the assessment they would have taken into account the impact of committed development, such as housing development in the areas, as part of the operational impact on traffic in the area. An assessment had been carried out on parking numbers as part of a previous traffic survey and the applicant had provided information which Officers were satisfied with.

In relation to parking management around the site, he advised that Northumbria Police had visited the site previously but that you would always have people who would park badly and this should be reported to the relevant bodies at that time. Critically, it was felt that the removal of the charge for the on site car parking would alleviate and address that problem.

In relation to Members concerns that the applicant could change their mind at any time and bring the car parking charge back into force, the Planning Officer advised that a condition had been included that the car parking facility had to be available for use at all times during the proposed operational hours.

Members having fully considered the application, and having been put to the vote, with five Members voting in favour and 2 Members voting against the application, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the application be approved subject to the six conditions set out within the report and for the reasons detailed therein.

18/00075/FUL – Erection of 99 dwellings with associated roads, infrastructure and public open space at land east of former Broomhill Estate, Houghton Road, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton –le-Spring

The representative of the Executive Director of Economy and Place presented the application advising the Committee of the key issues to consider in determining the application and drawing Members attention to the information contained within the late sheet.

In response to a query from Councillor Turner regarding the protection of the Stephenson Trail, the Highways Officer confirmed that the trail would remain, there were traffic calming measures to be introduced at the site but the trail would be continue to be protected.

Members having fully considered the application, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the application be delegated to the Director of Economy and Place, who is minded to approve the application for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the twelve conditions relating to those areas as set out in the late sheet.

18/00370/FUL – Sub-division and change of use of existing unit to A1 (retail) and A5 (hot food takeaway) at Biddick Community Centre, 33 Biddick Village Centre, Washington, NE38 7NP

The representative of the Executive Director of Economy and Place advised that the applicant had requested that consideration of the application be deferred to allow for further information to be considered.

4. RESOLVED that the application be deferred.

Items for Information

Members having fully considered the items for information contained within the matrix, it was:-

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

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

(Signed) A. SCULLION,
Chairman.