

**At an extraordinary meeting of the PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS (WEST) COMMITTEE held remotely on TUESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Thornton in the Chair.

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

**Declarations of Interest**

**20/01360/FUL Erection of 86 no. residential dwellings (Class C3) – Land at Cragdale Gardens, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton-le-Spring**

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

Councillor P. Walker made an open declaration on the item as a former employee of Gentoo and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item

**Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report and circulatory 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)

**20/01360/FUL Erection of 86 no. residential dwellings (Class C3) – Land at Cragdale Gardens, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton-le-Spring**

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 enquired if officers could confirm that the additional Section 106 money for play sites was to upgrade the play area that was closed at present within Peat Carr. The Planning Officer advised that the Section 106 money was ringfenced to the Hetton Ward so it would be possible to upgrade that particular play area.

In response to Councillor G. Walkers query as to why it was acceptable to only have one parking space per household rather than two, the Highways Officer advised that one space was our current adopted parking standards which was applicable to planning applications at this moment in time.

Councillor Blackett referred to the additional money proposed to mitigate for the ecological issues and the loss of open space aspects and enquired if there was there any more detail as to how this money would actually be spent. Councillor Blackett commented that he understood that the money would facilitate staffing to maintain the area over a couple of years but in the long term how would the money mitigate for the green space lost

The Planning Officer advised with reference to the contribution for ecology, this was a specific contribution to offset from the impact of the local wildlife site so there was specific criteria for the spending of that money such as the management and maintenance of the site, to improve the acid grassland that was particularly characteristic of that local wildlife site.

With regard to the other contributions for the loss of open space and the maintenance of others, the Hetton Ward had a high quantity of green space but did not have a high quality of green space so this section 106 money would go towards improving the quality of green space. The Planning Officer also advised that there was green space retained immediately adjacent to the development site and it was possible this site would benefit from the section 106 money.

Councillor Blackett referred to the Draft Allocation and Designation Plan mentioned and noticed within the paperwork that the consultation for that would not end until mid February and raised concerns that the residents views were not being taken into account and enquired as to what would happen to that consultation now.

The Planning Officer informed the Committee that the consultation was ongoing and whilst the Allocations Plan was a material consideration, it had very limited weight at the moment because it was only within the first stage of its consultation and was not an adopted document. The consultation sat outside of this part of the Planning process, within the Planning Policy Team so people could still make their representations on that but this application did not affect that at all.

Councillor Lauchlan commented that he was disappointed to see that it was proposed to be building upon green space once again but he had visited the

site and he did understand that it was a massive area and that there would be a lot of green space area left.

Councillor Lauchlan also commented that he was concerned how we considered the NE4 Criterion 3 & 4 and the impression that these conditions can be bought their way out of. These conditions were supposed to be there as way of protection.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Kay Rowham of Hetton Town Council who wished to speak in objection to the application. Councillor Rowham informed the Committee that this application was proposing to build upon amenity green space that had been allocated within the same UDP policy as the allocation's for outdoor sports facilities, the campaign to protect rural England's letter to Planning objects to this development on the grounds that there were no material considerations that justify departing from the fact that the site was clearly marked as open countryside in figure 29 in the SCSDP and that these areas should be protected from inappropriate development.

The report failed to address why the council recommended this planning application be approved yet refused planning approval to a local resident whose home was on the same title deed as this green space, citing policy B3 of the UDP which stated that public and private open space should be protected from development which would have a serious adverse effect and impact upon its amenity. The report also failed to address that granting approval would result in the loss of 50% of existing parking within Ennerdale Street or that the traffic statement was not an accurate reflection of the ongoing traffic issues at peak times as lockdown had just been enforced at that time.

Councillor Rowham commented that the report failed to acknowledge that Northumbria Police had considered the possible increase of crime due to this development was high. This application relied upon two claims which were being used in an attempt to override the constraints of the Sunderland Core Strategy and Development Plan and retained UDP Policy. The first claim was that it was okay for local people to lose their green space if good quality alternative green space was provided elsewhere and a contribution of monies was made and the play space area to be upgraded and maintained. Although the report admits that the quality of the green space and others in Hetton are poor, it failed to suggest where the elderly, the infirm and those with young families that did not have car could travel to as the steep climb to Moorsley bank was not an option.

