

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**CASTLE MORPETH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **Castle Morpeth Local Area Council** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Monday, 12 November 2018 at 4.00pm.

**PRESENT**

Councillor S. Dickinson  
(Vice-chair (Planning), in the Chair items 69 - 75) (part)

Councillor E. Armstrong  
(Chair, in the chair items 76 - 84)

**COUNCILLORS**

Bawn, D (part)  
Beynon, J.A  
Dodd, R.R  
Dunn, L  
Jackson, P (part)

Jones, V  
Ledger, D (part)  
Towns, D.J  
Wearmouth, R

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Bird, M  
Blenkinsopp, M  
Brown, J.  
Bulman, M  
Dodds, D

Hadden, D  
Horsman, G  
King, M  
Lally, D  
Marley, J  
Mason, A

Murphy, J  
Sinnamon, E  
Strettle, R  
Wardle, S

Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Lawyer (observing only)  
Consultant in Public Health  
Lawyer  
Operations Manager, Self Directed  
Support, Prevention and Carers  
Lawyer (observing only)  
Senior Planning Officer  
Highways Delivery Area Manager  
Chief Executive  
Locality Coordinator Team Manager  
Locality Coordinator for Castle  
Morpeth area  
Principal Planning Officer  
Interim Head of Planning Services  
Principal Policy Officer  
Neighbourhood Services Area  
Manager

Five members of the public and one member of the press were in attendance.

## 69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Foster and Sanderson, and from Councillor Jackson for the planning part of the meeting.

## 70. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council held on Monday, 8 October 2018 as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the title of minute 65, regarding 26 Station Road, Stannington, being amended to its correct reference of 18/02189/FUL, rather than 18/00483/DISCON.

A member also queried whether the first bullet point line in minute 65, page 4, should be amended to read "*the nearest shop to the site was the petrol station which was situated 800m west of the site*". It was clarified that officers had not specified any distance at the meeting, although a member might have made reference to it. It was also not certain whether 800m related to the walking route or the direct distance. As this section of the minutes consisted of key responses to questions by officers, it was thus not necessary to amend the record to include any reference to 800m.

## 71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ledger declared a prejudicial interest in planning application 16/04486/FUL. He had disagreed with the Local Area Council's decision on the original application, had read the update report and not changed his mind, so would leave the meeting whilst the item was considered.

Members received legal advice that a decision was not required on the actual application; they were only being asked to consider whether or not to reduce the number of refusal reasons following the receipt of further information. Councillor Ledger was entitled to not take part in the item if he considered that he had predetermined it, to which Councillor Leger confirmed that he had.

## DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

### 72. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The report explained how the Local Area Council needed to decide the planning applications attached to this agenda using the powers delegated to it and included details of the public speaking arrangements. (Report attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A.)

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**73. 18/01840/FUL**

**Demolition of existing farmstead and erection of 3 No dwelling houses  
Benridge Moor Farm, Longhorsley, Morpeth, Northumberland**

Richard Laughton, Planning Officer, introduced the application with the aid of a slides presentation. He referred to the site visit that had taken place on 9 November and explained the reasons for the recommendation for refusal. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix B.)

Craig Ross, agent, then spoke in support of the application, of which his keys points were:

- he was speaking on behalf of the applicant and other local residents who supported the proposal. The scheme submitted was no different to the application recently approved at Hebron Hill; the only difference was the recommendation
- it was a redundant, disused site covered in debris, adjacent to existing housing and had no viable use; it could be brought back to life with three traditional Northumbrian houses. The houses would include less floor space than the current derelict barn and would be a form of sustainable development
- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) policy guided developments towards sustainable solutions. The development would not function in isolation; the local bus stop was within walking distance and the site was within reach of Morpeth and the surrounding area. It would not lead to unrestricted growth nor cause any villages to merge and would reuse existing developed land. It would not interfere with the purpose of the Green Belt
- members should consider accepting the special circumstances, including the improvement of the local environment for neighbouring residents, and agree to support the application and delegate to officers the outstanding ecological and public protection issues that needed resolution.

In response to a members' questions, key responses from officers included:

- regarding any differences between this site and the development at Hebron Hill, members were advised that it was a matter of planning policy. This application had to be assessed independently to the Hebron Hill one. Another recent application nearby had also been refused. This application was considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and had no very special circumstances to support it
- it was contrary to Green Belt policy in the NPPF. It did not meet the NPPF's definition of previously developed land, as it previously had an agricultural use
- if the site was considered an eyesore, then the owner should tidy it up; untidiness did not provide a high enough test for approval. Weight had to be given to any very special circumstances
- conversions were allowed in the Green Belt, but this did not qualify as one.

