

At a meeting of the PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS (WEST) COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on TUESDAY 31ST AUGUST, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Thornton in the Chair.

Councillors Blackett, Donaghy, Fagan, Lauchlan, G. Miller, Price, and Warne.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Jenkins

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 6th July 2021.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 6th July, 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

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)

**19/01320/FUL – Erection of a detached double garage and change of use of open space to private garden. (Amended plans received on 19.4.21)
Neds Cottage, Hetton Le Hill Farm, Elemore Lane, Easington Lane,
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 reasons set out in the report subject to the 8 conditions contained therein.

20/02026/LP3 – Refurbishment and extension of disused school building to form 15no. residential accommodation units with support. The Old School Building, Albert Place, Columbia, Washington, NE38 7BP

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 Blackett commented that he understood the building was not in use but queried if there were similar provision of that sort within the vicinity. The Planning Officer advised that there was provision in close proximity,

Councillor Lauchlan commented that he was delighted to see the building being brought back into use after such a long time and that there was a Community Centre near by which offered similar provision.

Councillor Lauchlan raised concerns that the roads were very narrow in this area and 5 bungalows had just been built here, which needed protecting and he worried where the construction vehicles would gain access to the site. The Highways Officer advised that a Construction Management Plan was conditioned as part of the application so this would address any issues in relation to site access.

Councillor G. Miller commented that he was delighted to see this application come forward as it had been 12 years since the building was last in use and he was pleased to see it wasn't being torn down and would instead be used for specialist supported accommodation, something this city had a need for and would help the community going forward.

3. RESOLVED that Members grant consent under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (as amended) subject to the 15 recommended schedule of conditions contained within the report

21/00483/FUL – Development of 45 no. dwellings (Use Class C3), with associated car parking, landscaping and infrastructure (amended plans and updated drainage and ecology information submitted). Land South of Redburn Row, Redburn Row, 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.

A circulatory report was also provided to the Committee relating to late representations.

Councillor Fagan referred to page 47 of the agenda and Durham Wildlife Trusts representations that the development would lead to a biodiversity net loss and commented that whilst financial contributions were in place, this wouldn't replace the loss involved.

The Planning Officer advised that they had consulted with the Councils Ecology expert and they had secured net gains via the financial contributions, these net gains would be delivered off site, whilst they wouldn't be specifically on this development they would be within the locality.

Councillor Fagan referred to page 66 of the agenda relating to the previous Gleeson Homes application for the development of 50 dwellings which was refused and queried what had changed in terms of justification for the differing recommendations, given the similar number of dwellings on both proposals.

The Planning Officer advised that the proposal before Members was able to meet every financial contribution requested by the Council for services such as Education and off site play for example. The previous application submitted by a different developer couldn't meet these obligations and therefore had an unacceptable affect on the area so the key difference between the two applications had been that the previously refused application had not been able to provide mitigation from its impacts.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Heron, as Ward Councillor who wished to speak in objection to the proposal. Councillor Heron referred to page 41 of the agenda which states the proposal was in the Hetton Ward when in fact it was the Houghton Ward and this was a very emotive issue for her and the residents in the Ward as Redburn Road and Black Boy Road had seen a number of developments with building work having never stopped over the past 5 years so she couldn't blame residents for their complaints over construction traffic etc.

Councillor Heron raised concerns over the settlement break of Joe's pond and the adjoining field. Fencehouses already had a number of affordable homes built and Councillor Heron stated that whilst there was nobody who wanted affordable housing more than her, it was considered that there was more than enough in this rural area and that more and more green space was being eaten up.

Councillor Heron wished to highlight the wildlife within Joe's pond and the importance this has had for residents mental health, especially over the past year and a half during the pandemic. Councillor Heron had also received emails in relation to developments at Elba Park and the oversubscription of nearby schools and the NHS being stretched to its limit already.

Councillor Heron summarised that whilst this proposal was only for 45 dwellings it was not appropriate for this area which has had development

upon development. Green space was becoming ever smaller and she had seen Houghton grow to the point where enough was enough.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Neil MacKnight as Ward Councillor who wished to speak in objection to the proposal. Councillor MacKnight commented that he fully agreed with his Ward colleagues comments and that this proposal did cause a conflict as they did want to see social/affordable housing being built, but this area had seen a great deal built upon so his objections were in the same vein as Durham Wildlife Trust and that this proposal would result in a net loss in biodiversity.

Councillor MacKnight commented that we either had a Core Strategy or we didn't and a line needed to be drawn in the sand as Houghton was now the largest populated ward in the city with constant piecemeal developments nibbling away at the green space.

The Chairman introduced Mr Joe Ridgeon of Hedleys Planning, who wished to address the Committee on behalf of the applicant. Mr Ridgeon advised that the proposed properties would be managed by Karbon Homes, who had provided the high quality homes in Fencehouses.

Mr Ridgeon fully supported the Officers recommendation and thanked them for the report and that they had tried to address all concerns where possible. The development would deliver 100% affordable homes, meeting the housing needs along with much needed bungalows whilst also delivering all requested financial contributions totalling £340,000 so that all impacts were mitigated.

The development would deliver highways safety works on Redburn Road and whilst Hetton Town Council and residents had concerns over the number of properties proposed, this development proposed 13% more open space than the other schemes previously approved for the area and would provide the appropriate rounding off of Chilton Moor.

Mr Ridgeon commented that whilst he appreciated residents wanting to protect green space there was a need for affordable housing which this proposal provided the opportunity for 100% of affordable homes and he requested that Members approve the officer recommendation contained within the report.

In response to the representations made at the meeting, the Planning Officer advised that Officers did recognise the amount of housing built within the Hetton/Houghton area, however the proposal was not in conflict with the Core Strategy and the area was designated/allocated for housing in the future. The Land to the south was protected but in relation to this site, there was no conflict.

In relation to Ecology, the site had been subject to numerous surveys and the advice given by experts was that the mitigation and financial contributions were considered to be acceptable. With regard to the value of open green

space, Officers recognised this but did not feel there would be any reduction in accessibility from this proposal.

The Planning Officer commented that ideally brownfield land would always be used but realistically some green field sites needed to be brought forward to meet our housing needs and this site was always intended to support the Council's housing delivery in the next 5 years.

Councillor Fagan commented that she had concerns over this application and did not like the perception that should developers throw enough money at the Council then the recommendation changed to one of approval and that we could not reverse the damage which would be done to wildlife and biodiversity on this site, therefore she would be voting against this recommendation.

Having been put to the vote, with 5 Members voting in favour of the recommendation and 3 Members voting against, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that Members be minded to approve the application, subject to the expiry of the public consultation, the completion of an agreement under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and subject to the 20 draft conditions contained within the report

21/01192/TC3 – Felling of two conifers. (Amended description 29.6.21) – The Green, Washington Village, 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.

5. RESOLVED that Members grant consent under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Regulations) 1992, subject to the two conditions contained within the report.

21/01423/FUL – Extension to car park and erection of close boarded fence (Retrospective) Mamas Italian Kitchen, Houghton Road, Newbottle, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 4EF

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.

6. RESOLVED that the application be refused for the three reasons listed within the report.

Items for Information

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

7. 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)