Councillor Rowham commented that no Council should accept Section 106 monies, in this case approximately £60,000 from Gentoo, to then give it back to Gentoo to pay them to maintain the play area that it had failed to upkeep since it had acquired from the Council during the housing stock transfer nearly 20 years ago.

Councillor Rowham commented that the second claim related to the lack of affordable housing and stated that residents in Hetton believed this to be

untrue as there was no housing shortage in Hetton, affordable or otherwise as there were a number of empty Gentoo properties within Low Moorsely and Peat Carr as well as a plentiful supply of reasonably priced private properties for sale and rent throughout the area. According to the ONS, Sunderland's population on the whole has been declining for years so unless the Council planned to import hundreds of people from other areas, this claim was simply not true. The ONS also expected the entire population of the whole of the North East to increase by just 2.3% (61,000 people) from 2018 – 2028.

Councillor Rowham commented that even if the two claims were acceptable, they were not material planning considerations and she believed it was shameful in the way that Gentoo had rushed through this proposal in less than 9 months, Shameful in the way that the Planning department had appeared to have aided and abetted Gentoo in assisting them.

Councillor Rowham proposed on behalf of Hetton Town Council, that this Committee refuse the application on the grounds that there were no material considerations that justified the departure from the recently adopted SCSDP and that the land should be protected from inappropriate development as represented by the campaign to protect rural England.

The Chairman introduced Councillor James Blackburn who wished to speak in objection to the application. Councillor Blackburn informed the Committee that he had been a past member of Planning Committees in which he had to decide whether Planning Officers had made the right decision when recommending to approve a planning application and he knew how difficult this was for Members, especially when under pressure from constituents.

Councillor Blackburn commented that those applications he determined, paled in significance to this application submitted by Gentoo which sought to take away a grassed area which had been enjoyed by residents for decades and to be replaced with a brick jungle.

Councillor Blackburn commented that it was not a good enough reason that just because Gentoo owned the land, that it could be used for housing, especially when they could have used brownfield land that was also within their ownership and also within the Hetton Ward. This would then have averted the biggest outpouring of public condemnation against a planning application that he had experienced in his many years as a Ward Councillor.

Councillor Blackburn stated that this application, if approved could affect the lives of many of their residents in four villages within the Sunderland City Council Hetton Ward for almost two years with the extra traffic and the pollution from builders and delivery vehicles. The applicant intended to build almost 90 new houses right in the middle of a former council housing estate which had been left undisturbed for over 50 years. The amount of wagons, plant equipment, building materials and manpower that would need to travel along an unclassified road with older peoples bungalows situated along it, before turning to travel for more than 200 metres along a housing estate road to the actual building site was numerous.

Over the build period, the disturbance from increased traffic flow would encompass two 6 week summer holidays, 2 autumn school holidays, 2 Christmas school holidays and at least 1 easter school holiday. The very time children would be out playing and riding bikes on these very roads.

Councillor Blackburn informed the Committee that he was a governor of Hetton Primary School, which Council Members had just agreed to fund the building of a new school for, the site for the school was approximately 300-400 metres from this application site that was situated on the approach road for the applicants site. This new school would be constructed over the same period as the Cragdale Gardens application if Members were to accept the Officers recommendation.

Councillor Blackburn stated that it was the Committees responsibility to determine this application and unlike Planning Officers who must follow planning rules, Members also represent the residents of Sunderland and must balance the human cost against what was being recommended and this could be used as a possible reason to reject this application and urged Members to do just that.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Doris Turner who wished to speak in objection to the application. Councillor Turner informed the Committee that as one of the three Ward Councillors for the Hetton Ward, she supported the residents in objecting to this proposal.

