

At a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (HETTON, HOUGHTON AND WASHINGTON) SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on WEDNESDAY, 13th JULY, 2016 at 5.45 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Walker in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Cummings, M. Dixon, Jackson, Lauchlan, Middleton, Mordey, W. Turton and P. Walker

Also in Attendance:-

Councillors Blackburn, Scullion and Turner

Declarations of Interest

16/00479/FUL – Change of use from care home to HMO at Manor House Nursing Home

Councillor Cummings made an open declaration in the above item and advised that he wished to speak in objection to the application. He left the room prior to the Committee's deliberations and decision making.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Porthouse, Scaplehorn and Taylor

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

The Executive Director of Commercial Development submitted a report (copy circulated), and report for circulation 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)

16/00479/FUL – Change of use from Care home to HMO (House in Multiple Occupation) for ex-servicemen/women with associated parking and landscaping (re-consultation – revised plans and additional information

received 03.06.2016) at Manor House Nursing Home, High Street, Easington Lane. Houghton le Spring, DH5 0HN

The representative of the Executive Director of Commercial Development presented the report advising of the principal of the proposal and the impact it would have and any implications in respect of highway and safety.

The Chairman advised that there were a number of speakers who wished to speak in relation to the application and welcomed Councillors Blackburn and Turner, along with Ms. C. Nelson and Ms. M. Francis, all of who wished to speak in objection to the application. He also welcomed Mr. R. Fox who was in attendance to speak in favour of the application and on behalf of the applicant.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Blackburn to address the Committee in the first instance, who thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of residents of the local community. He explained that Easington Lane was a small and tight knit community with a number of generations of families living in the area and that he had never experience another issue which had caused as much turmoil as this application had with the residents.

He explained that in September, 2013 the Care Quality Commission had carried out an inspection of the then Manor House Care Home premises and on the third day the owners decided to close the facility with immediate effect due to receiving a result of 'inadequate.' Following this, in 2015, a planning application had been submitted to convert the empty property in an apart hotel which would consist mainly of single room accommodation without en suite facilities. At this time the local community had raised major concerns over the proposed application and the application was withdrawn by the applicant at the meeting where it was to be considered for decision.

Cllr Blackburn advised that he had spoken with the applicant outside of the meeting who had advised that they were considering using the property to house ex armed forces personnel who may be experiencing difficulty in obtaining housing. At that time Councillor Blackburn advised that he had suggested that, should this be the direction they did decide to move forward in then they should consider holding a public meeting in the area to allow residents to share their concerns and raise any issues for discussion with the applicant, this never occurred and the application being considered today was submitted.

He advised that to date there had been over six hundred objections lodged against the proposed use of the property. After considering commented made to them the applicant reduced the number of bedrooms to be available in the property but did not set out clearly how many person could accommodate each of the rooms which the community felt was vital information. Further information had been provided which advised that there would be one person per each bedroom and therefore this would equate to 19 residents, maximum, at any one time.

Councillor Blackburn advised that to the rear of the premises were some bungalows for the elderly and that several of these properties were overlooked by the Manor

House property. Residents were concerned about the loss of privacy and amenity, to such an extent that one resident had already vacated her property.

In closing Councillor Blackburn commented that evidence from the Strategic Housing Department suggested that there was very little, if any, demand for this type of establishment within the area or Sunderland and as such, although residents were fully supportive of ex armed forces personnel, this application would not enhance the lives of those people the application was suggesting it may benefit and therefore it was requested that the application be refused.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Blackburn for his thorough comments and invited Councillor Turner to address the Committee.

Councillor Turner advised that she objected to the changing of the Care Home to a Home of Multiple Occupancy for two main reasons; area and car parking.

With regards to area, she commented that Easington Lane was a village and that the property was situated within a residential area within a very close knit community and surrounded by elderly people's bungalows. She did not feel that the proposed property was in keeping with the surrounding environment.

She also commented that the previous application had led to speculation from residents in the area that due to their only being single rooms and shared facilities that it would be used a hostel and a petition had been drawn up in objection to that application.

Councillor Turner advised that she had been informed by a representative of the applicant at the site visit that application by ex-service personnel would be vetted before securing accommodation within the property and that they would be expected to attend Houghall College to study horticulture and work on a farm. She felt that ex service personnel would already be trained in engineering, driving, medics, catering, etc. and therefore did not see the demand for the provision. She commented that at any one time there would be a maximum of 19 residents within the property and as Easington Lane was 9 miles from the nearest city of Sunderland and 8 miles from Durham residents would find themselves in the village where there would be very few activities and could see groups of young men and women congregating outside of the home drinking.

