

**At an extraordinary meeting of the PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS (WEST) COMMITTEE held remotely on TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2020 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Thornton in the Chair.

Councillors Armstrong, Blackett, Fagan, Lauchlan, F. Miller, and G. Walker.

**Declarations of Interest**

**20/01182/FUL – Erection of 13 no. residential dwellings (Use Class C3) – Land West Willows Close, Columbia, Washington**

Councillor Fagan made an open declaration on the item as her brother was an employee of Gentoo and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Rowntree and P. Walker.

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

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copies circulated), which related to the West area of the City, 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 reports – see original minutes)

**20/00795/MAW – Installation of kiosks associated with sewage treatment works – Northumbrian Water Ltd Washington Treatment Works, Pattinson Road, Pattinson Industrial Estate, Washington**

The Planning Officer representing the Executive Director of City Development outlined the proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

In response to Councillor G. Walkers enquiry over the noise levels of the units and if operating 24 hours a day, if they were giving off any kind of hum or drone, The Planning Officer advised that the noise from the units was

negligible and that a full noise assessment had been received and Environmental Health had determined that it was not above the background noise levels during the day or at night.

Councillor F. Miller commented that as she lived relatively close to the area she had had problems with noise, the environment agency and local residents have contacted her in relation to noise. Councillor Miller advised that she was aware of the work they were doing in regards to some of the background noise in the past so she was concerned about the noise levels in the area and queried how much of an issue this may be.

The Planning Officer advised that the noise assessment had been considered thoroughly and additional information had been requested by environmental Health who were completely satisfied upon receipt of, that there would be no additional background noise from the units.

2. RESOLVED that the Members approve consent for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the four conditions contained therein

### **20/01182/FUL – Erection of 13 no. residential dwellings (Use Class C3) – Land West Willows Close, Columbia, Washington**

The Planning Officer representing the Executive Director of City Development outlined the proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

Councillor G. Walker referred to the presentation slides and commented that it showed green space to be built upon and queried if this was to be levelled and how would the profile of the houses affect the view of the existing homes toward the school ground.

The Planning Officer advised that there were two marked plateaus within the site and there would be some gradient work to Lowthian Terrace down towards the north of the site, there would not be any back filling and he would assume that the rear gardens of the properties would retain the ground levels that exist previously. There would be a need for a retaining wall between the properties to the higher part of the site.

In relation to the existing houses view, the Planning Officer advised that their view of the school playground would be obscured.

Councillor F. Miller referred to page 25 of the report and that she was concerned about pedestrian safety and that there were issues within the area between Central and East Wards and the transport/traffic issues there also.

The Highways Officer advised that in terms of pedestrian safety, this was essentially a cul-de-sac development with the open space area to the rear of the development, generally all pedestrian movements would be contained within the development and where it connects to existing, there would be new

footway connections done to an appropriate standard as found elsewhere in the city.

Councillor Lauchlan commented that he was very disappointed with the loss of green space and that he was a little confused with the report, specifically on page 17 which referred to 2.51 hectares of green space quite close to this land, which he stated there was not.

Councillor Lauchlan advised that the loss of green space seemed to depend on the NE4 Policy Criterion 4 which Members could see on page 16 of the report, the amendments that could be made to allow this development to go forward and the only thing he could see which had been amended was the fact that Gentoo have said this would be an overall betterment. Councillor Lauchlan requested if Officers could explain how taking away the green space from the children of Willows Close would be better for their mental wellbeing.

Councillor Lauchlan also queried if the pedestrian link to Ovingham Close mentioned in the report had been an error as clarified by Officers in their presentation, then did this alter the determination that there was satisfactory links to the development with the removal of this.