Councillor Turner commented that if the development was to go ahead, it would deprive residents of key recreational space. Regarding the consultants report agreed by Highways which stated there was less car ownership on council housing estates, whilst this may be true on estates nearer a City Centre where there was at least 3 public service bus companies operating, plus metro stations and a railway station, however in rural areas such as Hetton, they had one public service bus company and a mini link which operated around three housing estates but not to the Peat Carr housing estate therefore anyone who did not work locally and had to travel (especially if they were on shift work) a car was a necessity.

Councillor Turner believed there had not been enough consideration given on car parking facilities on the proposed development. Regarding public service transport, the report mentioned that bus stops were within the desired distance from the proposed estate, which would be fine if there was a direct bus but if a resident required to travel to Durham, Dalton Park or Seaham on a Sunday they were required to travel to Houghton firstly, then change buses once again.

Also, there were less bus services on a Sunday which resulted in long waiting times. There was a bus shelter in North Road but there had been no bus services along this route for years. The report states that buses go direct to Boldon but does not mention that the Heworth bus is only running on evenings, replacing the Boldon bus which operated during the day, therefore

public service transport was inadequate for the needs of residents living in the Peat Carr area. The corner of Coal Bank Square was very narrow and cars were normally parked there, where this led to Coal Bank Road the traffic came to Low Moorsley Road, which was an unclassified road and led to a junction which was subject to great traffic, a bottleneck at peak times due to the traffic coming from Rainton Bridge Business Park. Most people who are familiar with this junction avoid it by using the Peat Carr Housing Estate as a rat run.

Councillor Turner informed the Committee that she had lived most of her life a few yards off the A182 and since the building of all of these housing developments over the past few years, together with extra employment that the Council had brought to the area such as Rainton Bridge Business Park and Hetton Lyons Industrial Estate, whilst an asset to the area it had also brought a huge increase in road traffic and also an increase in the size of the lorries that utilised the roads. These lorries had a great difficulty in negotiating the many roundabouts.

It was a nightmare around School closing times and peak times when commuters were travelling home from work. Councillor Turner felt that there should be no further plans for house building in the area until the road structure was improved.

Councillor Turner commented that if this development went ahead the proposed development of Hetton Primary School would be taking place at the same time which again would add to more traffic congestion, especially when the schools were fully occupied.

The Chairman introduced Ms Lyndsey Gibson who wished to speak in opposition to the proposal. Ms Gibson stated that the three sections of the proposed development did have covenants on the land and these were not just with the Coal Board and had been placed there to stop anything being built upon the land. Residents have had to adhere to these covenants on the land so why shouldn't Gentoo.

Should a development go ahead it would mean that the current residents would lose light and privacy due to the design of the plans and despite the officers comments about the 21 metres distancing, they would still lose this.

If the Houses were built, this would go against the Councils Core Strategy and Development Plan which was only adopted in January 2020. This stated that Green Spaces would be protected. Paragraph 2.24 of the Strategy stated that there would be an improvement in the infrastructure therefore Ms Gibson questioned where the evidence was of an improvement in the area prior to building these 86 dwellings. The area has one small post office with a shop attached and a takeaway, this was not good enough to support this.

Without the correct infrastructure in place and this large number of additional houses, there would be overcrowding in their area. Traffic issues were an ongoing problem already and the roads feed the 3 main schools and the traffic

report carried out did not show a true reflection of the situation as the vast majority of traffic observed was completed during COVID where many schools were closed or operating at reduced capacity and many people were working from home. A further 86 homes would generate many more cars and congestion in this area and create a further danger to their children that are crossing roads that did not have any patrols on.

Ms Gibson referred to the census figures used which were from 2011 and requested this be investigated and also referred to questions raised on the Planning Portal about the strength of the Transport Statement provided, questions claiming that the statement was flawed in its findings and its recommendations could not be trusted for various reasons. Ms Gibson enquired as to why these questions have not been answered to date.

Ms Gibson advised that the parking along the proposed entrance and exits currently struggle to accommodate the current residents. More houses, especially along Ennerdale Street would leave current residents with nowhere to park outside of their own homes. There was currently a public consultation on the closure of Hetton Nursery and if this development were to go ahead, they would have approximately another 150 vehicles using this road at peak times as they would be using Hetton Primary School.

