

**At a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (HETTON, HOUGHTON AND WASHINGTON) SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 23<sup>rd</sup> MARCH, 2017 at 5.45 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor G. Walker in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Jackson, Lauchlan, Middleton, Porthouse, and Walker, P.

**Declarations of Interest**

16/02266/FU4 – Erection of 56 no. residential dwelling at former High Usworth School, Washington

16/02357/FUL – Erection of 128 dwellings at land south of Coaley Lane, Newbottle, Houghton le Spring

Councillor Peter Walker made an open declaration in the above applications as an employee of the applicant Gentoo and left the meeting during consideration of the items. Councillor Middleton also made an open declaration in the above applications as a council appointed member to the board of Gentoo and left the meeting during consideration of the items.

17/00126/FUL – Creation of a second floor extension with balconies to the rear to provide 22 no. new bedrooms at George Washington Hotel, Usworth, Washington

Councillor Porthouse made an open declaration in respect of the above application as he felt it may be publically perceived that he was potentially biased on the application due to his previously objecting to the hotel being named Mercure Newcastle, during his time serving as Mayor and left the meeting during consideration of the item.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Cummings, Dixon, M., Mordey, Scaplehorn, Taylor and Turton, W.

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

The Executive Director of Economy and Place submitted a 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 Council, upon applications made under the Town and Country Planning Acts and Regulations made thereunder.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

**16/01687/OUT – Proposed housing, up to 138 dwellings at land adjacent to Blackthorn Way at proposed waster transfer station, Blackthorn Way, Sedgeleth Industrial Estate, Houghton le Spring**

The Planning Officer advised that following the publication of the main report the Environment Agency had provided a response to the consultation exercise in which having assessed the supporting information they advised that they were in a position to withdraw the objection they had originally made subject to the inclusion of the extra condition as set out in the report for circulation.

Councillor Porthouse referred to page six of the agenda and the comments from the Coal Authority and commented that Members never got to see the desk study that had been undertaken in these circumstances to ensure the authority were satisfied there were no concerns of previous mine shafts, etc in the development area. Mr. Watson, advised that there was a whole suite of conditions that developers would have to adhere to ensure developments were undertaken in the correct manner but that he was happy to forward a copy of the technical data received from the Coal Authority to those Members who would like a copy.

Members having fully considered the report, it was:-

1. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the signing of a Section 106 agreement and the twenty two conditions as detailed within the main report and report for circulation.

**16/02266/FU4 – Erection of 56 no. residential dwellings with associated access, landscaping and infrastructure works at former High Usworth Primary School, Well Bank Road, Washington**

The Chairman welcomed Ms. Margaret Porter and Ms Helen Goudie to the meeting who wished to speak in objection to the application and also Ms. Amanda Stephenson, who was in attendance on behalf of the applicant, Gentoo, to speak in support of the application and answer any questions from Members of the Committee

The Chairman invited Ms. Porter to address the Committee who advised that her main concerns with the proposal were around the potential pedestrian route adjacent to plots 9 and 10 that lead out onto a private road and the driveway of her own property. She advised the Committee that this proposed footpath would not give access to anywhere of any merit and that to accommodate the footpath the developers would need to remove at least two trees. She asked what purpose the footpath would serve and if consideration had been made by the developers that to install the proposed footpath they would need to pass over private land. In closing she reiterated that the potential footpath serves no purpose whatsoever and did not

provide access to bus routes which would be accessed via the bus lane alongside the nearby school.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Porter for her representations and invited Ms. Goudie to address the Committee. Ms. Goudie advised that she had lived in the village for 48 years and that for as long as she could remember there had been a bus link at the bottom of Well Bank Road. She advised that residents had had to travel all the way around Donwell perimeter road to get to the other side and had done so with no objection to help keep the local school children safe and at less risk of harm. This development would increase the number of vehicles using the roads and add to the problems that were already faced around the school with drop off and pickups.

She commented that the road was not very wide and there was already a problem with congestion at the school and to increase that further was a safety issue for children and residents in the area. She commented that the school and bus link had been omitted from original plans so it had not been clear to those who had been consulted. In relation, to the consultation process she advised that if they had not been sent out over the Christmas period then in her opinion the Council would have received many more objections.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Goudie for her representations and invited Ms. Stephenson to address the Committee. Ms. Stephenson advised that she spoke on behalf of the applicant, Gentoo and advised that they had discussed the issues around access to the site with the Council and had stuck to the brief requested of them.

