

**At a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (NORTH SUNDERLAND)
SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY 31st OCTOBER,
2017 at 3.45 p.m.**

Present:-

Councillor Jackson in the Chair

Councillors Beck, Bell, Francis, Mordey, Porthouse, Scaplehorn and D. Wilson.

Declarations of Interest

17/00955/FUL – Rear of Saint Georges Terrace/Roker Park Terrace, Roker, Sunderland

Councillor Jackson made an open declaration that she had held discussions with residents on this application as Ward Councillor and would withdraw from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Chequer and Foster.

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

The Executive Director of Economy and Place submitted a report (copy circulated) relating to the North Sunderland area, copies of which had also been forwarded to each Member of the Council upon applications made thereunder.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Change in Order of Business

The Chairman advised that Item 2 would be considered first on the agenda due to the number of public in attendance for this application.

17/01457/FUL – Change of use of vacant grassland to paddock and construction of associated stables and erection of boundary enclosure – Land South of South Bents and Weardale Avenue, Seaburn, Sunderland

The representative of the Executive Director of Economy and Place outlined the proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

Councillor D. Wilson referred to the representations submitted by Ward Councillor, George Howe and requested Officers circulate some form of clarification on the powers given to Communities to protect green spaces as stated in the said representation.

Councillor Bell also wished to clarify that the statement included in the representation claimed that the land had been bequeathed to the people of Sunderland, yet he understood the land was transferred to the Polytechnic as it was at that time.

Councillor Francis enquired if greater detail were to be submitted by the applicants would this proposal come back before the Committee. Toni Sambridge, Principal Development Management Planner advised that the applicants would have a six month window to resubmit their scheme.

1. RESOLVED that the application be refused for the reasons set out within the report

At this juncture, Councillor Mordey wished to make a statement, commenting that as the Portfolio Holder for City Services he had been shocked and appalled by the treatment Members and particularly Officers had received from members of the public in relation to this application.

Councillor Mordey wished to stress that applications could be submitted for determination by anyone, even if they did not own the land in question, and it was the Council's duty to consider the application and apply the policies and procedures in the same way for all proposals, therefore the personal attacks on Officers, having their professional integrity impugned over social media and such like had been totally unacceptable.

Councillor Mordey further added that everyone had the right to object, but they did not have the right to bully, intimidate and harass. Whilst he understood feelings could run high in such instances there was no excuse for some of the behaviour and language that had been directed at Officers merely carrying out their job.

Councillor Mordey also wished to clarify that the site visits organised for Members had never been open to the public. Site Visits were for Members to acquaint themselves with the location and obtain a better understanding of what was being proposed and neither public nor the applicant's attendance was appropriate.

The opportunity for members of the public to give representations was available during the planning process and also at the official Committee meetings. Recent guidance circulated to Members was only done so to reaffirm long standing protocol and had not been a change in procedure as suggested. The procedure for such site visits was set out in the Council's Constitution and had been so for many years.

Councillor Mordey commented that the accusations of corruption were baseless and was evidenced in the fact that the recommendation put before us today was the one objectors had wanted all along therefore he hoped that all individuals concerned would consider their actions during this process and lessons would be learned.

17/00955/FUL – Rear of Saint Georges Terrace/Roker Park Terrace, Roker, Sunderland

As Councillor Jackson had made an open declaration on this item and left the room, Councillor Bell took the Chair for consideration of this application.

The representative of the Executive Director of Economy and Place outlined the development proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

Councillor Francis commented that a great number of hardwood trees had been lost over the years and enquired if the sycamore trees would be replaced like for like. Jamie Reed, Senior Planner advised that the trees would be replaced with a suitable standard of similar nature and to the satisfaction of the ecologist.

Councillor Porthouse referred to the architects' visualisation of the properties within the powerpoint presentation and commented that Members had been given the direction during training that they should not accept gable ends which had featureless brick walls as this one had shown.

Mr Reed advised that the slide in question had been from an earlier iteration of the proposal and was only included to show the quality of the houses proposed. The previous scheme had intended for the properties to be staggered which would result in the gable end being visible however in reality this proposal would have the gable ends set further back and out of sight.

The Chairman introduced Jamie Collins, a local resident who wished to speak in objection to the proposals. Mr Collins commented that he did not believe due weight had been attributed to the appropriate plans. There were issues in relation to overlooking and loss of privacy with the proposals being too close to the existing dwellings with main facing windows only 14.7m apart rather than 23m as required by the Council's guidelines.

Mr Collins believed the current proposals were the exact opposite to those in the Roker Conservation Report and as they conflicted they should be refused.

Mr Collins raised concerns over the height of the new buildings which would be higher than the one and a half storeys required with nothing submitted to address this. Similar developments had set a precedent to impose conditions for no windows at first floor level or conditions that they be obscured and unable to be opened.

Mr Collins commented that as the proposals were inaccurate he requested this application be refused.

Mr Reed advised that in relation to overlooking, some of the properties in St George's Terrace had roof terraces which would overlook the gardens of the new buildings but the impact of this would affect the owners of the proposal and the scheme would not have a negative impact upon the existing residents.

With regards to distancing of the properties, the proposed measurements were considered to be acceptable and separation distances were just to provide guidance as other factors could be taken into account.

In relation to previous schemes, Mr Reed wished to make clear that the Committee were giving consideration to this scheme and its merits only and not previous schemes. The previous scheme had been a one and a half storey development and had been planned to be located on the boundary, this proposal differed in that the houses would be set within the site and set down at a lower level with significant boundary walls also, therefore the conservation officer had considered all elements and had deemed them to be acceptable.

2. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reasons set out in the report, subject to the 17 conditions contained therein

Items for Information

17/01855/SUB – Land Adjacent Fulwell Methodist Church, Dovedale Road, Sunderland

Councillor Francis requested that a site visit be arranged in respect of the above application.

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

(Signed) J. JACKSON,
Chairman