Ms Gibson stated that the crime rate in the area was high and the Police had expressed a concern that more houses could generate further anti social issues. The proposed developer, Gentoo, did not maintain this area to a high standard with many homes having single glazing and long waiting times for repairs. The park had been closed for a long time, yet Gentoo were proposing to pay Section 106 money to regenerate a park that they already owned and should have maintained.

Ms Gibson questioned why the Peat Carr and Moorsley community should lose their playing fields when it had been commented that the Section 106 money may not even come back to those communities and actually be used in the Hetton area.

There was many empty properties in the Coalfield area and recent reports had shown 64 houses, 20 bungalows, 19 supported accommodation units that were empty, These were just Council owned properties alone, not forgetting the extensive list of Gentoo empty homes, private rented homes and homes that were for sale in the area, which were affordable. There was no need for more affordable homes in this area and what residents needed was the area brought to a better standard.

If Gentoo wanted to make a difference to bring a stronger, happier community they needed to listen to the residents and not go against their wishes and leave the much needed green space which had played a vital role during this COVID outbreak.

Ms Gibson advised that she had just been made aware of the Draft Allocations and Designations Plan, designations which includes the said land

and this document was only out for consultation until the 12<sup>th</sup> February and she proposed that she would like to make representations opposing this allocation.

Ms Gibson also raised concerns that information for the Committee had only been produced within the last day or so, this included a recommendation and list of conditions which she believed recipients should have had more time to consider and did not comply with the 5 day notice for such documents.

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

A Ms Niki Thompson submitted a representation stating why she felt that permission should not be granted.

The 8 properties designated for the south west of the development (opposite those already on Ennerdale Street) would create loss of light during winter months and loss of privacy at all times.

The sun rises lower in the sky over the winter months and the building of 2 storey houses directly to the south and in a position higher than that of the original properties on Ennerdale street would cause light to be blocked during the short winter months. The loss of privacy to those properties was also generated for the same reason as mentioned before the proposed builds would sit higher than the original houses. This would cause them to overlook straight into the main living quarters of those already living on Ennerdale Street where the living room and master bedroom were all located at the front of the properties. There had been no allowance to counteract this and the large window design along with the open driveway design on the new properties only seek to enhance this.

The whole area was covered by Title Deed TY372188 this is further broken down into a number of areas. The proposed development covers 4 of those areas all of which have covenants on. The first and forth schedule state "No building structure or works shall at any time be erected constructed placed or laid on or in the said land or any part or parts thereof". It also states, "the purchaser will at all times hereafter perform and observe the restrictions and stipulations contained within". The purchaser is Gentoo as they received the land on 31 July 2007 according to the transfer of whole title deeds. So therefore, the purchaser should be upholding the covenants regarding the land or applying to the Land Registry to have the restrictive covenants removed.

Ms Thompson stated that she was a local resident and was subject to the same covenants and when she purchased her land from Gentoo she was informed that no building was to take place on the land as it fell under a restrictive covenant. It cannot be one rule for one and one for another surely, as it all falls under the same title deed.



The increase in use of Moorsley Road both pedestrian and vehicular poses an issue, Ms Thompson was aware that the survey was carried out during a reduced traffic period (during a national lockdown) and showed no issues. As a paramedic she had attended a recent RTC on the road of which injuries were sustained, the road is narrow and although holds a 30 MPH limit this is often not adhered to, the minimum she would like to see is the placement of a puffin crossing to allow children, those children from the 86 family houses, to cross the road to get to 2 schools safely.

Ms Thompson advised that they also highlight in your letter that cycling could be utilised, the nearest cycle route is the off road route along the old train lines this could be acceptable if it wasn't littered with a vast amount of broken glass and burned out equipment (where Moorsley Road crosses over it and it goes under the bridge next to the school) this area has even been off limits to local Firefighters who have been pelted with stones when attending such incidents, I would suggest it is not very safe for the average commuter on their way home.