The Planning Officer advised that in terms of Policy NE4, the policy aimed to protect, conserve and enhance the quality of existing green space. Moving onto the caveat, this looked to replacing the quantity. Officers had looked at this very carefully across the City and across this area within the Ward to see whether or not there was an area of land in the location that could be provided to fulfil that caveat in terms of replicating quantity with quantity and in the Barmston/Columbia Ward that's not necessarily the case so Officers had looked at the wording of the Policy itself and that meant they were looking to enhance the quality and the value and accessibility of the existing green space and that was the balanced response why they believed in this particular instance the loss of quantity of open space should be allowed.

Councillor Lauchlan stated that the Policy did not refer at all about qualities and that it referred to adverse effect on amenity, recreational or nature conservation and to him taking away this green space, which was the only green space in that area then the children had absolutely nowhere to go to play and therefore it would adversely affect the 70 families that live in Willows Close so he could not see the argument about quality and quantity.

Councillor Lauchlan also commented that once the houses were built on that green space, what was left would be very little and he did not understand how this would be significantly bettered. Whilst he was not one to usually stand in the way of progress he felt this development was one too far.

The Planning Officer advised that he took on board the points made by Councillor Lauchlan, looking specifically at Policy NE4 what they had tried to highlight in the agenda report was that whilst it was acknowledged there would be a loss of open space and amenity, in summary, the uplift and the betterment to the remaining open space in addition to the delivery of the

affordable units and the biodiversity enhancements on balance had led to the recommendation to err on the side that it was acceptable in principle. It was not a quality/quantity singularity argument and had been carefully weighed against all of the material considerations that this proposal brought.

In relation to the query over the pedestrian links, The Highways Officer advised that whilst it would have been beneficial to have had a connection through to Ovingham Close in terms of connectivity the access of local amenities and services via the main entrance to the development remained acceptable.

Councillor Armstrong commented that he was very sympathetic over the need for more affordable homes and that he appreciated there were mitigating factors on this proposal, however the fact we were losing another green space in the city and in Washington was rather disheartening. Councillor Armstrong commented that he recognised the City Ecologist has had input into this, along with the Planning Officer expressing that there would be some improvements and queried what exactly the biodiversity enhancements would be and which green areas would be made better as he could not see where these would be from this development.

The Planning Officer advised that in terms of the biodiversity enhancements, the supporting ecological appraisal made it clear that there were areas potentially to the south that could contain habitats for bats, but also pointed out that there were a number of species of birds that could fly over the site and also made reference to the fact that hedgehogs may cross over that field. The report and the city ecologist concluded that with the addition of the vegetation that was proposed, they would be enhancing habitat for all three species mentioned. More trees to facilitate nesting birds, potentially also bats, low growing hedgerows and undergrowth which would facilitate refuge points for hedgehogs and also by the inclusion of the fence between the existing palisade fence and the rear of the residential properties there is the potential there to create a hedgehog highway.

The Chairman referred to the affordable housing and requested confirmation that all of the 13 dwellings would be available for rent.

The Planning Officer commented that in terms of delivery of the units, all 13 had been indicated as being affordable and the Council policy would generally be that 80% rented and 20% intermediate and he believed that at the present moment in time they were still drafting up the Section 106 therefore he could not confirm whether it was 100% but the agent of the applicant may be able to clarify this.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Dianne Snowdon who wished to speak in objection to the application. Councillor Snowdon informed the Committee that she had expressed her concerns over this development to Planning Officers and Gentoo for some time, twice since she had become a Councillor, Gentoo had looked at developing in this small pocket of green space and twice they had listened to Councillors and residents concerns over traffic, loss of green

space and other issues and no development had taken place, therefore she wondered what was different now.

Councillor Snowdon commented that the roads had not changed, aside from possibly becoming more congested and she was extremely worried about these roads. If they had been able to conduct an official site visit she was sure members would have been able to see for themselves that a development on this site was not appropriate. The roads in this area cannot cope with the current volume of traffic and was the reason why Go North East withdrew their bus service. Any additional traffic would make a bad situation worse and she did not feel access to a new build housing project in a back lane that was originally built for horse and cart and had no footpaths in the Derwent Terrace end was acceptable in 2020.

