NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - WEST

At a meeting of the Area Planning Committee - West held at Council Chamber, Prospect House, Hexham, NE46 1XD on Wednesday, 16 October 2013 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT
CW Horncastle (Chair), I Hutchinson (Vice-Chair), E Armstrong, A Dale, RR Dodd, JB Fearon, R Gibson, A Reid, JR Riddle, A Sharp

OFFICERS
M Bird Team Leader (Scrutiny/Regulatory), Committee Services, Legal and Democratic Services
P Bracken Solicitor, Legal and Democratic Services
J Green Senior Planning Officer, Development Services
K Ledger Head of Development Services
G Robbie Principal Planning Officer, Development Services
I Stanners Housing Enabler, Housing Services
J Wood Planning Officer, Development Services

ALSO PRESENT
Press (1)
Public (36)

PART I

69. Apologies for Absence

It was noted that all committee members were present.

70. Minutes

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the last meeting held on 18 September 2013, as circulated, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

71. Disclosures of Interests

Councillor Fearon declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to application 13/01982/FUL - land south west Cragside / north Synclen Avenue, Corbridge. She considered that she had predetermined it so would take no part in the committee's decision on the application, but would reserve her right to address the committee during the public speaking slot.

72. Determination of Planning Applications
The report requested the committee to decide the planning applications attached to the report using the powers delegated to it. The Chair also explained the process for how each application would be considered.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

73. T/20100576 – Land east of Tulip Street, Prudhoe, NE42 6JF: Construction of 4 dwellings and associated works

The committee were requested to consider deferring the report to a future meeting as a detailed highways response had been received just prior to the meeting which required further discussions with both the Highways Authority and the applicant. This was moved by Councillor Hutchinson, seconded by Councillor Dale and thus:

RESOLVED - that the application be deferred.

74. 13/02034/FUL - Land south west Cragside / north Synclen Ave, Corbridge: 54 dwellings (36 open market dwellings at Cragside / 18 affordable dwellings at Synclen) for residential purposes and associated works

With the Chair’s agreement, this planning application was considered first at the meeting.

The application was introduced by Mr Robbie, Principal Planning Officer, who firstly provided a correction; the report stated in paragraph 7.48 that the current proposal of 54 equated to 189 dwellings, which should have said 189 bedrooms.

Mr Robbie also provided an update - the Local Education Authority had now responded and had confirmed that the proposed increase in population would be within the capacity of the local education provision. Details of the proposed intake had been provided and they had no concerns that local schools would not be able to cope with additional demand arising from 54 new properties. The school numbers would peak in 2015/16, higher than the two years either side, but the Local Education Authority had projected that there would be an increase of one child per school year if the development went ahead. The report’s recommendation remained as read except for the deletion of the reference to awaiting comments from the Local Education Authority.

Mr Robbie then continued presenting his report with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams.

Mr David Burnett then spoke in objection to the application. His key points were:

- he was speaking on behalf of the Friends of Corbridge 2013 and the 200 people who had attended a public meeting about the issue and over 150 people who had written in objection to the application; their views should be
listened to
- Corbridge’s foul sewage system was working beyond capacity and additional sewage from new properties would exacerbate the problem. There should be no new development in Corbridge until the infrastructure was improved
- Corbridge’s schools were oversubscribed - some children in Corbridge had to go to school in Hexham as a result
- the stated economic benefits would be dependent on any future government funding.
- Councillors were urged to listen to villagers, who experienced problems on a daily basis.

County Councillor Jean Fearon then spoke in her capacity as local member:
- she was concerned that the Highways Authority had not objected; Synclen Avenue was narrow, busy and congested with parked cars
- the development would cause misery to residents whilst it was built and how would emergency services access?
- the impact of the traffic would impact the whole community, for example it would impact on the walking route to the local school
- Corbridge was a tourist centre, an asset that should not be spoilt.

Chairman of Corbridge Parish Council Councillor Maurice Hodgson also spoke:
- without an agreed Local Development Framework in place developers like the applicant were going to take advantage during the uncertainty being caused
- the report did not address what was the long term plan for Corbridge and why a historic, unique, popular village with great potential to add to tourism should be destroyed by an application like this. Corbridge Parish Council had recommended that Corbridge should be regarded as a settlement rather than a service centre to protect its uniqueness and value to the county
- such developments should be limited to meet the future needs of the village rather than attract migratory housing for people who would contribute little to the community
- the consultants should see the current problems with raw sewage and almost grid locked roads that existed now before such a development.

(Councillor Fearon then left the meeting for the remainder of the consideration of the application.)

