

**At an extraordinary meeting of the PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS (WEST) COMMITTEE held remotely on TUESDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Thornton in the Chair.

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

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Rowntree.

**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)

**Change in Order of Business**

The Chairman advised of a change in the order of business as there were a number of speakers in attendance for the second application – Land to the North of Mount Lane, therefore it was appropriate that determination of this application be made first so that they weren't unduly inconvenienced in having to wait.

**20/01754/FUL – Residential development of 75 dwellings (Use Class C3) including 15% affordable housing, vehicle access from Mount Lane, landscaping, public open space, pedestrian footpath, children's play area, surface water flood attenuation, and associated ancillary works (amended plans and revised drainage strategy submitted) – Land to the North of Mount Lane, Springwell, NE9 7UQ**

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 Fagan referred to Page 21 of the report and the NHS CCG comments that this development would overwhelm the local primary care infrastructure and requested a payment of £56,700. Councillor Fagan enquired if this had been addressed or was going to be addressed in the Section 106 agreement.

The Planning Officer advised that the request had been considered by Officers who had been in discussions with the CCG over a number of years and the current position was that Officers were not satisfied that the information provided to underpin the requests made by the NHS and CCG was robust and did not think that the figures used were appropriate for the request that was being made. Officers also had concerns over how the money would be able to be spent and Officers did not think it would meet the tests set out in National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations so on that basis they did not think it was something that we were in a position to request from the developer as it did not meet the statutory tests.

Councillor Fagan enquired if Officers believed the local NHS primary care services would not be overwhelmed by this development and the local services would be able to take on these extra 75 dwellings.

The Planning Officer advised that he had checked with the Health Centres in the locality, within Wrekenton and in Washington and all local health centres did appear to be able to take on new patients, which suggested that there wasn't an overwhelming issue with capacity in those areas. Any section 106 requests that comes in does have to meet relevant tests in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Regulations. The information provided to the Council from the NHS and CCG, Officers did not feel was robust to pass those tests.

Councillor Blackett commented that he understood some of the land that the houses would sit on were being removed from the greenbelt and enquired if any other parts of the development would touch on parts of the land that was still part of the greenbelt and if so what proportion would still be greenbelt.

The Planning Officer advised that the area covered by the housing development was allocated for housing through Policy HJ1 and was removed from the greenbelt on the adoption of the plan, the development site does include areas which remain in the greenbelt and that was the corridor for the footpath connection to the North, the route of the access road down to Mount Lane to the South, there was also a strip of land immediately along the western boundary which was out with the allocated area and remains within the greenbelt. Officers had considered the development that was proposed within the greenbelt against national greenbelt policies and they had found that the development which involves the footpath, the access road and areas of landscaping and sustainable drainage infrastructure, they had found that not to be inappropriate within the greenbelt, so did not feel there was any conflict with national greenbelt policy in terms of what was actually being proposed.

Councillor Armstrong enquired as to what respect this development accords with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration as we were building over green spaces, adding to the problem and the emergency we were currently facing.

The Planning Officer advised that the site was allocated for housing development through the adoption of the Council's Core Strategy, this site was envisaged to come forward for housing to meet the Council's housing land supply needs and its housing delivery needs. In terms of sustainability Officers did feel that the site was well connected to the local footpath network, attractive routes created for pedestrians and routes to local public transport options and the developer has also agreed to make a contribution to encourage the use of local public transport through the delivery of travel tickets and the developer has also set out within the supporting documents within the application to have sustainability principles of the construction of the development.

The Chairman introduced Councillor H. Trueman who wished to speak in objection to the application as the Ward Councillor for this area. Councillor Trueman advised of historic concerns over the infrastructure in the village and commented that anyone who has travelled through Springwell will see that, it was unlike any other part of the City.