The report also highlights the recreational facility of Elmore Golf Club, this facility has had to close down due to the amount of illegal motorcycle use and its inability to maintain the grounds. So, recreation facilities in the immediate vicinity are limited, limited to a poorly maintained local play park which was locked prior to the national lockdown in March. This lack of facilities for the new development would lead to over development of a suburb of the town and possible over development of the town of Hetton le Hole if you take into consideration the recent new build estates which satellite it, Easington Lane and North Road are just 2 of the new developments that may fall into Hetton as the local resource for shopping and recreation.

A brownfield site was previously allocated for a housing development opportunity in the Low Moorsley area (in accordance with the Sunderland 2019 Brownfield Land Register) should this not be used before destroying greenfield sites. The planning permission for this development also stated that the proposed A690 - A182 link road would offer new residents a safer commute to work and reduce the flow of traffic on minor roads. This road is yet to be finished. The Core Strategy paragraph 4.26 – states “Prior to considering amending the Green Belt boundaries, the council has taken a proactive approach to identify alternative sources of land supply. If this is the case, then should the brownfield site not be developed first? The council also state with the Core Strategy that the Coalfield area “In seeking to meet the city's agreed housing need over the plan period, the council has demonstrated that all sustainable non-Green Belt site alternatives have been fully considered and exhausted (including full consideration of site densities).” This is not the case if the brownfield site still exists. It would appear neither of these have been taken into consideration.

The Highways Officer referred to representations made in relation to on street parking around and on Ennerdale itself and advised that it had been

confirmed during the presentation that this development would not result in the loss of on street parking and there would still be the opportunity for residents of Ennerdale to park outside their homes if they so wish.

In terms of trip generation, whilst acknowledging the application had been submitted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to state that the Traffic flows considered were over previous years, prior to March 2019. This had been discussed with the applicants transport consultant. In relation to the development itself and traffic generation, a development of this scale was considered by Highways Officers and they were satisfied with the suitability of the access and the trips associated with this could be accommodated on the highways network.

With regards to construction traffic, it was clear that this site would need construction access in order to build, but this could be managed and the normal process would be through a Construction Management Plan which was usually a planning condition and subject to the determination of this application, the developer would need to agree suitable measures and routes for construction traffic so they could ensure that there was no detrimental impact upon the safe operation of the network.

The Highways Officer advised that the level of car parking provision on this development was based on a minimum of 1 parking space per property, which was appropriate for a development of this scale. The points raised on public transport, based on the location of the development, it was an unfortunate reality that there would be a need for residents who wished to use the bus to have to change buses and use other networks in order to travel to Durham for example.

The visibility of Moorsely Road had been assessed and was adequate. In relation to the query made around questions made in 2011, these concerns did not relate to traffic but concerning the last census that was undertaken in 2011 which was used to inform on journeys to work and other sites so it was about understanding how trips spread across the network and looking at the destinations that people wanted to travel to.

With regards to a puffin crossing and cycling, the Highways Officer stated that they did encourage cycling and the request for a puffin crossing was something which sat outside of this application and the Council would need to consider this as part of the new Hetton Primary School and other schools.

The Planning Officer referred to the restricted covenant and informed the Committee that it was important to stress to Members that covenants were not material planning considerations, they sat outside of planning legislation and it was very common to grant planning permission on areas that had restricted covenants and it would be down to the owner of the site to have those covenants removed through legislation that sits outside of the planning process.

Regarding the UDP Policy allocation of the site, the application was a departure from the Plan and the Planning Officer advised that the Plan was a 23 year old policy and was significantly out of date and she believed the Council's aspirations had changed as had been shown by the emerging Allocations Plan so in respect of this, the planning application was a departure but had been publicised and advertised accordingly and reported to Members as such.

The Core Strategy Development Plan, the figure that was referred to by Councillor Rowham as showing the site as to be in open countryside, this was an error on behalf of the campaign to protect rural England who had misread that plan, the site was not in open countryside.