In relation to the access to the site which ran alongside neighbouring properties she advised that having assessed the proposal it did not give any great value to the proposal of the development.

With regards to the safety of local residents and children attending the school, Ms. Stephenson advised that a transport assessment and traffic management plan would be carried out and they would work with the school to look at alternative access points for drop off and pickups to help alleviate any issues, current and expected.

The Highways Officer advised that the reasoning behind the access point that ran alongside plots 9 and 10 was in line with general urban design elements of the development, as with any residential development they would look to ensure that it was well connected with existing developments. He advised that this access was not essential to the development but desirable to allow better connectivity around the community and for the betterment of the development could be omitted if the applicant was in agreement. Ms. Stephenson advised that the proposed footpath was not key to the development and could be removed if necessary.

In response to concerns from Councillor Porthouse around the parking and traffic issues around the area, Mr. Watson, Planning Officer, advised that there was a parcel of land which had been identified which the local authority were in discussions with the school around them taking ownership of the land to allow them to extend the car parking facilities and provide a better turning facility for vehicles, which could come forward as part of the traffic management scheme and that they were also

looking at other ways to improve the exiting traffic flow. He advised that although the traffic assessment did not require these works for the development to be undertaken it was in the best interests of all parties to look to address potential traffic issues.

Councillor Porthouse referred to his Google Maps image of the development site and commented that the access from the North side of the development looked as though it may be a better alternative and was advised that what the 2D image on Google Maps did not show was the level of gradient at that side of the development site which was approximately a 10 metre drop and therefore would be a significant gradient and unacceptable for an alternative access siting.

The Planning Officer advised that further to the receipt of additional information from the lead local flood authority in terms of the updated drainage strategy for the site it was recommended that a further condition be added as set out in the report for circulation. He also advised that within the main report there had been a duplication error and as condition five was duplicated by condition fifteen, condition fifteen should be replaced with the condition as set out in the report for circulation.

Members having fully considered the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the application be delegated to the Chief Executive who is minded to grant consent, in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the nineteen conditions as detailed within the main report and report for circulation; and the signing of an agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

**16/02357/FUL – Erection of 128 dwellings including associated infrastructure, access, landscaping, open space and SUDS (Sustainable Drainage System) as land south of Coaley Lane, Newbottle, Houghton le Spring**

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Michael Forbes to the meeting, who had requested to speak in objection to the application and Mr. Shaun Cuggy of Gentoo who was in attendance to speak on behalf of the applicant and in support of the application.

The Chairman invited Mr. Forbes to address the Committee who advised that his objection was mainly in relation to traffic and environmental issues and the impact of the development on the local area.

Mr. Forbes advised the Committee that Coaley Lane was 800 metres long, with a roundabout and traffic lights at one end and the Beehive public house at the other, both accident black spots and that due to housing developments in the area it had seen the addition of 300 vehicles through the Persimmons development, 250 vehicles through the Gentoo phase 2 development and then a further 250 vehicles through this proposed development onto a bottleneck road. He felt that the road could not cope with this further amount of traffic.

In relation to environmental concerns, he asked what the depth of the run off pond was, as if it was not adequate and not maintained then it would inevitably become a swampland if the correct drainage solution was not in place.

With regards to the impact on the local area, Mr. Forbes commented that increasing residents in the area would have an effect on amenities and facilities in the area. He referred to the neighbourhood school and how it had increased its intake number to 60 from 30 children, to help alleviate the numbers coming into the area but there was simply not the provision to manage another site of residential housing.

He referred to the Section 106 monies as set out in the report and asked if there could be guarantees that the funds secured would be spent within the Newbottle area, as in the past Section 106 monies from developments had been spent in the Hetton Ward and not the local area. In closing, he thanked Members for the opportunity to address the Committee.

The Highways Officer referred to concerns around impact upon traffic in the area and advised that a review had been undertaken, which included impact on the junctions, and it had been deemed that the road had the capacity for the extra traffic. In relation to the Persimmons development, he informed the Committee that as part of the application they had agreed to install a roundabout which would help to manage speeds along the route and also see the speed limit reduce from the National Speed Limit to 30mph.