Mr John Driver then spoke on behalf of applicants Taylor Wimpey. His key points were:
- the application resulted from extensive community engagement process, including consultation events and a working party with Corbridge Parish Council. The plans were indicative so residents could have their say
- residents had asked for the inclusion of bungalows on the Synclen Avenue site; this had been done
- surface water flows would be no greater following the development than they were prior to it beginning
- the Highways Authority had not objected, but the development would include
dropped kerbs for the six houses at the top of Synclen Avenue
• neither site was in the Green Belt and Tynedale District
  Council had envisaged 13 years ago that the site would be developed from 2006 onwards
• if housing was not delivered at the same rate as the previous five years, Corbridge would face a population loss and an impact on its viability, and there was a backlog in affordable housing. Northumberland had the lowest percentage of children under 16 in the north east region
• no objections had been received from either the Environment Agency, Northumbria Water, Highways Authority or Local Education Authority.

Members then asked a number of questions, to which answers were provided by officers, key details included:
• the housing density in the application would be similar to current levels locally, around 25 – 26 per hectare
• maintenance of the open spaces and financial contributions towards sport and play would be covered by a Section 106 (S106) agreement; play areas would be provided by the developer and managed by a management company
• the refusal of another application and subsequent appeal for the site 15 years previously had focused on the emerging Tynedale Local Plan and issues of prematurity. The current development plan context was significantly different.
• The Cragside site was included within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)
• an area near Cragside considered untidy was confirmed as outside of the application site and not in Taylor Wimpey's ownership
• the Synclen site was currently grazed
• Northumbria Water had requested various conditions which would address concerns with foul sewage/surface water; Condition 14 had been worked up with the council's SuDs (sustainable drainage) officer, who considered it satisfactory
• there was not a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) involved yet but requirements would be defined through the S106 agreement
• 219 houses within the Synclen estate were already served by the junction of Synclen / St Helen's lane., Dropped kerbs would be installed to access those properties located off the immediate access spur to the Synclen site.

Councillor Hutchinson then moved the recommendation to grant the application. This was seconded by Councillor Armstrong.

Detailed debate then followed, with key points including:
• concerns about Corbridge children having to go to school in Hexham
• statutory consultees had not objected, including the Highways Agency despite concerns expressed about possible traffic congestion
• concerns about future traffic problems, although this application had to be considered without reference to any other future developments
• issues with parking and emergency access
• the changing planning policy and the application's adherence to the National
Planning Policy Framework.

Following a summing up it was put to the vote and then:

RESOLVED - that authority be given to the Head of Development Services to Grant Conditional Permission subject to completion of a Section 106 planning agreement to secure the delivery of affordable housing and appropriate contributions towards maintenance of proposed play and informal open space and towards outdoor sport provision, and subject to the conditions set out in the report.

75. 13/01932/FUL - Extension to existing cottage and demolition of existing garage: Wash House Cottage, Eltringham Farm, Station Bank, Mickley Stocksfield, Northumberland, NE43 7DF

(Councillor Fearon then returned to the meeting.)

Ms Wood, Planning Officer, introduced the report with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams. The presentation covered both this application and application 13/01933/LBC.

The Chair advised Mr Harrison, the applicant, that he would have a combined 10 minutes to speak in relation to applications 13/01932/FUL and 13/01933/LBC, although the applications would be voted on separately.

Applicant Mr Harrison then spoke in favour of the application:

- his family were living at the site for a third and fourth generation; it was very important to remain and run their business from the site
- they needed to relocate to a single storey dwelling because of his wife’s health; personal circumstances should be taken into consideration as they were a material reason
- letters of support had been received, which included Prudhoe Town Council
- the holiday let consideration had now been lifted
- two other properties within the location, recognised as a residual hamlet, also had planning permission
- the site was not visible from the highway and the increase in height of 0.5m was not much.

In response to a question members were advised that it was difficult to impose a condition relating to personal circumstances for a permanent structure. Councillor Horncastle moved that the application be refused for the reasons shown in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Hutchinson.

Detailed discussion then followed. Points made against the application included:

- it impacted on a listed building and this was a reason for refusal, barring exceptional circumstances
- the proposed size increase was too much.

Other points were made in support including:
the site visit had helped
• despite the size increase, the building had been small to begin with and the
development would be similar in appearance and materials to what was
currently there
• it would not be harmful to the Green Belt
• removing the garage was supported as it did not enhance the listed building
• it would not be detrimental to the other listed buildings at the location
• it would not be intrusive or overlooking, would improve the property for the
future and create a new home
• it was necessary for the working farm and provided accessible housing for Mrs Harrison.

Following further advice regarding the consideration of development proposals
within the Green Belt, the motion to refuse the application was put to the vote. The
vote was lost so the motion fell. Councillor Dodd then moved that the application
be granted, which was seconded by Councillor Fearon.

Clarification followed about attaching conditions to the motion, which included
support for the removal of permitted development rights and control over the
decking area. Following this the motion to approve the application was put to the
vote and it was:

RESOLVED - that Conditional Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions
being agreed with the Chair and Vice-chair following the meeting.