Councillor Trueman advised that the people who live there are very proud of where they live, they get involved in their surroundings with the aim to improve them and there was some fine examples of this. Councillor Trueman commented that he did not believe Mount Lane was a road big enough to take the amount of traffic that would come on to that entry and exit. Mount Lane was a typical village track/road with a bend that when he has travelled on has had oncoming traffic come onto his side of the road, so it was a very poor road for the access and exit of the traffic that would be generated.

Councillor Trueman commented that looking at the 1288, which was the main road through Springwell, it has never been big enough or good enough for the traffic that it sees today, it has become a rat run to and from the A1 and it was only designated as a B road to take high roads not wide roads.

Council Officers working with residents had chicaned parts of the road to tackle speeding motorists rather than use speed cushions and whilst done with good intentions this has created problems for the road. This road had a chapel, a school, a club and pub, a very well used community centre, a Quarry and some industrial use. Councillor Trueman did not think use of Mount Lane was acceptable and he certainly did not think using the B road was acceptable for this development

Councillor Trueman advised that the residents take a great pride in their area and have researched this development a great deal and will show in their representations that their objections are based on planning grounds, they are not "NIMBYS".

Councillor Trueman also wished to stress that putting a footpath on Mount Road would result in that road becoming even more narrow and referred to the recent application for the Quarry in which the Council conditioned that their own vehicles would not travel through Springwell when delivering rubbish to the tip, however he had received reports recently of wagons using this route and Enforcement Officers have had to become involved.

The Chairman introduced Ms Liz Reid who wished to speak in objection to the application. Ms Reid advised that she was part of Springwell Village Residents Association, speaking on behalf of residents here, many of whom have submitted the 505 objections to this application.

Ms Reid commented that residents supported the Core Strategy and accepted that this site was allocated for around 60 houses, but none of the people involved in this, planners, applicants and their consultants or the committee lived here. They did and they know exactly what the practical implications of these proposals were.

In developing the Core Strategy the Council ignored over 8000 objections, it took a Planning Inspector to visit just a couple times to work out that those objections were valid. The same inspector supported approximately 60 houses on this site. The Council adopted the Plan and even they are now accepting that 75 is significantly more than that. So there was agreement that there are too many houses.

Ms Reid commented that it seemed that this alone was not grounds to refuse. Apparently, if the applicant promises to address policy issues by planting a few trees and hedges and putting in a footpath, too many houses on the site is ok. Affordable housing that is different from the other houses and stuck in the farthest most awkward corners of the development is also apparently acceptable, this was shocking.

Despite this and with over 500 objections covering at least 34 places where the proposals go against the Local Plan caused overwhelmingly by the practical implications of over-development, approval was still recommended. This does not mean Planners were right and we were wrong, it simply means they disagree from the comfort of their desks finding ways around the Core Strategy rather than complying with it.

The report sets out the objections and the responses to them – independent response is scarce and is never based on what it is actually like to live there. When the applicant engages consultants to articulate responses the inevitable result is reports that favour the proposals. They effectively say how the applicant can get around the policy demands. They simply confirm what the applicant said in the first place.

Ms Reid stated that examples of this included the difference between the applicant's consultants and Nexus, where the applicant claims the site is well served by public transport and Nexus confirm it is "tolerable". Nowhere near good as there is only one bus an hour and this stops at 4pm, and where they

claim employment sites were within cycling distance, they aren't. The main employment site of Team Valley is 4 miles away and also has no direct bus link. Springwell is on a hill as high as Penshaw Monument so would be too difficult to cycle.

Claims by the Applicant and Officers that the road network can accommodate the traffic generated by the proposals make it clear that their local knowledge is very poor and they don't understand the constraints of this pit village. The roads here were never built for cars and cannot be widened. These are people who don't have to take their lives in their hands to get kids to school or be late for work because of traffic jams on a daily basis, let alone deal with the absolute chaos if there are problems on the nearby A1M which was a regular occurrence.

Ms Reid further commented that the assumption that Mount Lane could take more traffic was ludicrous. It was a country lane already suffering from overuse with two blind bends and a terrace of houses at its pinch point. Ward members confirm this has been a problem for years.

