

At a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (HETTON, HOUGHTON AND WASHINGTON) SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 4th OCTOBER, 2016 at 5.45 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Scaplehorn in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Cummings, Dixon, M., Jackson, Lauchlan, Porthouse, Taylor, Turton. M. and Walker, P.

Also in Attendance:-

Councillors Heron and Scullion – Houghton Ward Members

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Middleton, Mordey, Turton, W. and Walker, G.

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

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

16/01097/FU4 – Development of 17 no. houses including 7 no. 3 bedroom houses and 10 no. 4 bedroom houses as well as associated landscaping and parking at former Newbottle Community Centre, Houghton Road, Newbottle, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 4EE

The representative of the Executive Director of Commercial Development presented the report advising of the principle of the development and the main issues in determining the application relating to design and amenity, highways and transportation, ecology and habitat issues, drainage and flood risk, land contamination and Section 106 and viability.

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Heron and Scullion, Mr. Forbes and Mr. Jackson to the meeting who had all requested to speak on the application.

The Chairman invited Councillor Heron to address the Committee first who advised that following consultation with her ward colleague, Councillor Scullion, she would speak on behalf of them both as they shared the same concern.

Councillor Heron spoke in objection the application stating that the main area of concern was surrounding the proposed entrance/exit to the new development. She commented that there was a lot of pedestrian traffic in that area, due to the proximity of Newbottle Academy and that the speed of the current traffic up and down the road was horrendous. She advised that the new development would exit out onto a very busy road and that herself and her ward colleague felt that the positioning of the entrance needed further consideration as they had grave concerns with regards to highway safety due to the blind spot for drivers leaving the development to possible oncoming traffic.

The Highways Officer advised that access roads had been looked into in great detail, which had included investigations into traffic speed and the number of recorded accidents in the area and they had found no reason to warrant refusal of the application on highways grounds. He further explained that to the northern boundary there was a private access road which was not a public highway and therefore could not be used as an option for access.

Councillor Cummings agreed with Councillor Heron's concerns commenting that anyone trying to pull out of the junction would find difficulties due to the visual aspect you would get from a vehicle. The Highways Officer advised that they had particular criteria to adhere to within a visual and access manual for streets and they had ensured that there would be boundary treatment at the entrance and that it was felt that this was the correct designed highways scheme which would be controlled by condition.

Councillor Turton sought clarification on the times set for works on the site and was advised that as a residential development, once approval was granted they could use the site as deemed necessary by the applicant.

In respect of highways safety, Councillor Porthouse asked if the option of a pedestrian crossing island in the middle of the road had been considered and was informed that this did not meet the criteria given the footpaths and traffic light system in place already. Councillor Porthouse went on to state that he had counted another 34 entrances/exits onto that road already and could not see how this one more would create that much of a difference to road safety.

The Chairman then invited Mr. Forbes to speak to the Committee, who advised that he was resident at Langdale, a neighbouring property to the site and had the following concerns:-

- Although a number of assessments had been carried out, as set out in the report, the application was obviously lacking a full risk assessment being undertaken;

- A182, the main road that the access opened onto was a designated area for the mobile speed camera van, due to speeding vehicles;
- There had been a claim to no accidents; and yet he was aware of an accident approximately 2 months ago; involving an access point halfway up the bank;
- Although there may be 34 access routes onto/off the main road, only 2 were on the bank and therefore that fact was irrelevant;
- The loss of green space in the village which may force vehicles dropping off at the school to park on the main road, having children alight onto the busy road;
- Vehicles already double parking on the school road, which had recently prevented an emergency vehicle accessing the school site, and therefore he was surprised the fire service had no objections;
- There were bats roosting in the community centre which were legally protected;
- There were good condition trees on the site which should be preserved; and
- Sunderland City Council had already refused two other planning applications on Houghton Road due to road safety.

In response, the Highways Officer, advised that they worked closely with Northumbria Police to highlight areas where there may be a concern for speeding traffic. The mobile speed camera unit could then be deployed in any of those areas. He reiterated that following all checks and investigations there was no record to warrant the refusal of this application on highway safety grounds.

With regards to the private access road to the Academy, he explained that Officers undertook work with schools in the city to promote road safety and safe routes to school, and that they had introduced a one way system in the area to help during school drop off and pick up times.

In relation to concerns around the bats and trees on the development site, the Planning Officer explained that within the ecology section of the report bat assessments would be carried out via conditions on the application, should it be approved which must be adhered to and the trees in the locality had been identified as not being under any preservation orders.

The Planning Officer referred to the previous applications in the area which had been refused and advised that each application should be considered on its own merit and therefore any reasons for their refusal were not of concern when considering the matter before the Committee today.

The Chairman then invited Mr. Jackson to address the Committee who advised that he was a development consultant for Prince Bishop Homes and was speaking on behalf of the applicant. He advised Members that following a viability study it had been found that due to the high costs of demolition and replacement of underground services, such as sewerage, etc it would not be affordable to provide Section 106 funding.

He explained that the development would provide a solution for those tenants, usually between 25-35 years old, who could not afford to purchase their homes outright and would not be eligible for social housing and therefore ended up in the private rented sector. It was intended that the homes would be split between a percentage available at market rent / rent to buy properties and the remainder sold. He advised that it would be usual for a tenant to be in the property for approximately 4 years, in which time they would work with them to prepare them for purchasing the property through a number of different ways, through helping them to save for a deposit and organise their finances to improve credit ratings, if needed.

He informed Members that a previous site in Crook of 38 houses had been so successful that they had all gone within 3 days of release and they would expect that this development would be the same.

Members having fully considered the application and representations made, it was:-

1. RESOLVED that the application be granted consent in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (as amended), subject to the seventeen conditions as set out in the report and for the reasons as detailed therein.

16/01231/VAR – Variation of condition 17 of planning approval 15/00815/HYB: (Hybrid planning application comprising: Full planning application for proposed development of 147 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure, landscaping, open space and highway improvements; and outline planning application for the proposed development of approximately 130 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure landscaping, open space and highway improvements with all matters reserved except for access.) to replace the approved Phase 1 site layout plan Rev B with Rev F; to replace the approved Phase 1 Materials Layout NB-002 with NB—2 rev C; remix of 33 no. plots proposed housetypes including the introduction of the Souter housetype Souter (village) SU-WD06 rev U at land north of Coaley Lane, Houghton-le-Spring

Members having fully considered the report, it was:-

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

Items for Information

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

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

(Signed) B. SCAPLEHORN,
Chairman.