13/01933/LBC – Listing Building Consent: Extension to existing cottage and
demolition of existing garage: Wash House Cottage, Eltringham Farm,
Station Bank, Mickley, Stocksfield, Northumberland, NE43 7DF

Further to the discussion on application 13/01932/FUL, a separate vote was
required on application 13/01933/LBC.

Councillor Dodd moved that Conditional Permission be Granted as per application
13/01932. This was seconded by Councillor Sharp.

It was put to the vote and:

RESOLVED - that Conditional Permission be Granted, subject to conditions being
agreed with the Chair and Vice-chair following the meeting.

13/01982/FUL - Construction of four, three bedroom dwellings for affordable
rent, relocation of existing play area and public footpath: Land West Of 51
Wydon Park, Wydon Park, Hexham, Northumberland

An update was firstly provided by Mr Robbie. Northumbria Water had initially
commented that a number of pieces of NWL “apparatus” crossed the site; they had
since reported back and confirmed they had no objection and considered that the
development would not have an impact on their assets. It was also noted that the
consultation period had a further week to run and as a result the recommendation should be revised to also state that “Authorisation be given to the Head of Development Services subject to the following conditions and subject to the completion of a Section 106 planning obligation to secure the dwellings as affordable and available to local people in perpetuity, and subject to there being no adverse comments received from the Suds Officer within the consultation period.

Mr Robbie then continued presenting his report with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams.

Mr Garrod then spoke in objection to the application. His key points included:
- the proposed site was the only visible and accessible green space in the local area and the development of housing would diminish this
- the proposed new location for the children’s play park would be less visible for parents and decrease safety
- he had no problem with the construction of well managed sites, but although this scheme was beneficial it was in the wrong place - could it not be added on to other major developments in Hexham?

County Councillor Colin Cessford then spoke in the local member slot. His key points included:
- the consultation process had been flawed; as a result many local residents had lost their opportunity to object
- the proposal would make the already dense area of housing even denser; it was an extremely congested cul-de-sac
- the land got waterlogged at times
- the current play area was well used but the new one would be smaller and in an unacceptable place
- the need for affordable housing was acknowledged but not on this key community asset; there needed to be better alternative sites.

Agent Mr Vince Walsh then spoke in favour of the development. His key points included:
- following the pre-planning process the proposal had reduced from five to four houses
- consideration had been given to access and repositioning the playground to assist safety for children
- Hexham Town Council were supportive of the plans
- Northumbria Water and the Environment Agency considered that there was not a risk of flooding on the site
- it would not lead to major traffic congestion.

In response to a question it was confirmed that Hexham Town Council had not responded to the county council regarding the application.

Councillor Dale then moved the recommendation to grant the application. This was seconded by Councillor A Reid.

Reference was made to how local residents were concerned about flooding at the
site although the relevant statutory agencies did not think it was a risk. Members were advised that once the SuDs Officer had replied, if they submitted adverse comments, work could take place with the developer to address any issues raised. Members were also advised that the Green Spaces Officer was happy with the proposal, subject to a comment on the need for a streetlight at the site; members agreed that this should be added as a condition.

It was then put to the vote and:

RESOLVED - that Authorisation be given to the Head of Development Services subject to the following conditions and subject to the completion of a Section 106 planning obligation to secure the dwellings as affordable and available to local people in perpetuity, and subject to there being no adverse comments received from the SuDs Officer within the consultation period and an additional condition required an additional street light.

78. 13/02119/LBC – Listed Building Consent for the retention of 18 solar photovoltaic panels: Morley Hill Farm, Whitfield, Hexham, NE47 8HW

Mr Robbie presented his report with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams.

Mr Chris Harrison spoke in support of the application on behalf of the applicants. His key points included:

- the government encouraged all households to use green energy, and the applicants had inserted a 4KW facility under permitted development rights at substantial cost to them, putting electricity back into the grid
- the panels would assist work on the farm, and help sustain farmers and their facilities
- the panels were south facing, black on a grey slate roof; they were hardly noticeable
- compared to the other green option, wind turbines, the panels would be less obtrusive; they were cheaper to maintain, could be removed, and were temporary
- 11 letters of support had been received.

Councillor Hutchinson moved that the application be approved, considering them to not have had a detrimental effect, were done sympathetically, and the applicant was using sustainable renewable energy. He suggested that if his motion was not agreed, members should then consider agreeing to a site visit.

Discussion followed during which two members supported the proposal of a site visit.

The motion to approve the application was then put to the vote. The motion was defeated and thus fell.

Councillor Sharp then moved that a site visit be arranged to look at the impact of the proposal on a listed building. This was seconded by Councillor Riddle. This was put to the vote and it was then:
RESOLVED - that a site visit be arranged to look at the impact of the proposal on a listed building, to take place on Monday 4 November at 10.30am.