Claims that the Quarry and the Bowes Railway present no noise issues also show a complete lack of local knowledge, on average there are lorries dumping 20 tonnes of rubble, 50 times a day on the site.

Ms Reid stated that the Applicants had crammed in as many houses as possible onto the site, and in doing so have had to encroach the greenbelt. They have gone along with making amendments to respond to objections where it has been relatively cheap and easy but stopped short of reducing the number of houses.

Residents were not asking to go against the Core Strategy, but asking the Committee to do their job and make sure it was delivered. They support the Local Plan and accept 60 houses on this site but not 75.

The Chairman introduced Dr Ian Edworthy who wished to speak in objection to the application. Firstly, Dr Edworthy wished to say that he had taken a long term interest in consulting with both the development of the local plan and this specific application and he found it disheartening that views that have been presented to the council by the residents of Sunderland seem to have been consistently ignored with regard to development matters.

For this application, he strongly believed that it should be rejected on the grounds that it includes development of the irreplaceable green belt in Sunderland. The HGA1 site in the local plan is 3.21 hectares, as specified in the latest SHLAA, but the application form requests development on 3.78 hectares of land. This discrepancy of nearly 20% of the size of the site is significant and means the proposals for development are not limited to the housing release site set out within the local plan. Dr Edworthy strongly believed that green belt boundary needed to be protected, it was stated that it should be defensible in the local plan and he thought that allowing development on green belt land sets a dangerous precedent for future

development applications. Given the application is for 25% more houses than stated within the local plan housing target for the site, this suggests that the plans for this HGA1 site includes over development and wouldn't be able to fit all the landscaping and other nice amenities the developer wants to put in within the actual site boundary.

Dr Edworthy believed that the increased number of cars generated from this development, that includes over 200 car parking spaces for residents would cause significant traffic issues through the village. Even now, leaving the village towards Gateshead causes lengthy delays at the junction with Springwell Road and the potentially additional 200 cars will only make this situation worse and results in lengthy queues of traffic back into the village at peak times. There was also a single lane traffic calming measure in front of the Springwell Village Primary School playground which often has stationary traffic waiting there and Dr Edworthy queried if the planning officer had considered the potential negative health impact on the pupils in the school from the increased pollution generated from an additional 200 cars. This did not seem to be sustainability minded.

Dr Edworthy commented that he was genuinely concerned about the fact that this application would remove the current flood defences that have been installed at great expense to the council. These have made a massive difference to the risk of flooding in the village and to remove them and replace it with a stagnant pond that will require regular maintenance seemed ludicrous. Also, the fact that the pond would be placed next to a children's play area seemed a potentially dangerous proposition. At no point in the application report on flooding commissioned by the applicant is the fact that an underground reservoir is being built on the land adjacent to the site considered or what potential impacts this will have on flood risk for the area and the suitability of the proposed SUDS pond. The applicant was aware of the reservoir plans since the applicant owned the land before Northumbrian Water and requires the reservoir access road to get to the development site.

Dr Edworthy questioned the timing of the development of this specific site at this time. At the consultation meeting for the local plan with the planning inspectorate it was clearly stated that this site was not within the current 5 year housing supply plan but for later development, so he wondered why there was such a rush to develop this greenfield site ahead of the many suitable brownfield sites that were within the current 5 year housing supply plan, particularly at this incredibly challenging time and the downturn in the economy that had seen the pressure on the housing market shrink considerably. Is this development really what Sunderland needed right now?

In the local plan it was highlighted that there was a lack of council tax band F and G homes in Sunderland and during the consultation events he attended this site was identified for this requirement, how many homes in these bands will this development deliver for Sunderland? In addition, related to the timing of the development, the traffic involved would be a major concern since the

approved reservoir would be under construction simultaneously, adding many vehicles to a narrow road furthermore additional noise and pollution.