Road Safety reports showed few accidents however we all knew that low speed accidents were not recorded and residents had told her that there were often bumps, scrapes and wing mirrors lost by cars parked on Station Road.

Councillor Snowdon added that Gentoo stated they had carried out a large consultation prior to submission and this was included in the report, however she had been told by residents in private homes backing onto the site and in Ovingham on the opposite boundary that they did not receive any consultation. It was all very concerning as some Gentoo tenants living a distance away had seen these documents and it was surely those closest to the site that needed to be listened to.

On reading the report submitted for the Committee, Councillor Snowdon noticed the mention of a footpath through Ovingham and she was pleased the Planning Department had acknowledged this had been included by mistake and was to be removed from the application.

Councillor Snowdon commented that it was often difficult for residents to understand planning process and she had been contacted by some very late in the day who had stated they did not need to comment on the Council site as they had already submitted their objections to Gentoo directly and they believed their comments would be passed onto the Council. This was something that happened regularly and she believed it was something that needed greater consideration outside of this meeting.

Councillor Snowdon informed the Committee that she had attended a JFK School governors meeting, the school which joined the boundary of this site and they had claimed not to have received any notice on this proposal.

Councillor Snowdon commented that it was really hard to speak against a proposal for 100% affordable housing but she was acting on behalf of her residents and to conclude she wished to ask the planning committee to defer this application until a full site visit could be arranged once COVID restrictions were lifted so that they could see for themselves how tight this site was and the road conditions that affected the area.

The Chairman introduced Mr Mark Lloyd who wished to speak in opposition to the proposal. Mr Lloyd stated that he had lived in Washington for forty-one years and at Lowthian Terrace for fifteen years. Having grown up in council accommodation he generally supported the work of Gentoo and the development of affordable housing. He had very strong objections to this particular development and most particularly about the way they had been consulted.

Mr Lloyd was not convinced that the process of consulting local residents was conducted in a fair and accessible way for a number of reasons. Mr Lloyd suggested that if he wished to make the process as difficult as possible to get their application through under the radar he would have done the same as Gentoo had, making it a two tier process and to lead people to believe they had lodged their objections when in fact that was only the first part of the process.

He would claim to deliver a large number of leaflets, with only a small number of returns by delivering these to houses that were not really affected by the development. Mr Lloyd stated that as he lived directly opposite the development he had not received any leaflet.

Mr Lloyd advised that the second half of the process was cumbersome and online with residents having a lot of difficulty in signing up to make their objections known and in an area where there was a large demographic of people who did not have access to online resources it was very difficult for them to take part.

Mr Lloyd believed the final report for the Committee dismissed peoples legitimate concerns about traffic increase with vague statements that played the potential issues down without actually visiting the site or knowing about the area. It was easy to say that something was within the daily tolerance without having any real understanding about what the local residents had to tolerate on a daily basis.

Mr Lloyd queried if the Committee felt that having a two-tier, largely online, consultation process offered all of the residents of the area a fair and accessible opportunity to express their opinions about the development. The whole thing seemed to be focussed around the benefits to Gentoo, and when "Community" was referred to, it seemed to be about the Community resulting from the development and not the existing Community that was already there.

In reference to the quality of the land improving, Mr Lloyd queried how the Members of the Committee would feel if developments took place within their garden, taking away their space only to be told that the unwanted development had bettered their life.

The report identified quite clearly that the amount of green space was lacking in Columbia, especially with the developments taking place next to the Primary School eating into another section of green space currently available.

Mr Lloyd stated that there were a number of inaccuracies in the report and he wondered whether anyone had physically visited the area. One thing stated was there was a post office which was within 100 meters from the development. As he actually lived in the old post office and could confirm that it closed over fifteen years ago. This made him question if up-to-date information has been supplied to the planners he worried that when making decisions about amenity green space they were relying on google maps from several years ago without having actually visited the site.

