

At a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (HETTON, HOUGHTON AND WASHINGTON) SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 9th AUGUST, 2016 at 3.45 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Scaplehorn in the Chair

Councillors Bell, M. Dixon, Jackson, Mordey, Porthouse, Taylor and P. Walker

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Cummings, Lauchlan, Middleton, Turton, M. and Turton, W.

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

The Executive Director of Commercial Development submitted a report (copy 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)

16/00780/FUL – Change of use from warehouse to trampoline park to include new entrance to North elevation at 20-22 Brindley Road, Hertburn, Washington, NE37 2SF

The representative of the Executive Director of Commercial Development presented the report advising that at the last meeting of the Committee, Members had requested further information be provided regarding the nature of the interest shown in the unit during its marketing phase and that this had been provided within the report by the prospective purchaser who owned a Structural and General Steel Fabricators business.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Cottam and Mr. Scott to the Committee who wished to speak in favour of the application and on behalf of the applicant and he advised that

an Officer from the Council's Economic Development Team was in attendance to answer any questions Members may have.

Mr. Donkin, Investment and Information Officer, advised the Committee that he had engaged with those who were interested in the purchase of the unit and that there had been a local company currently based at Philadelphia who had expressed an interest in the unit as their current site was being demolished to develop the land for housing. They had made an offer on the property which had been close to the asking price and had advised Officers that the only other suitable site they were considering was based in Peterlee, which would see the business moving outside of the city. He advised that this was a rare opportunity for the business to purchase this unit as there was a shortage of larger units available within the city.

He explained that he could work with the applicant to locate a unit suitable for a trampoline park within the city but unfortunately it was not appropriate for this land and the Council had to start to defend the industrial land available if they were to continue to be able to accommodate future demand.

Councillor Walker asked how long the unit had been vacant and was advised 12 months and went on to comment that he understood the need to protect the larger units for the appropriate use but had concerns as there was still no guarantee that the property would sell, when they were faced with a clear opportunity for the trampoline park to take over the site. Mr. Donkin advised that voids in other industrial sites tended to be of the smaller variety and that Hertburn was a very well used and occupied site with only this unit vacant.

Councillor Walker went on to say it would be a great facility for the local community and the way that Washington had been built meant that a lot of the industrial estates were surrounded by housing developments which would find this a key development for the community.

Mr. Cottam then addressed the Committee speaking in favour of the application and in conjunctions with Mr. Scott. They circulated hand-outs which encompassed what they would bring to the property and the surrounding area in regards to the employment opportunities and inward investment. He commented that this was a good opportunity to bring the vacant and dilapidated unit back into use following renovations carried out by local tradesmen.

Mr. Scott informed the Committee that it was estimated that it was going to cost in the region of £300,000-£400,000 to bring the unit back into use and that they would challenge the level of demand for industrial units, particularly in light of the current and future unpredictable markets.

He advised that having spoken with the other potential purchaser they had viewed the property but were not able to offer the asking price, whereas the applicant had made their best offer, which had been in excess of the asking price, due to arrangements regarding the inclusion of the car parking provision. In June, the alternative purchaser had advised that they had found another property to relocate to.

The unit had been vacant for at least 18 months and his client having offered the highest price had had it accepted subject to securing this planning application. They had carried out some sequential testing and the initial results were showing that they could not find any alternative units available.

In response to a query regarding the application for a similar use on another industrial estate, the Committee were advised that at that time, the Council did not have the policy framework in place to refuse the application, and if they had chosen to do so they could not have supported an appeal from the applicant as they had no evidence basis on which to refuse the application. The situation was now different and each application had to be considered on its own individual merits at the time of application,

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and Members having fully considered the application and representations made, it was:-

1. RESOLVED that the application be refused for the reason as set out in the report.

16/00939/FU4 – Refurbishment of building and external alterations to include replacement of wall cladding, windows and doors, fascias and rain watergoods and external lighting at Barnwell Primary School, Whitefield Crescent, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 7RT

The representative of the Executive Director of Commercial Development presented the application, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the three conditions as detailed therein.

16/01170/FU4 – Erection of rear extension to existing community centre, new roof to part of building and elevation alterations to include new windows to front and side at Biddick Community Centre, 33 Biddick Village Centre, Washington, NE38 7NP

The Representative of the Executive Director of Commercial Development presented the application advising that the period for submission of representations did not expire until 5th August 2016 but that no further representations had been received during this time, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the application be granted consent under Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulation 1992 (as amended). Subject to the three conditions as set within the report.

Items for Information

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

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Appeals

Members of the Committee requested that in future the appeals report included information on which ward each appeal related to, and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the appeals received and determined between 1st and 31st July, 2016 be received and noted.

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

(Signed) B. SCAPLEHORN,
Chairman.