The Planning Officer advised that the SUDs pond forms one part of the sustainable drainage system and was designed to attenuate water up to a level of 1350 cubic metres. The full drainage strategy was considered by the local flood and coast team and considered to be acceptable for the level of development that was proposed.

In relation to the infrastructure within the area, the Planning Officer advised that they recognised the comments from the objector in relation to pressure on current provision and that the requested Section 106 was deemed to be appropriate to help in alleviating issues and looking to provide school places and play provision etc, in the neighbouring area, which would be agreed at the time of receiving the funds to best fit the requirements at that time.

The Chairman invited Mr. Cuggy, Gentoo, to address the Committee on behalf of the applicant, who advised of the following:-

- The Council did not have a current five year housing land supply in place;
- The development would bring social, economic and environmental benefits to the area, and new home bonus enhancements for the Council;
- The settlement break was not an issue for this development;
- The public right of way would be maintained;
- Key hedgerows would be maintained and the SUDs would also help create general wildlife habitation;
- The applicant was looking to finance contributions towards bus shelter improvements in the area;

- Drainage ponds on the site would aid in the biodiversity of the site and Northumbrian Water had raised no objections in relation to their use on the development;
- The applicant was providing financial contributions through Section 106 agreements and this could provide facilities in relation to education, wildlife and play provision where required by the Council;
- The applicant was providing a range of housing, including affordable housing on site, giving as much choice within the development as they possibly could; and
- The applicant had not challenged the level of funding contributions and was looking to improve the area as much as they could.

Councillor Porthouse referred to the Coal Authority's comments included at page 49 of the agenda and was advised by Mr. Browning that the Coal Authority provided mappings which covered the whole of the city and services to identify known remains of previous mining activity. On this site there had been no known features, such as seams or examples of mining remains identified but the developer would be provided with standard advice from the Coal Authority of what to be aware of when undertaking the development.

When asked which schools had been identified by the Council to merit from the Section 106 funding, the Planning Officer advised that the Council would not look to name schools until the time the funding was received by the Council but that there were potentially four schools, at this time, which were included within the 2 mile radius .

Members having fully considered the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the twenty three conditions as detailed therein and the signing of an agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended).

**17/00126/FUL – Creation of a second floor extension with balconies to rear to provide 22 no. new bedrooms at George Washington Hotel, Stone Cellar Road, Usworth, Washington, NE37 1PH**

In relation to the upholding of existing covenants in place, the Legal representative advised that this would be a private matter for local residents to take up their own legal advice and pursue should they feel that covenants have been breached, and there being no further questions, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the four conditions as set out in the report which were subject to change pending further assessment of the proposal.

**17/00184/FUL – Change of use from D1 to combined D1 and B1 use at Washington Church of Christ, Albert Place, Columbia, Washington, NE38 7BP**

The Chairman welcomed Mr. William Marshall to the meeting who was in attendance to speak in support of the application on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Marshall thanked the Committee for the opportunity to address them and advised that he was speaking on behalf of the Coalfield Regeneration Trust who were keen to continue to work towards improving the quality of life for former colliery communities. He explained that they had looked to how they could adapt the building to provide a wider use of the building for the local community and had agreed upon providing small office spaces within the building for current home workers or small start up businesses that may otherwise not be able to afford premises to work from.

He advised that the main concern around the development had been the access to the car park and it had been agreed to widen the access to allow two way traffic to pass through so that vehicles waiting to access the site would not be waiting for access on the highway if another vehicle was leaving the site.

In closing, he commented that both the Trust and the Council recognised the benefits of this provision to the community and that they had remained sympathetic to the building and in such not having a negative impact and maintaining the current level of use.

Members having no further questions, and having thanked Mr. Marshall for his contributions, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the application be approved subject to no further representations having been received for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the five conditions as set out in the main report and the amendment to condition three as detailed in the report for circulation.

**17/00232/SU4 - Erection of a two storey extension to side with a single storey extension to front (resubmission) at 1 Meadow Close, Houghton le Spring, DH5 8HU**

The Planning Officer having presented the report, and Members having no questions, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the application be granted consent in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the three conditions detailed therein.

**Items for Information**

7. RESOLVED that the items for information contained within the matrix be received and noted.

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

(Signed) G. WALKER,  
Chairman.