Mr Lloyd commented that his biggest concern was that this was seen as a flat bit of land that was easy to develop and would tick some boxes but he would like to know if there was any evidence to suggest this area of Washington needed more houses, more than it needed green space for its children to play on and wide open space for residents to look out to. This development would take away the green space and the view of blue skies for residents.

Mr Lloyd agreed with Councillor Snowdon and suggested the Committee visit the site to see what issues such as the parking were like before they made a decision as this could be a very big development mistake.

The Chairman introduced Mr Andy Gray who wished to speak in opposition to the proposal. Mr Gray advised that he was a gentoo resident within Willows Close. He had completed the survey online, shortly after receiving the leaflet from Gentoo but unfortunately it did feel as though the results of their own survey had not been fully shared or simply dismissed within the report. It felt like it was mainly a tick box exercise and they could have at least, responded to some of the concerns raised. Mr Gray advised that he had left his contact details on the survey sent and to date he still was to be contacted by Gentoo.

Mr Gray wished to add his voice to the concerns raised by various others regarding traffic. There were a number of various junctions into Willows Close that require drivers to slow down, some drivers do not do this. Adding extra traffic to the area either from new occupiers or visiting families and deliveries did not make sense to him.

Mr Gray advised that as a dog owner, the field was used as the main area for his exercise, the loss of Columbia's last decent sized green space, he believed would be detrimental to the residents already living there. It was well used by fellow dog walkers, young people and those accessing to JFK School fields.

Mr Gray commented that lockdown in particular had shown how much we all valued green space and as a resident of Willows Close, only having a small front yard himself he felt that in a way, this field was his green space. Whilst all of these new properties would have their own garden as well as a drive, he would in a way, be losing his therefore pleaded with the Committee to decline or reconsider this application.

The City Solicitor wished to clarify that in relation to the Section 106 agreement, he could inform Members that all of the properties would be affordable rented properties.

The Development Control Manager read out the written statements received from objectors to the application, which were as follows;

A Ms Pamela Elliott submitted representation stating that she would like to know why she and other existing residents appeared to have been ignored when a few years ago they said no to the building of new properties on the Green Space. Looking at the overall dimensions of the proposed 13 new properties including their parking (off limits to existing residents) would take up most of their Green Space encroaching on a high proportion of the existing properties' space and day light.

Lowthian and Wear Terraces would be like an island with extra traffic using both Station Road (in front of the Terraces) and the back road/lane (behind the Terraces) turning the current back road into a main busy access road for the proposed properties.

Road access to those properties would be extremely dangerous, as there is currently a high traffic volume especially at busier times of the day and night with people parking their vehicles on the junction at the bottom of Willow's Close to use the businesses on Station Road, which at times restricts safe viewing from all access points of the junctions and A195 roundabout making this a dangerous area to navigate in a vehicle never mind on foot.

Extra properties would result in an even higher volume of traffic using the junctions leading into Willow's Close to access the back road behind the terraces to the proposed site, placing pedestrians and other road users at a higher risk of being involved in an RTA not to mention extra traffic and noise pollution.

The JNP report notes it wouldn't cause any extra noise or emissions pollution. Extra properties and traffic would result in extra noise and emissions pollution. The extra pollution was not only disturbing to the existing residents but to the wildlife, which JNP's report refers to no risk to wildlife as wildlife doesn't use the green space. This was incorrect as birds, hedgehogs and bats (to name but a few) had made the green space their home. In the case of the bats, they live close by and use the green space as their feeding ground. Ms Elliott also didn't agree with JNP's report advising there'd be no problems with increases of surface water and the main sewer infrastructure in the area.

Ms Elliott stated it was a fact more properties would cause an extra demand on existing utilities adding an extra strain on existing sewerage pipes and underground drainage. Resulting in a high risk of Gentoo, Sunderland City Council and Utilities having to constantly dig up their poorly conditioned roads to gain access to pipes, patching up problems caused by the addition of new properties creating a high cost to all involved especially to the existing residents.