79. 13/01103/FUL - Proposed development of 14 dwellings each with 2 parking spaces and visitor parking: Land north of The George Hotel, Humshaugh, Northumberland

The application was introduced by Ms J Green, Senior Planning Officer. Ms Green firstly provided an update; there was a slight rewording to Condition 4 regarding the landscaping scheme to substitute ‘Before development commences’ with ‘Prior to the occupation of the first dwelling hereby approved.’

As a result of the re-consultation on the amended plans English Heritage and the Highway Authority had raised no objection. As the consultation period had not yet expired then the recommendation on page 45 of the report read: "Authority be given to the Head of Development Services to grant conditional permission subject to further comments from the Parish Council, subject to no new comments being raised within the consultation period by local residents and subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement to secure the provision of the affordable units in perpetuity with the inclusion of a local lettings clause".

Ms Green then continued presenting her report with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams.

Questions were then asked about the position regarding the waiving of sport and play contributions. Members were advised that Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) were not for profit organisations, and for them to develop they might at times need to have their sport and play contributions waived. On this occasion the company was due to otherwise make a loss. Members asked why the viability was not assessed before applications came before planning committees and given the time spent developing applications how could they not know the expected cost? Members were advised that details were checked but their sport and play figures were only looked at if they requested justification, and other factors such as financial pressures such as increasing tender prices could affect the viability of schemes. Issues regarding viability affected the whole of the county. In response to another question it was confirmed that the local parish council, who had concerns, still had until 24 October to respond to the revised details in the application. Members were also advised that building relationships with and supporting RSLs was important in difficult financial circumstances which particularly affected RSLs' builds in rural areas.

At this point in the meeting it was approaching 9pm so Councillor Hutchinson moved that the meeting continue beyond three hours in duration to finish the remaining business on the agenda. This was seconded by Councillor Horncastle. It was then:

RESOLVED - that the meeting continue beyond three hours duration, in accordance with Item 4 of Part 4 of the Council’s constitution.
Following further clarification about policy issues regarding sports and play contributions, Councillor Dale moved the recommendation to grant. This was seconded by Councillor Horncastle.

Some concern was expressed about the circumstances through which the proposed materials had been changed, and it was clarified that the motion proposed was for the amended scheme as presented, with no sport and play contribution included. It was put to the vote and then:

RESOLVED - that authority be given to the Head of Development Services to Grant Conditional Permission subject to further comments from Humshaugh Parish Council, the Highway Authority and English Heritage, subject to no new comments being raised within the consultation period by local residents, subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement to secure the provision of the affordable units in perpetuity with the inclusion of a local lettings clause, and subject to the conditions detailed in the report.

80. 13/02237/FUL - Demolition and rebuild one dwelling: 24 Edge Hill, Ponteland, NE20 9RW

The application was introduced by Planning Officer Ms J Wood with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams.

Mr Robbie then replied to questions about how the current application differed from the previously refused proposal, and explained that the previous application had been refused on the grounds of protected species.

Councillor Horncastle then moved that the application be approved. This was seconded by Councillor Dodd, who considered that the local area was a suitable place for such applications. It was put to the vote then:

RESOLVED that the application be Granted permission subject to the conditions listed in the report.

81. 13/02519/COU - Change of use of redundant mental health care building to hostel: Woodlands Lodge, Dene Park House, Dene Park, Hexham, Northumberland

Ms Green presented her report with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams. Councillor Sharp moved the recommendation to grant, which was seconded by Councillor Hutchinson. It was put to the vote and:

RESOLVED - that authority to the Head of Development Services to Grant conditional planning permission subject to no new material planning issues being raised within the consultation and notification period and subject to the conditions listed in the report.
82. 13/02583/FUL - Business Link, 3 Cattle Market, Hexham: Change of use from office (B1) to betting shop (A2), installation of: new shop front, roof light to rear single storey flat roof, two air conditioning condenser units, one satellite dish and one TV aerial

Mr Robbie firstly provided an update; following on-going discussions between the applicant and Conservation Officer and the submission of revised and amended elevations, Condition 2 had been amended to refer to the correct drawing reference numbers. The recommendation was as set out with the appropriate revision to Condition 2.

Mr Robbie then continued presenting his report with the aid of maps, photographs and diagrams.

Councillor A Reid moved that the application be approved. This was seconded by Councillor Hutchinson. It was put to the vote then:

RESOLVED - that authority be given to the Head of Development Services to Grant Conditional Permission subject to no new material planning issues being raised within the consultation period, and Condition 2 amended to include the correct drawing reference numbers.

REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF LOCAL SERVICES

83. Appeals Update

Members received a report on the progress of planning appeals for their information.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE