

At a meeting of the PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS (WEST) COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on TUESDAY 8TH JUNE, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Thornton in the Chair.

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

Declarations of Interest

21/00059/FUL – Equestrian use of land, formation of horse track through partial re-levelling, fencing, and planting – Land South of High Lane (North/West of A690) Stoneygate, Newbottle, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 4NH

Councillor Jenkins declared a pecuniary interest as a relative of the applicant and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

21/00177/LP3 – Demolition of Primary School and erection of new school with multi games area including improved site access, associated carparking and landscaping – Headteacher Hetton Primary School, Moorsley Road, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton-Le-Spring

The Chairman made an open declaration that as a Member of Hetton Town Council, she had withdrawn from any of their planning meetings during discussion of this application and therefore still retained an open mind on this item.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 30th March 2021.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 30th March, 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)

20/02048/MAW – Application for the installation of a soil Washington plant – Grab and Deliver Limited, Freezemoor Road, New Herrington Industrial Estate, Tyne and Wear, 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 introduced Councillor Melvyn Speding who wished to speak in opposition to the proposal as Ward Councillor. Councillor Speding referred to the issue of noise within the officers reports and that this had failed to address a number of surrounding streets and stated that the claim there would be no increase in traffic movements was false.

Councillor Speding commented that traffic movements from the firm had led to an increase in dust and fumes in the area.

Councillor Speding advised that since the introduction of this development there were originally 7 vehicles with no trailers and this had increased over the years and now stood at the present day of 24 vehicles and 5 trailers so obviously this leads to increased dust and fumes.

Councillor Speding informed the Committee that he had videos and photographic evidence of the effects caused by the traffic movements to the facility which he could display and he understood that this would be embarrassing for the Council in highlighting the lack of enforcement on this matter.

The Chairman introduced Mr Michael Bibby who wished to speak as the applicant of the proposal. Mr Bibby advised that granting this application would eliminate the amount of waste being sent to landfill from the site and help towards the Council achieving its target for Carbon neutrality.

Mr Bibby commented that we only had one planet but we were using the resources of 2 so the need for recycling was ever more required. Grab and Deliver was sending 200 tonnes of construction waste to landfill at a cost of over £400,000 per year. This wash plant would eliminate the need for transportation vehicles and would massively reduce the amount of waste from washing.

Mr Bibby advised that the air quality would be improved as the plant operated on electricity therefore eliminating the use of fossil fuels and all sources of vibration would be eliminated due to the material used. As the plant was electric this would also result in much lower noise levels. The washing process would also eliminate dust, vibrations and odour.

Mr Bibby informed the Committee that the benefits of this development included maximising the protection of resources such as sand and aggregate, creating further jobs, energy saving and cutting climate emissions alongside reducing the level of traffic to and from the site. This would be more carbon friendly and work towards achieving Government targets.

Mr Bibby advised that should this application be unsuccessful the business may have to close or lose employees as they could not maintain the costs of sending waste to landfill.

Councillor G. Miller commented that schemes such as this that aligned with the Council's green agenda to meet recycling targets, making the site more environmentally sustainable had a massive number of benefits to the city going forward and that he supported the officers recommendation for approval.

2. RESOLVED that the application be approved, subject to the three conditions contained within the report

21/00059/FUL – Equestrian use of land, formation of horse track through partial re-levelling, fencing, and planting – Land South of High Lane (North/West of A690) Stoneygate, Newbottle, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 4NH

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 commented that it was disappointing this application had been submitted after some of the works had already been done and that having passed the site it appeared like all the works had been done. The Planning Officer advised that 90% of the works had been carried out with only the surfacing to be done.

The Chairman referred to the visual amenity and enquired if the 1600 trees that had been planted were to be removed, would this have an effect on the officers recommendation to refuse. The Planning Officer advised that it would still be considered an unacceptable development within green belt land.

In response to queries from Councillors Lauchlan and Fagan, the Planning Officer advised that the application was part retrospective and that if the recommendation for refusal was agreed by Members then the land would have to be restored to its original condition and it would be up to the Council's

enforcement Officers to ensure this was carried out outside of the Committee process.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Kevin Johnston, Ward Councillor who wished to speak in objection to the application. Councillor Johnston informed the Committee that he was speaking against this application on behalf of local residents as it was felt this development was a harm to the green belt location.

Councillor Johnston commented that the applicant had completely ignored planning rules from the start on a highly visible site, working without permission on a proposal that would cause greater harm due to the extra activity it would generate. As others would use the site, this would generate more vehicles and greater use of the unadopted roads surrounding the site which were not suited to accommodate such traffic.

Councillor Johnston also commented that it was the belief that the track would not only be used for training horses, but for racing therefore it did not represent the true nature of planned use and raised major concerns about the trust in the applicant and their intent for its future use.