It would be a beneficial long term investment to Washington if Gentoo, Pegasus and all involved could please focus their attention on larger plots of land with an existing housing stock in other parts of Washington that would benefit from development, creating jobs and affordable housing whilst still making a profit. There was no need for any more houses in this already heavily developed area, and not on their green space.

Ms Elliott informed that since the last week of November 2020 there had been site works on what appeared to be Green Space near Salon 2000. She was already sick of the noise and vibration from the building of what she believed would be new bungalows (this was just for 2 new properties.) The building of the proposed 13 new properties over the road on the green space would be horrendous.

Now these new bungalows would generate even more traffic to the already overly congested roads. Which in places were narrow and in some cases the view was restricted. As a long term resident she had herself experienced negotiating these roads and narrow pavements both by driving and as a pedestrian, which over the years the traffic had increased. She did not understand how anyone could say the roads around Willow's Close and Station Road were not congested. They certainly did not need any more regular traffic adding to their already overly congested roads, through the building of 13 new properties.

Ms Elliott queried the need to take away people's green spaces for building homes causing dangerous traffic congestion, when in other parts of Washington there were existing housing stock that would benefit from development.

Regarding the 13 proposed new properties, Ms Elliott strongly objected to these properties being built on their green space causing destruction, noise and traffic pollution in an already congested area.

A Mr Keith Bartlett submitted representation stating that he had been a resident in Lowthian Terrace for 33 years and he strongly objected to development of area adjacent to Willows Close

The development would result in the loss of what little Green space was left in an already over developed area, this area was popular with children playing, dog walkers, local residents exercise and a social area.

A Loss of mature trees and wildlife habitats, there were Bats and Hedgehogs present on the site which gentoo had acknowledged by stating they would include provision of 2 bat boxes only within development.

Mr Bartlett did not believe the Gentoo report had been accurate as it stated there was a post office within 100 meters or so. This Post Office closed some

10 years ago. This caused him to question what other inaccurate information was being supplied.

Another report stated there had been no traffic accidents reported during the past 10 years. This may have been true regarding the involvement of emergency services, however there had been a number of cars damaged through collisions with stationary parked vehicles and he had personally had 2 different cars damaged significantly and he was aware of neighbours also affected very recently. These incidents were dealt with through their own insurance companies and not involving emergency services.

Traffic movement was a major concern and Mr Bartlett had submitted time lapse video of traffic at the Station Road, Willows Close junction directly outside his property and whilst this showed issues with traffic it was really not a true reflection as due to COVID restrictions the traffic activity was currently significantly lower than what it would be normally. The roadway at the rear of Lowthian terrace and Wear terrace was effectively a one lane road as residents including himself park vehicles at the rear of their properties.

The area had a number of elderly residents a number of which had disabilities who were forced to use mobility aids. Due to the lack of dropped curbs they tended to use the actual roadway as a means of getting from A to B, So there was a risk to their safety. Mr Bartlett was not aware of any Risk assessment having been completed covering this area of concern.

The roadway was used daily by young children and parents travelling to and from JFK Primary school. The street lighting along rear of Lowthian Terrace was inadequate for more traffic to use currently as there were only 2 street lights covering the footpath which was set back some 3 meters behind a row of trees not really illuminating road sufficiently. It was difficult during winter months after trees had shed their leaves in summer when in full foliage they blocked almost all light (He did not wish this to be an excuse to fell trees) but if development went ahead the lamps would require relocating.

The access road between Lowthian Terrace and Wear Terrace was very narrow and had a very difficult line of site when exiting onto the front of Lowthian Terrace & Wear Terrace, he believed this was just going to force traffic to use the already busy junction which surrounded his end of terrace property on three sides which would increase noise levels and headlight reflection which would disturb his Grandchildren when they were staying.

There were 2 sandwich food shops, 1 Social club, 1 Chinese take away and 1 convenience store present which attracted a lot of vehicular traffic who used the front and back of Lowthian Terrace as simple turning routes.