With regard to other applications made by private households which hadn't received planning permission, each application was judged on its own merits but with reference to that, there were significantly different considerations with regards to piecemeal developments from private householders to large scale developments of this type and also the B policies quoted from the UDP have now been replaced with Core Strategy policies.

The Planning Officer referred to representations made about concerns over where residents could go for recreation following this development and wished to point out that there was a large area of open space retained adjacent to Cragdale Gardens and Peat Carr Park. There was still green space available in the vicinity albeit at a reduced level.

In relation to the need for affordable housing in the area, the applicant was not required to evidence the need for affordable housing, there was no planning requirement for this however the Planning Officer did wish to point out that it was widely acknowledged that there was a national shortage of affordable housing and they had attached significant weight to the fact that there was 100% affordable housing proposed as part of this development.

With regard to objections made over Anti-Social behaviour and crime, there had been some comments received from the Police, however it could not be left to the Planning process to Police areas or to reduce crime levels. ASB was a matter for the Police and that was where it would need to be referred to. The design of the application before Members had natural surveillance, increased lighting and increased presence on site so this issue could not be given a lot of weight.

The Planning Officer referred to comments describing the development as a "brick jungle" and stated that there was still a significant amount of green space retained on the site and landscaping particularly between the properties to the North.

The Planning Officer also informed the Committee that the Authority could not control when applications were submitted and the Government had provided no dispensations for the ability to delay determining decisions during the

Pandemic and they had been told that it was business as usual from central government and that was the expectations placed upon them.

With regard to the construction whilst other developments construction were underway, when an application was granted, there usually is an implementation period of three years. We did not have any control over what point within that three years for construction to happen so it would be the case sometimes that different construction occurs together, this was unfortunate, but they could not control timings to that degree.

In relation to comments made about the circulatory report produced on the day, Ms Gibson was correct in stating that main agenda reports were required to be published with 5 days notice before the meeting and made public, that was what had happened in this case however it was normal practice when any minor issues or consultation responses remain outstanding for late sheets to be produced.

With regards to empty properties in the area and maintenance of existing housing stock, the planning authority could not address these issues and it may be for the application to answer.

The Planning Officer referred to concerns of overlooking and advised that this had been addressed within the presentation and whilst houses on Ennerdale Street would be able to see houses opposite, the spacing standards required were maintained so it was not considered that they could sustain a refusal on the basis of overlooking in that area. They had checked levels and differences in gradients on the site but the floor level was the same as the back of the pavement on the existing properties on Ennerdale Street so this had been taken into account.

The Planning Officer also informed the Committee that comments referring to this site as a green belt site were incorrect. This was not a green belt site but an area of green space therefore greenbelt policies did not apply.

With regards to Mr Newtons representation on the Planning Portal, the Planning Officer advised that this had been sent to colleagues within the Transportation Team to be specifically looked at, so it had been considered but every part of every individual representation does not get included within the agenda reports as these would result in huge agendas. The content of that submission had been considered and had been responded to by the Councils Highways Officers who considered the application and the supporting documents to be satisfactory and are acceptable in terms of impact on the road network and the proposed development meets the policy requirements.

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 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.

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 2187 dwellings. The SHLAA goes on to identify the importance of the Gentoo Affordable Housing Programme in meeting that affordable need and 86 dwellings was a significant contribution and as such carries significant weight in determining this scheme.

Ms Manson commented that at present Gentoo had over 15,000 people on the waiting list for a Gentoo home and whilst that would include a significant proportion of tenants already on the books looking to move to a bigger house or a house in a different area it was nevertheless a compelling figure of need being expressed. In terms of demands, Gentoo got on average 134 expressions of interest in every property that was advertised. This was based on existing stock and where new build stock was advertised, demand was significantly higher.

This need was likely to be exacerbated through the impact of the current Covid crisis that we continued to face 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 commented that the need for good quality affordable housing was significant and hence the importance of delivering this programme. It was also important to note that Gentoo were looking to invest in their current homes within the area as well with a spend of £5.6 million proposed over the next 5 year period to over 12,000 properties in Hetton, Peat Carr and Moorsley area.