With regards to her second objection, car parking, Councillor Turner commented that if all of the residents owned a vehicle then there would not be enough room within the car park provision to accommodate them all.

In closing, councillor Turner commented that she did not feel that the property was suitable as a house of multiple occupancy because of its close proximity to houses, especially the bungalows, the camber on the road which was bad in icy conditions and the possibility of anti-social behaviour, especially if there was not demand for ex service personnel in need of accommodation in the area and therefore requested that Members refuse the application.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Turner for her comments and invited Ms. Francis and Ms. Turner to address the Committee in turn. Ms. Francis and Ms. Turner advised the Committee that having heard the comments already made by Councillors Blackburn and Turner they felt that all of their points had been raised, and not wishing to repeat the same information, did not wish to speak on this instance.

The Chairman invited Councillor Cummings to address the Committee, who had asked to speak in objection to the application.

Councillor Cummings explained that his main concerns over the proposed application were what may happen going forward should the application be approved; the inadequate number of parking spaces to occupants; and the lack of demand for this provision in the area.

He expanded by advising that he did not think that the application demonstrated any need for this type of provision in the area or show a trend for future demand to remain and sustain the provision should it be approved. He commented that there were concerns around the occupants of the development should the application be approved and then the demand not be there in the future, this gave resident a fear factor as to what could follow in the future, although he was fully aware that the application had to be determined on the information set out in the proposed application before them.

He also felt that the number of parking spaces was too few for a property that could, if filled to maximum numbers be housing 19 people. He commented that he could not imagine the majority of the residents not having vehicles and requiring parking facilities. He also referred to the infrastructure of public transport to allow the residents to attend sites of further education. He did not feel that the travel infrastructure would support the residents getting to sites to study or work as young people in the area already struggled to access similar sites to study at colleges and training centres.

Councillor Cummings also referred to the fact that there was no indication of the quality of the refurbished accommodation that was to be on offer and this would be a key indicator to the level of resident. Having raised all of the above points he commented that he struggled to find the positive in approving the application for this provision in the area.

Councillor Walker thanked all of the objectors for their comments and invited Mr. Fox to speak to the Committee on behalf of the applicant.

Mr Fox thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present his case on behalf of the applicant and began by clarifying that a number of the major landlords in the city, including Gentoo and Castle Dene Housing had an allocation in the local area that had accommodation for single housing occupancy and that it was difficult to secure. He explained to Members that over the last two years they had rehomed 107 individuals through the charity but that they had had to use hotels and bed and breakfasts as stop gap accommodation until rehousing as they had no multiple

occupancy properties to place them in and that this could prove very costly and the funds were needed up front.

Mr Fox explained that at present individuals received around £45 per week housing benefit and that landlords would not offer a single person a 2 bedroom flat or property so the availability of suitable, affordable accommodation was low.

With regards to the quality of the rooms that were to be made available within the development, Mr. Fox advised that renovations were currently on-going to make each of the room en suite and that there would be cooking facilities but they would be offering breakfast and evening meals to residents.

Any persons using the facility must be actively seeking full time employment or enrolled upon a training scheme and then taken to a regional farm to help in providing their own food sources. Alongside this there would be a number of other activities to ensure their time was filled.

He explained that ex service personnel using the facility would be signposted in the direction they wished to develop themselves and that they would be offered advice upon any aspects including housing, training, etc. and that they would each be vetted so it would not be used as a centre for any individuals who had specific needs or issues that may need a higher level of support.

The Chairman thanked Mr Fox for his presentation and invited the Officers to address any further issues.

The Highways Officer referred to the concerns around the car parking provision and advised that they had looked at the previous use and that this proposal of use was less intensive than the previous of the care home. He explained that the UDP guidance was 1:3 on a bedroom basis and the proposed provision met this requirement and was therefore correct in relation to this application. He explained that the property was also in close proximity to bus stops and the local public transport provision but the Council were not responsible for delivery of this transport.

In response to a question from Councillor Jackson as to who was responsible for the vetting and criteria for potential residents of the property, Mr. Fox advised that it would be undertaken by Veterans Plus UK and that applicants had to be CRB checked, with a reference from the Ministry of Defence and then take part in an interview process. Any residents with care plans in relation to drugs, alcohol or PSD issues would need to provide a doctors letter of support but they could only request this information and not enforce it.