In 2011 a plan to build houses on this land was rejected. Mr Bartlett questioned what had changed from 2011 to 2020. In his opinion the traffic was greater now than what it was then.

Mr Bartlett stated that the letter informing of this opportunity to speak arrived at his address on 12 November with a deadline of Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November to respond. This he felt was not giving the residents ample opportunity to consult with each other and respond accordingly. He thought this in effect would reduce the number of responses the Committee would receive.

Mr Bartlett thanked the Committee for allowing this statement and urged the committee to reject this proposal. This was a strong happy community and already over developed so requested that they leave it as it is to help grow community spirit and not destroy it.

In relation to the consultation process, The Planning Officer advised that Gentoo had undertaken a statement of community involvement as part of their submission, the content of which their agent would be best placed to relay to the Committee and in terms of the City Council's responsibilities, the City Council was duly obligated under the Development Management Procedure Order to undertake consultations with those properties adjoining the site and they had done that. They had also posted site notices and press notices and by the number of responses received it was clearly evident that the local population surrounding the site were alive to the application being submitted during lockdown.

The Local Planning Authority therefore had carried out their statutory obligations in terms of consultation. With regards to informing on representations to the Committee, letters were drafted immediately after the agenda was published and distributed on the day. Everything was done as efficiently and to the minute as it could be in order to get the local populations input to this Committee.

The Planning Officer also wished to point out that 25 letters were sent out and we have had a number of responses received, as evidenced at this meeting.

With regards to comments made on previous projects for the site, The Planning Officer advised that he was aware Gentoo had looked at the site on a number of occasions but he could not provide any planning history to Members due to officers working from home due to COVID restrictions.

The Highways Officer wished to respond to comments and that it was important to state that this proposal would generate traffic, because it was a new development, however, as it was set out in the report, the development of 13 houses in this scale would only generate 6-7 two way trips within the peak hour which was essentially the busiest hour of the day. So in terms of capacity of the road network and road safety, the layout, the highway access all meet with Highways standards and are therefore deemed to be acceptable.

With regard to road traffic collisions, yes it was correct these weren't recorded by the police if there was no personal injury as a consequence, this was an unfortunate situation but one the Council could not change. In relation to street lighting and footway improvements mentioned by an objector, they would be required to be undertaken as part of the access works to the development, which was normal practice.

The Chairman introduced Ms Sandra Manson, the Agent on behalf of the applicant who wished to address the Committee to inform of the benefits of the development.

Ms Manson thanked the Members for the opportunity to present to the Committee and commended the Planning Officer for their report and presentation. Ms Manson advised that the delivery of the Gentoo affordable development programme was a significant opportunity for Sunderland to deliver around 900 new affordable homes across the City by 2024, supported by Homes England grant funding.

Willows Close scheme was one of a series of those sites to consider, the programme to be delivered by Gentoo Group was a commitment to deliver a meaningful range of sites with a programme that supported job creation, social, economic and environmental benefits. This needed to be considered in the context that Sunderland had a continuing significant affordable home deficit as identified in the Authority's own Strategic Housing Market Assessment of 542 dwellings every year. This need was likely to be exacerbated by the impact of the current COVID crisis with a sharp rise in the number of people claiming Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance.

The number of claimants within Sunderland had significantly increased by over 5600 people between March and August 2020 which meant that more people were likely to be experiencing financial pressures which then in turn led to pressure on an affordable housing need in Sunderland.

Ms Manson informed that the economic benefits statement included with the application set out the economic and social benefits that would arise from the affordable home programme which were substantial and carried significant weight. The schemes proposed, including those at Willows Close were of the highest quality design with homes that met the Nationally described space standards, garden, space, parking provision (which the scheme would be self sufficient in terms of parking within the development) and a high quality build which was energy efficient.

This assisted in addressing sustainability considerations and savings for tenants. Gentoo Group were seeking to implement low carbon technology wherever possible with precise measures to be incorporated within the scheme by way of condition.

In relation to the Willows proposal itself, Ms Manson highlighted that there had been no objections from the statutory consultees and thanked Officers who had worked with them to ensure all technical matters had been resolved

satisfactorily to ensure a scheme, recognising the timescale for delivery against the Homes England grant programme.

In response to objections and concerns that had been raised both during the application process and at this meeting, Ms Manson wished to draw Members attention to certain matters. In regards to the open space, there would be an element of loss to the open space on the site, however there would be substantial enhancement to the landscaping undertaken which would remain open for the public in an improved environment which also included biodiversity enhancements.

Currently the site was of low ecological value and amenity grassland noting that there were bats and birds that may fly over the site itself. By the inclusion of specific measures within the development and mitigation on biodiversity which was required on condition there would be overall enhancement delivered through the scheme.

Ms Manson stated that Officers had confirmed that the concerns over the Ovingham Close wasn't actually an element of the scheme and also in terms of highways matters, Officers had again outlined to Members that there were no highways issues that would arise as a result from the development of 13 units within the site itself,

Ms Manson advised that it was noted and they did understand the residents concerns over the existing issues that they had, however Planning Policy required schemes to be determined on their own merits and in terms of addressing and mitigating their own impacts, as a result of this, it was clear that the scheme would be self sufficient from a highways perspective.

In terms of accident recording, Ms Manson reiterated that this was a process nationally prescribed standard practice that had been reported effectively as it is meant to do. Ms Manson acknowledged and apologised for the error in the reporting of the location of the Post Office, however wished to point out that there still remained a post office within walkable distance of the site at Barmston, which was 0.7 miles away

Ms Manson referred to the Statement of Community Involvement and that there was an extensive exercise undertaken and consultation with 600 leaflets distributed, 48 responses were received and an additional 78 responses were received via the website. Therefore 126 responses altogether demonstrated a significant amount of consultation.

Councillor G. Walker referred to the contribution by Mr Lloyd and that he had made some valid points regarding the consultation/community involvement strategy carried out by Gentoo, whilst this was not for discussion here, he requested that Gentoo take these points on board.

Councillor G. Walker commented that at this moment in time as he was not familiar with the space at all, he felt he would benefit from the application being deferred pending a site visit. There were arguments about use of the

green space and if Members were to be on site and take a closer look at the potential of the development for the area and how this physically affects the green space that the Committee would benefit from this.

Councillor F. Miller commented that her concern was over the affordable housing aspect and that she had been told this would be social housing, which was really what she wanted to see more of in the area. As she had worked in a food bank recently she really did appreciate the work done by Gentoo and she was hoping this was what was planned as it was so important that people do get housing.

The City Solicitor advised that he had completed the draft Section 106 agreement, subject to approval being granted and could confirm that it would be for 13 houses to be let at an affordable rent.

Councillor F. Miller commented that if this was the case, then this seemed to be a win win situation because it was so important we got people in to housing and she felt Washington was full of green spaces and trees. Teal Farm was only over the road from this development and if we were giving 13 families a chance of a house over their head then it made sense.

Councillor Armstrong commented that there had been some strong representations made to the Committee and that the people who had spoken were very concise in informing of the reality in which they experienced and viewed this proposal and the assessments carried out.

The site already had bats and animals that were living quite happily and the use of the green space by local children, residents and dog owners. The strength of feeling had definitely come through and to talk about improving an area, laying concrete does not improve the area ecologically and he was in agreement with Councillor G. Walker with the suggestion of deferral as he did not know how familiar Officers were with the area and it was definitely an area that needed to be seen with the traffic formidable and further investigation would not be a bad thing whilst also giving more time for residents to provide feedback.

Councillor Lauchlan formally proposed that the application be deferred for a site visit to be undertaken once safe to do so under the COVID restrictions. Councillor G. Walker seconded the proposal.

In response to the City Solicitor's enquiry over the reasons for deferral that had not been addressed at the meeting, Councillor Lauchlan advised that the photographs shown during the presentation could tell a lot of different stories and that Members needed to see how the road layout was, how much actual green space there was as he believed Members would have a false perception of how much was available based on the photos provided.