Ms Manson referred to the economic benefit statement submitted with the application which emphasised a range of social and economic benefits with Officers mentioning the high design quality of the scheme.

In relation to comments made about security and police concerns, there was discussions with the Police Liaison Officer and the Urban Design Team and amendments made to the scheme so it would be a silver standard award designed scheme when completed, which demonstrated the approach to ensuring the minimising of any impact from crime.

In relation to comments made on parking standards, Ms Manson wished to emphasise that whilst the Councils parking standards was one parking space per dwelling, the scheme did provide two parking spaces for all the three and four bedroom dwellings and also visitor spaces so it did go above and beyond the parking requirements which would ensure no exacerbation of issues on site.

With regards to construction impacts and construction traffic, Gentoo were committed to working with the Highways Authority and the Construction and Environmental Management Plan would have to be approved by the Authority to minimise any impacts going forward.

Ms Manson turned to discussion of open space and the play areas that currently sit adjacent to the application site and as explained, the play area was closed due to vandalism but Gentoo did have proposals to bring forward vandal proof equipment at the appropriate time when we came out of this lockdown situation, currently all play facilities were closed in accordance with government guidelines.

In relation to the Section 106 money and the play contributions, Gentoo were willing to work with the Authority and the Town Council in terms of how those monies were to be spent, if to be spent on the land adjacent to the site or equally there was no issue on that money being spent elsewhere within Hetton, wherever that was considered the most appropriate place.

Ms Manson thanked Members for their time and asked that the application be approved.

Councillor F. Miller enquired what sort of work was planned by Gentoo to stop the vandalism that had been occurring to the Play park in the past. Ms Manson advised that the site itself, in the scheme that would come forward was to be designed in such a manner that it was as vandal proof as it could be in these circumstances. By increasing surveillance of the play area by the creation of the new residential community development on the adjacent land you would have an increased surveillance which would in effect assist in trying to minimise that vandalism that is taking place.

Councillor Armstrong enquired if there had been alternative areas of brownfield land that had been or could be considered, and if there was, why was an area of greenspace chosen instead.

Ms Manson advised that Members would be aware that it is the application before them that needed to be determined and she was not in a position to comment upon any alternative sites. This site had been well considered and they had worked closely to address all the issues, satisfy all policies and create a meaningful development that would address a lot of issues in the local area.

Councillor Blackett commented that thinking back to when the Core Strategy Plan was being considered not so long ago, Officers had told Members by

passing this they would be able to protect green sites. This plan was meant to last until 2033 and now a year or so later we were moving to a Draft Allocation Plan that allows the building on these sites and whilst he had heard what the Officers had reported they had admitted themselves that the green space in Hetton was of poor quality and he was not currently satisfied that the money being put aside would lead to a long-term improvement in quality.

Councillor Rowntree, duly seconded by Councillor G. Walker moved that the Officer recommendation be put to a vote.

Having been put to a vote, with 4 Members voting against and 3 Members abstaining, the Officer recommendation was rejected.

At this juncture it was advised that an alternative recommendation and suitable reasons for the motion would be needed.

Councillor Lauchlan suggested that the loss of green space was the fundamental reason for refusing this application. The NE4 Criterion 3 and 4 had not been satisfied and the provision of Section 106 monies did not override this. Councillor Armstrong commented that he would second this recommendation.

Having been put to the vote , with 7 Members voting in favour of the alternative recommendation, it was unanimously agreed that

1. RESOLVED that the application be refused.

**20/01722/LP3 – External highways works to provide over-flow (parent drop-off) car-parks and set down lay-by to Houghton Road, Hawthorn Street and Fairbairn Drive, to provide additional car-parking capacity to Newbottle Primary Academy – land Adjacent to Newbottle Primary Academy, Houghton Road, Newbottle, Houghton-le-Spring**

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.

2. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reason set out in the main report and subject to the conditions listed within the circulatory report

### **Items for Information**

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

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

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

(Signed) M. THORNTON,  
(Chairman)