Another concern Dr Edworthy raised was the lack of local input into this, and queried if the planning officers for this application had visited the site. When he attended a meeting to consult on the draft local plan, the planning officer he spoke to admitted having never been to Springwell Village despite the draft local plan recommending housing release sites. This should not just be a paper exercise, this should be an active exercise in understanding the specific needs and requirements of the ward, the ward councillors and large numbers of the residents have made suggestions regarding the development to which the applicant has paid no attention to. Dr Edworthy commented that he was sure if the development was within your wards you would want the developer to work with the local community and provide what is required to meet the needs of the ward and the City of Sunderland.

Therefore, he urged the Committee to turn down the application at this time, as it does not comply with the local plan or the recommendations of the planning inspectorate following the consultation exercise, it was not in the plan for development for the next 5 years, there were flooding concerns, the plans for the site include overdevelopment in terms of number of houses and extending the boundary of the site, the traffic concerns and safety issues about placement of a children's park adjacent to a pond and the main entrance to the development. This development was not in the best interests of Sunderland at this time, this application was to maximise profits for the developers with no regards to the opinions of the people of Sunderland who know the area and have no monetary gain to be had.

The Chairman introduced Mr Dean Proudfoot who advised that as a residential and commercial neighbour with a shared boundary to the above application, he would like to register both his support and concerns for the proposed scheme.

Mr Proudfoot welcomed and supported the much-needed additional housing stock that the scheme would add to the local community along with the economic boost the new homeowners would bring to local businesses like his own.

Mr Proudfoot stated that he was concerned and uncertain however that sufficient attention had been paid to the mitigation of sound transmission between his business, Fernhill Animal Board, and the nearest dwellings proposed by the developer therefore he wished to remind the Planning Department of planning approval reference."15/00264/FUL - Demolition of smaller existing stables and erection of dog kennels and conversion of larger existing stables into a cattery"

While final completion of the kennels had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, demolition of the existing stables had recently been resumed and

they anticipated construction to complete in the summer, with commercial operations beginning in September 2021.

Mr Proudfoot added that while Fernhill Animal Board welcomes their new neighbours and potential new customers to their community, they request any planning approval be granted conditionally on the developers providing sufficient noise mitigation measures so as future occupiers do not suffer nuisance from the expanded kennels and cattery.

The Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation read out the written statements received from objectors to the application, which were as follows;

Councillor Bernard Scaplehorn submitted a representation opposing the application as Ward Councillor for the area. Councillor Scaplehorn advised that he had worked in the community in Springwell Village for more than 30 years and much of that time had been spent in trying to do something about the horrendous traffic that goes through there every day. It had got worse year on year.

Residents on Mount Lonnen have a lot to put up with. They have no alternative but to park cars opposite their houses and there was nowhere else. So vehicles traveling west have to go to the wrong side of the road meeting on-coming traffic head-on, right outside people's front doors. You risk getting run over when you talk to your neighbour or knock at someone's door.

This happens a lot because the traffic is heavy as it's used as a rat run constantly. There was room for only one car to pass the blind bend at the end of the road so at peak times cars queue along the narrow country lane and when there's a problem on the A1, which was often, there is chaos.

In the centre of the village it is worse. To stop speeding they have had to put a chicane outside the school, and it hasn't worked. They've installed a 20mph limit but it's not policed therefore it doesn't work.

Councillor Scaplehorn advised that Parents were worried about safety with the school gates having been wrecked in a crash so it did not inspire confidence.

Everything has been tried but the reality was that too many cars go through a village that simply cannot cope. It's unsafe and intolerable for the people who live there. We should not make it any worse.

Councillor Scaplehorn stated that as an authority we have adopted a plan that took five years and hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of public money to complete. It was up to us to stick to it. All of the issues have already been thought through so why were we revisiting them after only a year.

We should be grateful for communities like this who stick together and do their best to make it a good place to live. We've already approved a reservoir that

will see a field where horses now graze turn into to an escarpment as high as the houses and where there was supposed to be reinstatement of countryside, Thompsons are now able to operate indefinitely.