Councillor Lauchlan also commented that where they were proposing to put the road layout up to the back of Lowthian Terrace he did not believe

Members had the right view of the actual structure of that area and they needed to see for themselves what the possibilities are for that area.

The Development Control Manager commented that what was set out before Members was a very comprehensive report that had been thoroughly assessed over a number of weeks by all the relevant technical statutory and non-statutory bodies. The site was fully accessible and obviously given the restrictions with COVID , the Government had not allowed the Planning Authority any relaxations in terms of their determination timescales so applications had to be considered and determined in a timely manner.

Had the site not been fully accessible then it could be appreciated if Members had been unable to view the site and it was also understood that the application had appeared on the Matrix which had also given Member the opportunity to request a site visit, Therefore the Development Control Manager commented that for the reasons set out she did not feel Members would gain anything further if they had not already visited the site.

Having been put to a vote, it was unanimously agreed to defer determination of the application so that a site visit could be undertaken.

3. RESOLVED that the application be deferred for a site visit to be undertaken.

**20/01136/FUL – Erection of a detached house (bungalow). (Amended Plans received 15.10.20) – Garden of 18 Hillview Road, Newbottle, Houghton Le Spring, DH4 4SH**

The Planning Officer representing the Executive Director of City Development outlined the proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Julianna Heron who wished to speak in objection to the application. Councillor Heron informed the Committee that she had received a number of complaints from residents in the area and that historically the site had been left with a large garden in order to make it safer for the residents in that street and who had been told nothing would ever be built upon that site.

Councillor Heron acknowledged that she understood that the street elevation had changed and if this hadn't happened it would have been out of sync with the rest of the street and as mentioned in previous applications she felt it would have been beneficial for Members to have had site visit to this location.

Councillor Heron commented that she had problems with the highway layout as the turning area would be compromised especially with the new bungalow and would create access problems for properties 19, 20 and 21 on the opposite side of the road. The road narrowed as you reach the end as it was a cul-de-sac and people do park on the road despite also having driveways

which causes problems for bin wagons and emergency services if they needed to visit the site.

The residents did feel very strongly about this and they felt it would really create problems for them and had strong concerns about the building of the bungalow here.

The Planning Officer advised that in respect of any assurances given that the plot wouldn't be built upon, any such agreement would sit outside of planning considerations and the site hadn't been given any sort of formal protection and we were required to consider the proposal in line with national planning policies. The proposal had been considered on its merits and officers felt that the development was acceptable.

In respect of the concerns from objectors, appropriate consideration and weight had been given to those in the area but Officers were of the view that there were no issues raised by the development proposal that would warrant anything other than a recommendation for approval.

Access had been considered and the dwelling would benefit from an off-street parking space and the level of traffic that would be generated by the erection of one dwelling was going to be very low.

The Highways Officer advised that they had supported the application on the basis that off-street parking was provided for number 18 and the bungalow so based on that there was sufficient manoeuvring space to accommodate the proposal,

The Chairman introduced Mr John Waugh, who wished to speak as the agent on behalf of the applicant. Mr Waugh informed the Committee that the property had been designed as a lifetime home which had wider access, corridors and doors. A ground floor wet room with WC and would be an energy efficient, economical to run dwelling with good quality amenity space. These were all facilities that society now required and did not exist elsewhere on the estate.

The property was designed for young couples starting out in life, through family life and into single person retirement and had been professionally designed by the agent and assessed by professionals employed by the Council, who they had worked pro-actively with to progress locals concerns so that significant changes had been made, such that the Officer dealing with the application supported these proposals.

Conditions had been suggested to control the development upon which the client had found to be acceptable and he hoped that the Committee would support this application.

4. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reasons set out within the report and subject to the 4 draft conditions contained therein.



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

(Signed) M. THORNTON,  
(Chairman)