Councillor Johnston added that this proposal represented an inappropriate use in green belt land, it would have a detrimental impact on the area and was contrary to policies NE6, BH1 of the Core Strategy therefore should be refused. From the very start the applicant had given an example of how not to approach the planning process and rather than seeking approval, should be providing an apology for their actions.

The Chairman introduced Dr Anton Lang who wished to speak in support of the application on behalf of the applicant. Dr Lang commented that there were a lot of aspects to this application to consider but the main sections to consider were the Use, Trees, Fence and the Track itself.

With regards to use, this was a suitable use within greenbelt land. The trees were not part of the development but put in to mitigate as not considered under Section 55 of the Act. The Fence was considered as permitted development up to 1 metre which was the case here therefore it boiled down to the track which was on ground level and its impact on openness.

Dr Lang advised that the applicant has an open field and didn't realise that he needed permission so did apologise for the situation and stated that all works were paused once the Local Authority became involved.

With regards to objections that the fence was 2 metres in places, the topographical charts showed this was not the case and also showed clearly that there was no impact on the openness, therefore the test for refusal was not met and it would be exceedingly difficult for the Local Authority to justify their recommendation upon appeal.

Dr Lang added that the impact wasn't tangible on the openness to support a recommendation of refusal and there had been an incorrect application of greenbelt policy and the proposal, including the trees was acceptable.

The Planning Officer advised that the report clearly set out the reasoning with regards to the principal of the development within greenbelt land.

Councillor G. Miller commented that he was very disappointed with how this application had come forward, at the end of the day they could not accept retrospective applications within greenbelt land and whilst he understood Dr Lang's submission he did not believe that the applicant was unaware he needed permission. The greenbelt land must be protected and if this development was allowed it would then set a precedent for others to follow.

3. RESOLVED that the application be refused for the reason as set out in the report

21/00177/LP3 – Demolition of Primary School and erection of new school with multi games area including improved site access, associated carparking and landscaping – Headteacher Hetton Primary School, Moorsley Road, 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.

In response to Councillor Fagan's query over the parking provision and if this would be taken up purely by staff, the Highways Officer advised that the Council's policy was to provide 1 parking space per member of staff and this also had a car park for parents to drop off therefore the proposal was a great improvement on the existing facilities in place.

Councillor Lauchlan queried the representations made on Page 43 of the report and in particular the last 3 bullet points. The Planning Officer advised that the issue of asbestos during demolition and construction would be dealt with by specialists on site, it was unclear what the representation referred to by stating it was non-Covid compliant and the reference to the unsuitable toilet provision had already been addressed and dealt with.

4. RESOLVED that Members grant consent under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Regulations) 1992 (as amended), subject to the 19 conditions contained within the report

21/00259/MAV – Variation of conditions 3 (hours) and 4 (operating hours) relating to 19/01583/MAW – To allow site to operate on a weekend (7 days per week) – J & B Recycling, 1 Monument Park, Washington, NE38 8QU

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 Planning Officer advised that it has been noted that there was an error in the wording of recommended conditions 3 and 4, as set out in the main report and therefore a late sheet had been circulated with the correct amended conditions.

Councillor G. Miller enquired if the Planning Officers were confident that the environmental protections were there for the users of the neighbouring Wetlands Trust and Wildfowl that was situated in the green belt area.

The Planning Officer advised that Officers were confident that the proposed increase in hours of operation would not affect or cause any problems to the neighbouring sites.

In response to the Chairman's query as to what times the noise assessments were carried out, the Planning Officer advised that these were undertaken at times where the operations were at their busiest to obtain the worst case scenario and they were confident that the assessment had been robust.

Councillor Lauchlan enquired if there was any idea as to how many more vehicle movements this would generate and if this went against any conditions already imposed. The Planning Officer advised that the activity would likely be limited and would allow the facility to "catch up" rather than result in a constant stream of vehicles.

5. RESOLVED that the application be approved subject to the 11 conditions set out in the main report, with conditions 3 and 4 substituted with the wording provided in the circulated late sheet.

21/00953/LP3 – Erection of steel artwork to the front of plots 2 and 3 granted under planning application 17/00865/LP3 – Land West of Former Washington Old School, Albert Place, 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.

6. RESOLVED that Members grant consent under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Regulations) 1992 (as amended), subject to the 2 conditions contained 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 and a site visit be arranged for the following application;

21/01034/FUL – Former Alltrack Waste Recycling Centre And Corus Engineering Steels Limited, Heton Lyons Industrial Estate, Hetton Le Hole – Erection of portal frame industrial building for pallet storage – as requested by the Chairman.

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

(Signed) M. THORNTON,
(Chairman)