Councillor Scaplehorn believed enough was enough. The plan says "approximately 60" houses. This was 25% more, so 25% more traffic and 45 more cars on the road, 25% more emissions, 25% more environmental impacts, and 25% more pressure on local health services.

The village would be hard pushed to cope with 60 houses, we should not make it worse by approving 75.

A Ms Pauline Cooper submitted a representation stating why she felt that permission should not be granted. Ms Cooper stated that there was good reason why there are over 500 hundred objections to this planning application as residents who lived here know exactly how detrimental it would be.

The developer and everyone connected with this application have either ignored, not understood or not dealt adequately with a number of issues, some of which conflict with Council policies. The proposals would result in massive overdevelopment of the site. At the first stage of the CSDP process 48 houses were proposed here, later increased to 60 and residents were assured by Policy Planners that this would not increase. We are now faced with 75 houses, an increase of 25% from that agreed by both the Planning Inspector and the Council.

Planners now agree that 75 is significantly more than the 60 in the plan. Ms Cooper queried how this could possibly be acceptable. Ms Cooper commented that to add insult to injury, the developer was proposing to take up adjoining green belt land to facilitate the development. There would be no need for this if the original housing numbers were adhered to.

Overdevelopment would result in significantly more traffic, more pollution, more environmental destruction and would make the road network in and around the village less safe. The only access road to the proposed development was off Mount Lane, a narrow country lane used by walkers, joggers, cyclists, dog walkers and the local horse riding community. This lane was in a state of disrepair and has a dangerous double blind 'S' bend at Mount Lonnen, where traffic was forced onto the wrong side of the road due to parking by residents who have no option but to park there.

Traffic exiting Mount Lane to the East has to join Springwell Road where traffic joining from the B1231 regularly exceeds speed limits. Springwell was a former pit village with narrow, congested roads not constructed to cope with existing traffic, let alone extra traffic from an overdeveloped site. Springwell Road suffers from high amounts of traffic from elsewhere that uses the village as a rat run and was difficult to access, particularly at morning evening rush hours.

Ms Cooper informed that during the 20th Century, Springwell Village had 17.9% growth rate. This was appropriate and development was clustered

around the centre with great public transport and positive impacts on the local community and services. This proposal was outside the established curtilage of the village and would be the beginning of urban sprawl.

The development site was identified on the UK Govt Magic website as being located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zone and there were 3 Local Wildlife Sites within 1km of the site. The site was located within/adjacent to a designated wildlife corridor which was afforded protection under local planning policy.

Ms Cooper queried what was the point of Sunderland Council's Climate Emergency Declaration if overdevelopment of this site was allowed and the only mitigation measures offered were a few trees and a meadow. This was woefully inadequate.

Ms Cooper added that residents here have been called NIMBYs. This was absolutely not the case, in fact the recent development of 90 houses by Taylor Wimpey (2015) attracted only 1 objection and that was from Thompsons (Springwell Quarry) who were concerned about the likely complaints arising from a new housing estate on its doorstep.

Ms Cooper asked that the planning committee to listen to the voices of residents who actually live there and understand their area and its problems far better than developers and consultants whose sole interest was in making money. They would walk away from this mess with pockets full of money and leave residents to pick up the pieces.

The Planning Officer advised that in relation to Councillor Trueman's comments on traffic, the site was allocated for approximately 60 dwellings through the Core Strategy adoption process, impact upon local highway networks were considered as part of that process. The impact of 75 dwellings proposed in the application has also been given very careful consideration and the application has been supported by a range of transport assessments and statements. The conclusion reached by Officers was that road network was capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the development and could do so in a safe manner.

In relation to comments on the amount of objections raised, Officers had taken this into account and clearly there was a significant swell of opinion against the development and acknowledge that the vast majority of comments made raised material planning considerations. Officers did consider however, having gone through all the relevant policies of the plan and taken into account all other material planning considerations that the development of 75 dwellings did not create any unacceptable conflict with the policies of the Plan and there were no grounds to refuse the development of 75 dwellings.

