

CONSULTATIONS FROM NEIGHBOURING COUNCILS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS – GATESHEAD COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's agreement to responses about to be made to consultations from neighbouring Councils about planning applications affecting sites close to the common boundary with the City of Sunderland.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Where the Council is consulted by a neighbouring authority on planning applications in its area which may have an impact on Sunderland's interests, the approval of the Planning and Highways Committee is required to agree the form of the proposed response.

3.0 CURRENT CONSULTATION (REF. 11/00366/CAA) AND RESPONSE

- 3.1 Sunderland City Council has recently been consulted by Gateshead Council on the planning application which is detailed below. The City Council's reference is 11/00366/CAA.

- 3.2 **Notifying Authority:-** Gateshead Council

Application no:- DC/11/00110/FUL
Applicant:- Northumbria Police Authority

Proposal:- Erection of building to provide firearms support unit, firearms training facility, ancillary office and training accommodation, external driver training area and associated parking.

Location:- Plot 1B, Follingsby Park, Follingsby Avenue, Felling, Gateshead

- 3.3 The proposal seeks to erect a new 6364 sq.m. facility on a vacant site on the southern edge of the Follingsby Park Industrial Park, which lies just to east of the A194(M), about 150m to the north of the Gateshead/Sunderland boundary and adjacent to the approved Green Belt. The 2.44 ha plot lies to the north of Follingsby Lane and south of Follingsby Avenue. Land to the east and north has already been developed and a small vacant site will remain to the west (see Appendix 1)

- 3.4 The proposal seeks the erection of a new regional centre for Northumbria Police to provide improved driving and firearms training facilities. The facility would replace existing outmoded facilities in Jarrow, Ponteland and West Whelpington. The proposal would see the vacant site on the industrial park developed with buildings of a similar type to those already built on the industrial park providing employment for some 104 staff. Outline consent for the industrial park was granted in December 1993 for B1, B2 and B8 uses.
- 3.5 The development comprises two principal elements. The first is the firearms support unit, which consists of a two-storey building located on the eastern part of the site, which will accommodate firearms ranges, a hydra suit and ancillary accommodation such as offices, meeting rooms and a gym. It will also include a secure vehicle car parking area for operational vehicles. This building has been arranged around two 60 metre indoor firing ranges, which sit one on top of the other, along the western elevation. The building has a total floorspace of 5594 sq m. The height of the building is similar to a number of the larger warehouse units within Follingsby Park, at approximately 12 metres to the top of the stacked ranges
- 3.6 The second element comprises an external tactical driver-training facility of some 770 sq.m., located on the western part of the site that will consist of a series of stage set blocks to provide a simulation of various street scene scenarios. It will provide the opportunity to train for approach and entry into buildings for a range of situations and building types. To ensure privacy, this will be located behind a secure three metre fence.
- 3.7 The exterior of both elements will be clad in materials similar to those used extensively throughout Follingsby Industrial Park.
- 3.8 Through the use of a solar water heating array, rainwater harvesting and lighting absence controls the scheme achieves over 15% CO2 savings compared to a typical installation of this type. The scheme therefore is sustainable in terms of energy use.

Access and Car Parking

- 3.8 Access into the site is segregated between operational vehicles and private, staff vehicles. The main access off Follingsby Avenue will provide access into the main parking area, which will provide spaces for 75 (including 4 for disabled users) private vehicles. The number of spaces has been based on a detailed analysis of shift patterns and the training courses, which will be run on the site, to assess the maximum possible occupancy of the building.
- 3.9 Operational vehicles will access the site and their own secure parking (23 spaces) compound. In addition to the car parking provision for private and operational vehicles, 14 spaces are provided on the site for cyclists and 2 for motorcycle users.
- 3.10 Access /egress to the operational parking is proposed via a secondary gate located off the eastern access road. This will provide the means of exit for

vehicles responding to an emergency call. The two points of access/egress are linked within the site to provide alternative means of leaving the site should an incident occur.