Continuing on, asking what would happen if a resident became involved in unacceptable behaviour, Mr. Fox advised that they would not 'kick out' a resident as they did have a certain duty of care to residents but they would be looked to move to supported housing units located elsewhere such as Catterick or Durham. He explained that none of the residents would be homeless ex service personnel but rather those who were leaving the forces and wanted some where to stay that still offered some level of military regime whilst offering them support in their return to mainstream employment. It was expected that residents would stay a maximum of a

12 month tenancy agreement and that within that time they were supported in securing their own accommodation.

Having fully considered the report and being put to the vote, it was:-

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

16/00504/VAR – Variation of condition 11 (Construction Method Statement) of application 14/00671/OUT – Demolition of existing buildings and structures and the redevelopment for up to 144 dwellings and associated landscaping, access and other engineering works (All Matters Reserved) at Shiney Row Centre, Success Road, Houghton le Spring, DH4 4TL

The representative of the Executive Director of Commercial Development having advised the committee that the expiry date for the consultation period had passed and that no objections had been received, it was:-

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

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 application advising that the proposed use of the unit as a trampoline park (use class D”) was not consistent with the list of appropriate land uses as identified for Hertburn Industrial Park by policies EC4 and WA1 of the adopted UDP and draft policies CS3.3 and DM3.1 of the Council’s emerging Core Strategy and that there is no evidence that this unit and neighbouring units were proving difficult to let

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Cottam to the meeting who had requested to speak in favour of the application and on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Cottam provided Members with hand-outs and visuals to show the proposals of the development of the unit should the application be approved. He informed the Committee that the LPPF does involve the social and economic aspects of an application to be considered and he felt that the benefits this application would bring to the area and city were valid to allow the application to be approved. He further advised that it would bring a much needed leisure facility to the area and provide an additional 41 jobs for local people, whereas should the unit be used it would only allow the employment of 10-12 positions.

He informed Members that the Fun Shack Group was a family run North East based business who had resided in Washington for the last 18 years and that the Washington site would be a £1.8 million project as the site was currently in a derelict

state with work required for a new roof and exterior work which it would look to be contracted out to local tradesmen.

He referred to the other similar provision in Sunrise Park and advised that it had been granted consent and it had been concluded that there had been no detrimental impact on the remaining employment areas and that he felt that this application did not really undermine the surrounding area and opportunities for further developments.

As a business they were keen to promote getting children to be more active and live healthier lifestyles and offered free school sessions to local schools and fitness classes for both adults and children.

In closing, he commented that any prospective occupier of the unit would need to spend considerable money and that as far as they were aware the only other interest in the property was merely an enquiry from another business who were also considering alternative properties elsewhere and therefore was not guaranteed to proceed.

Councillor P. Walker commented that it was about getting the balance right in the area and having seen the unit derelict and on the market for a number of months it would be nice to see it brought back into use with facilities for the local community and not remain the eyesore that the building had become. He appreciated the reasons as to why the application had been recommended for refusal as it was not appropriate use of the land but he could see the benefit of what the application had to offer to the surrounding Washington area and further.

Councillor Mordey commented that he would also welcome the addition of the facility to the city and asked if Officers could work with the applicant to find other suitable properties anywhere else in the city. The Planning Officer commented that these discussions could be carried out with the Business Investment Team who could look to meet the developers requirements.

Councillor Lauchlan commented that he felt that the unit had been vacant for much longer than the 12 months referred to and asked if the Committee could be advised of any serious expressions of interest that had been made in the unit as he would be concerned if they were to refuse a valid application to improve the site and then it would remain derelict and vacant even further into the future.

Councillor Bell moved to defer the application to allow Officers to gather further information on the potential for other proposals for the unit, and it having been seconded by Councillor Mordey, and put to the vote, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the application be deferred to allow further information to be sought on behalf of the Committee.

16/00954/TP3 – Fell 2 no. young Ash trees to rear of no. 16 Morningside, fell Sycamore to rear of no. 11 Morningside and fell Ash, Sycamore and Pine and

prune Sycamore to read of no 10 Morningside at the rear of 10 and 11 and side of 16 Morningside

4. RESOLVED that consent be granted for the proposed tree works to be undertaken for the reasons as set out in the report and subject to the two conditions detailed therein.

Items for Information

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

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - Appeals

6. RESOLVED that the appeals received and determined between 1st and 30th June, 2016 be received and noted.

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

(Signed) G. WALKER,
Chairman.