In terms of the distribution and location of the affordable housing, the Planning Officer advised that they did have a policy which requests that affordable housing was scattered throughout the development site and the layout

proposed does achieve that and Officers were satisfied with the location of affordable housing and type that was to be delivered.

With regards to public transport connections and connections to employment, it was recognised that the bus route along Mount Lane was infrequent but the village itself and the main road was served by frequent bus routes to Newcastle, Sunderland and Washington and the development did provide good connections to the main road through the village. The Planning Officer advised that the Inspector would have taken this into account in accepting that the site could be allocated for development.

In relation to Noise, the planning application had been accompanied by a noise assessment which considered the competing noise environment including the potential impacts from the Quarry and the kennels/cattery which Mr Proudfoot referred to. The assessment actually took into account the assessment that had been submitted in Mr Proudfoot's planning application and the data available from that to assess the likely noise output from that development and in consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Officer considered that the residents of the development would not be unacceptably affected by any noise from sources in the area.

Moving onto concerns over the amount of development that was proposed, the Planning Officer acknowledged that 75 dwellings was greater than the 60 approximated in the Plan but Officers had considered the plans with the Council's Urban Design and Landscape Officer and they were of the view that the quality of the development was good, it was not a great density of development for the site and the landscaping that would be provided would be of good quality.

With regards to incursion into the greenbelt, the Planning Officer advised that it was inevitable that the development would have to include some greenbelt land to create the road connection down to Mount Lane as that land crossed by the road remains within the greenbelt and the same applied to the footpath connection to the north so any planning application that was to come forward, the site would always have to include some elements of greenbelt land in order to provide the appropriate road and footpath connections. Officers had considered the proposals which affect greenbelt land in detail against national planning policy framework policies in relation to greenbelt development and have found that the elements of the development which were within greenbelt were not inappropriate development and there was no conflict with greenbelt policy.

The Planning Officer also wished to point out that the land that was affected by the greenbelt development would stay within the greenbelt and would retain its protected status and there wouldn't be any change which would mean that no future development within the greenbelt would be looked upon more favourably and would still be subject to the same greenbelt policies which are very restrictive in terms of new development.

In relation to flood risk/flood defences, the development was accompanied by a comprehensive sustainable drainage strategy and the Planning Officer confirmed that this did take into account the sustainable drainage strategy that had been agreed for the reservoir development and it also incorporated measures which had been mentioned by objectors. There had been a flood defence scheme installed by the Council and the development proposals do incorporate those to ensure that those properties would be acceptably protected from additional flood risk and the proposal had been considered in detail by the Councils Flood and Coastal Team, the lead Local Flood Authority and they have accepted that the Sustainable Drainage Scheme accompanying the application was acceptable and ensured the scheme wouldn't materially increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

In terms of air pollution, the Planning Officer informed that an air pollution/air quality assessment was submitted with the application which was reviewed by the Councils Environmental Health Officers and the conclusions of those were acceptable and the development would not hit any unacceptable triggers with regards to air quality.

The Planning Officer referred to questions over need for this development and its position within the Councils five year housing supply and advised that the site was coming forward earlier than envisaged but that was not a concern in terms of the housing delivery chain of sites for the Council.

Representations were made querying if an Officer had visited the site, the Planning Officer advised that as the case officer for the planning application, he had visited the site many times and had a full understanding of the site and knew Springwell Village well through his experience of working for the Council.

With regards to ecology, as was set out in the main report, the application would deliver a biodiversity net gain and there wasn't a SSSI within the vicinity of the site, the nearest site was Penshaw, so it could not be concluded that the development would affect a SSSI. It was recognised that there could be impacts upon the local wildlife site and wild ponds so the developer was to make a financial contribution to manage and mitigate those impacts.