Landscaping

- 3.11 The proposals include for 0.53 hectares of the site (22%) on the southern and eastern boundaries to be subject to a programme of landscape improvements. This will consist of vegetation removal, new planting and the introduction of hedgerows and a new pond to support the existing flora and fauna on the site.
- 3.12 Following initial site surveys, it was revealed that the proposed site supports populations of *Triturus cristatus* (Great Crested Newt) within ponds and surrounding habitats. Great Crested Newts are protected under British and European law, and under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Subsequently, the proposed landscape strategy has been shaped by the combined objectives of providing a successful habitat in which Great Crested Newts can be protected and prosper, while also supporting a functional site that meets the needs of the Police Authority.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The principle of the development is considered to be acceptable. The key issues to consider in relation to this proposal from the City Councils perspective are:
- (i) the visual impact of the proposal on the Green Belt;
 - (ii) the potential impact on highway safety; and
 - (iii) the potential noise impacts from the use.
- 4.2 In terms of the impact on visual amenity it is considered that as the design of the buildings is similar to those existing both on this industrial park and other similar sites within the city that these will not be significant. However, it should be borne in mind that the site is very close to the Tyne and Wear Green Belt boundary and new developments should not detract from the visual amenity of the Green Belt. The impact of the buildings and enclosures when viewed from the green belt can be reduced through sensitive landscaping. Gateshead Council should therefore be requested to ensure that the landscaping scheme for the site helps to mitigate any adverse impact on the Green Belt.
- 4.3 The proposal was accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, which indicate that the existing highway network is sufficient to cater for the envisaged traffic likely to be generated by the proposal. It is considered that by reducing the need for travel between the three existing facilities the proposed unit will be more sustainable in transport terms. It is not considered therefore that the proposal is likely to have any adverse impact on highway safety within the city council's boundary.
- 4.4 The Executive Director of City Services – Street Scene has commented that the nearest residential receiver is Follingsby Lane Farm, some 200m to the southeast of the site. The nearest residential receivers lying within the bounds of the City of

Sunderland are those houses on Dalmahoy, Washington some 1000m to the southwest. The nearest commercial receiver is the George Washington Golf Course some 500m to the south.

- 4.5 The applicants have provided a noise assessment which considers the potential impacts of the proposed development on local residential and industrial receivers external to the development. In order to facilitate this, noise measurements were taken at an existing outdoor firing range during a firearms division training session. The assessment has used this data, assuming that firearms practice would be spread over a 7.5 hour period, and calculating anticipated noise levels at local receivers including Dalmahoy and the George Washington Golf Course.
- 4.6 In addition to indoor training it is understood that stun devices are proposed for use in the driver training area at the proposed site. The devices used are to be “9 bang” devices, which let off 9 bangs at approximately 0.5 second intervals. In addition, “1 bang” devices will be used. Measurements of stun devices were taken for use in the assessment, again during a firearms division training session to allow modelling to take place to assess the likely impact of noise at sensitive receptor sites. At the height of training Northumbria Police intend to use 9 bang stuns on two days per week for two to three hours. Other pyrotechnics including single shot devices would be used infrequently e.g. once or twice a year.
- 4.7 Additionally, it is anticipated that during driver training a number of cars will be used in street scenario training with various types of police operations undertaken. The worst case noise levels in any hour and maximum noise levels at local receivers from public order training events has been calculated based on internal noise levels and noise at local receivers subsequently modelled and assessed.
- 4.8 Of particular interest to Sunderland City Council are those levels predicted at Receiver Position 5 (Dalmahoy, Washington) and Receiver Position 8 (George Washington Golf Course). During the daytime, noise levels of 61dBL_{Aeq 1 hour} are predicted during stun device activity. This is 20dB above Gateshead MBC's criteria of 10dB below background (or 10 dB above existing background noise levels). During stun device activity L_{Amax} levels are 19dB higher than the highest existing. With no stun activity there are no exceedances of criterion noise levels. During the evening and night time there are no predicted issues, due to there being no plan for driver training during these periods.
- 4.9 Noise levels of 77.2dBL_{Aeq 1 hour} as predicted at George Washington Golf Course during stun device activity. These are 22dB above Gateshead Council's criterion. L_{Amax} levels are 26dB higher than the existing highest measured maximum. With no stun activity there are no exceedances of criterion noise levels. At night time there are no predicted issues, due to there being no plan for driver training at night.
- 4.10 It appears that the element of the operations most likely to give rise to noise levels which exceed existing background noise levels are those associated with proposed stun activities, without which there is unlikely to be any adverse impact at noise sensitive receptors within the City of Sunderland. However, it is understood that this is an integral component of the proposed training centre and

that these activities are likely to take place twice weekly for 2-3 hours at a time, during which time noise is unlikely to be continuous. As such, it may be considered appropriate to impose conditions regarding the hours of operations and frequency of occurrence of stun activities on any granted consent. It is noted that the noise assessment concluded that further discussions were required with the local authority in respect of possible mitigation measures and arrangements for informing local residents and businesses of the timing of the use of stun devices.

5.0 CONCLUSION.

- 5.1 In view of the issues raised above it is recommended that Sunderland City Council advise Gateshead Council that the comments in respect of landscaping and noise be noted and that it takes steps to ensure that any adverse impacts on the visual amenities of the Green Belt and from noise generation from the site are kept to an acceptable minimum through the imposition of appropriate conditions on any consent issued.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Committee is therefore recommended to agree the above comments, which will then be sent to Gateshead Council in relation to application no. DC/11/00110/FUL.

Appendix 1 — Location Plan



Appendix 2 – Proposed Block Plan