The Highways Officer advised that the traffic impact from this development was fully considered during the examination of the Councils Core Strategy, this examination concluded that the majority of traffic from this sites location would route to the south, the A1 and A194 with little traffic actually going through the village and this resulted in the Inspector concluding that it would be an acceptable impact in terms of the proposed development and the Inspector subsequently allocated the site for use.

As to the addition of the 15 dwellings, these would generate an approximate 7 additional trips in each of the morning and evening peak hours, again the majority of these would route to the south and the A1 and A194 and it was concluded that this would not result in an adverse impact on the local road network.

The Highways Officer referred to the use of Mount Lane, which was considered by the Inspector who concluded that it was acceptable for use as access to be provided and was therefore proposed as part of the application and officers fully accept that.

The Flood and Coastal Group Engineer advised the Committee that they had assessed the flood risk for the scheme, both for the existing houses and the proposed dwellings. The flood prevention measures that were installed a number of years ago, the developer has taken on board and proposed to move the protection to the west of the site so the new and existing homes would still remain protected to the 1/100 plus 40% climate change so he did not envisage any future flooding.

The Chairman introduced Mr Tom Baker, the Agent acting on behalf of the applicant who wished to address the Committee to inform of the benefits of the development. Mr Baker commented that Members had heard the Officers recommendation for approval and will have read the reasons for this as detailed within the report. Mr Baker commended the Planning Team for working with them to achieve a scheme which delivered real benefits for Springwell Village and the local area.

Mr Baker advised Homes by Esh were a local housebuilder, based in Durham with a proud record of building high quality homes across the North East. Their application before the Committee sought to deliver 75 homes including 15% affordable homes for local people. The application was submitted in full with detailed design matters for review.

In terms of the principle of the development, this was an allocated site within the Council's Core Strategy which was released from the greenbelt for the specific purposes of meeting the housing need of Springwell Village and the immediate local area. Whilst this scheme would deliver more homes than the indicative approximate number in the plan, the case officer concluded that the site could deliver 75 dwellings and still meet all of the policy requirements of the Core Strategy. More than that, the increase in units would mean more benefits such as more affordable housing and more financial fiscal benefits such as new homes bonus and Council Tax.

Mr Baker commented that at the Core Strategy stage there wasn't the same level of design, detail and information that we now have which demonstrated that the scheme could accommodate 75 dwellings.

In terms of the detail, there were no objections to this scheme from any of the expert Officers, including design, landscape, highways, housing, drainage, ecology, heritage and environmental health. Indeed there were no technical objections to the scheme from any officers or any external consultees. Historic England and the Councils Build Heritage Officer had confirmed the scheme would not harm the setting of nearby Bowes Railway.

The Council's Landscape Team considered that the scheme provides a Core Strategy compliant level of open space and appropriate landscape buffer to the west and to the south with no inappropriate impact on the greenbelt.

The Urban Design Officer concluded that the housing mix, design and layout was in line with Core Strategy Policy and the Council's Ecologist had welcomed the schemes delivery of biodiversity net gain meaning the development of this site would improve biodiversity in Sunderland.

The Local Lead Flood Authority has confirmed that the scheme was acceptable in terms of surface and foul drainage, water treatment and flooding. The Highways Authority have confirmed that the scheme would generate acceptable low levels of traffic and provide access to sustainable modes of transport whilst contributing towards facilities such as bus passes for residents.

Mr Baker commented that in summary this application would deliver both market and affordable housing in a well landscaped environment on a site that was released to meet the housing needs of Springwell Village. They recognise the strong feelings of some objectors however the Core Strategy's Plan meeting housing needs across Sunderland includes the delivery of this site and this was a hugely important consideration.

Mr Baker wished to stress that the Councils housing requirement was a minimum figure, not a maximum figure and the same applies to allocations within the plan. There was scope following a planning application to scrutinise the level of growth and to conclude that additional homes may be found on certain allocations and that was what occurred on this site.

Mr Baker informed the Committee that this scheme would deliver significant financial benefits to the area including supporting approximately 232 jobs across the lifetime of the project and construction, £85,000 in annual tax income, £590,000 of New Homes Bonus, £997,000 of retail spending with a proportion retained into the local area as well as contributing towards Springwell Ponds Ecological Site.

Councillor Armstrong commented that we had to weigh up what was more important and queried if the Climate Emergency didn't matter anymore. We have discussed if the development meets economic growth, The Housing Plan was developed a number of years ago and we have had Brexit and COVID since then so the economic landscape was completely different now. Referring to comments about meeting the needs of Springwell Village residents and Councillor Armstrong queried if more houses was what they need and was the growth prediction still on course to justify all these houses to be built upon greenbelt land.

Councillor Armstrong referred to the figure of 232 jobs coming to the area and queried how many of those would be for people living in Springwell, Washington or Sunderland. This was a prime piece of land and he couldn't blame developers for wanting to build there but he questioned whether we

would regret this development as it was a particularly bad area for flooding and he had witnessed this himself and it could only get worse as climate change worsened.

In response to Councillor F. Miller's enquiry over the style of home proposed and if they were considering using different types of boilers to gas for instance and also solar panels on roofs, Mr Morris from Homes by Esh advised that as the developer they would be building to current building regulations 2012 which stated that gas boilers were efficient to use, until the building regulations change again, which was envisaged to be implemented in the end of 2022 where gas fossil fuels would be preferred so depending on the start of the scheme on site, potentially if there was a late start these could be used but it was the aim to follow the current regulations.

With regards to solar panels, the 2022 regulations was pushing for renewable sources, not just solar panels. In terms of car charging points these weren't something as a developer that they currently install as current regulations don't ask for that so wouldn't be part of this scheme at the moment but if the 2022 regulations do ask for this then they would adhere to that.

Councillor F. Miller suggested that in light of comments made about climate change that the developer give consideration to such proposals if possible.

Councillor Fagan referred to the push for 75 dwellings rather than the 60 stated within the Plan and enquired if it was revised and permission granted for only 60 properties, would this development become financially unviable or could they still make it work on 60 houses.

Mr Baker advised that the application was in front of Members for 75 homes and this number was not plucked out of the air, it was a number derived through careful consideration of the on site constraints and opportunities through the size of the site as well as through external considerations and the surrounding road network. All of these matters pointed towards a number of 75 so that was what they considered to be an appropriate level of growth and all of the Council's Officers had concluded that the site and the surrounding area in terms of infrastructure could accommodate 75 units.

Mr Baker commented that in terms of the 60 units stated in the local plan, there was very little technical information that went into that and his understanding was that there had been a little bit of high level design work that had dictated that but ultimately it wasn't based upon a commercial consideration of the site in terms of what the market would ultimately deliver in that area, nor was it based on any detailed technical studies of the site and surrounding area which this application was based on. The number of 75 dwellings number was based on a whole host of additional information that wasn't available at the time of the Core Strategy, furthermore it has been deemed to be an acceptable number as per the Council's technical Officers.

Having been put to a vote, with 4 Members voting for and 3 Members voting against it was:-

1. RESOLVED that Members be minded to approve the application, subject to its referral to the Secretary of State, the completion of an agreement under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and subject to the conditions provided in the main agenda report, with the wording of conditions 2, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 19 amended and condition 21 added as stated in the circulatory report

**19/01319/OUT – Outline planning application for up to 250 dwellings, with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access points from North Road (All matters reserved except for means of access) – Land West of South Lodge Farm, North 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.

2. RESOLVED that the application be refused for the reasons as set out in the report.

**20/02278/FUL – Construction of logistics warehouse, with associated earthworks, landscaping, parking and access proposals – Land at Armstrong Road, Armstrong Industrial Estate, 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.

3. RESOLVED that the application be delegated to the Executive Director of City Development who was minded to Approve subject to the 7 draft conditions set out in the report and subject to the completion of a s106 agreement.

**Items for Information**

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

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

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

(Signed) M. THORNTON,  
(Chairman)