Councillor Towns then moved, against the officer recommendation to refuse, that the application be granted subject to the outstanding ecology and land contamination issues and any relevant conditions considered necessary being delegated to officers. This was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth, who added that it was a brownfield site, was in an accessible area, not in the open countryside, nor would it impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Debate then followed of which the key points from members were:

- there were inconsistencies between how some applications were determined, as this had a different recommendation to the Hebron Hill application despite their similarities
- the application could contribute to local sustainability and benefit the petrol station
- eyesores weren't a means for justifying the granting of planning permission, the site should be cleared up
- there was some architectural merit in preserving agricultural buildings, but the barn in question had no merit. It was not however necessarily appropriate to replace agricultural buildings with new residential buildings
- members had to give weight to the stress tests, and decisions needed to be consistent.

Upon being asked to provide reasons to justify any very special circumstances justifying the development, Councillor Towns summed up by referring to paragraphs 78 - 79 of the NPPF and it would contribute to sustainability and benefit the petrol station. He agreed that being an eyesore was not a reason just to develop a site, but said there was no other alternative use for the site nor any agricultural operation there anymore. It was in proximity to other residential properties to the site and local residents supported the proposal. It was better to replace it with a development which would benefit local businesses and help sustain the local community. It was an improvement to allow a small, discreet development of the site.

On being put to the vote, the motion to approve the application, against officer recommendation, was agreed by six votes for, three against and one absence. It was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that the application be **GRANTED** subject to the outstanding ecology and land contamination issues and any relevant conditions considered necessary being delegated to officers.

(Councillor Ledger then left the meeting whilst the update report on application 16/04486/FUL was considered.)

#### **74. 16/04486/FUL**

##### **Detailed planning proposal for 53 residential dwellings and associated infrastructure on land north of The Garth, Pottery Bank, Morpeth**

Geoff Horsman, Senior Planning Officer introduced the report with the aid of a slides presentation. (Report enclosed as Appendix C.) Mr Horsman explained that the application had been refused on four grounds on 12 February 2018. However, due to the receipt of additional information, it was recommended that both refusal reasons 1 and 3, concerning insufficient information being provided about the impact on the highway network and the impact on flooding, should not be defended at the forthcoming public inquiry about the application. This was because a revised transport statement had been received following additional work undertaken, and neither the Environment Agency or the Lead Local Flood Authority objected subject to the conditions included. It was instead recommended that only reasons 2 and 4, regarding the application being contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan and the impact on residents at Pottery Bank Court be retained as the reasons for refusal to be defended.

Members then asked questions to which the key responses from officers were:

- replying to concerns that traffic lights did not suit Morpeth's network, the impact of increasing more traffic at the Lancaster Park junction, that a roundabout would be preferable and there was no reference to the impact from a signalled junction upon the wider Morpeth road network, officers advised these were not reasons for refusal; the transport consultant's view was that a signalled junction would work and also benefit pedestrians and cyclists. The Highways Authority did not consider highways grounds to be sustainable refusal reason
- regarding a member's view about the overall impact of 3,000 new houses upon Morpeth's already capacity network and the likely numbers resulting from the high proportion of families who were moving into most new housing and the resulting cumulative impact, it was pointed out that this application only proposed 53 units. The transport assessment concluded that the development would result in additional one vehicle at the junction every three minutes during peak hours
- regarding how all other junctions in Morpeth were already under pressure, including Telford Bridge and Manchester Street, and only two routes existed through Morpeth which could easily be disrupted by a large vehicle breaking down or roadworks, and why only the Lancaster Park junction had been considered in this matter, members were advised that it was not strictly necessary or reasonable for the applicant to give consideration to the other junctions in Morpeth
- there was not expected to be cumulative adverse impact on the town centre from a development of 53 dwellings.

At this point, as reference was made to Counsel's advice about defending the decision, as the information received was legally professionally privileged, the meeting would need to go into private deliberations to receive and consider the advice.

Councillor Wearmouth then moved, seconded by Councillor Beynon, to exclude the press and public, which was agreed unanimously and it was thus:

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A</b>
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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 6 | 5 - Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings. The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because privilege lies with the "client", which is the Council. |
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Members then asked questions and received advice about legal matters regarding the forthcoming public inquiry.

Key responses from officers to further questions from members, outwith of legally professionally privileged matters, were:

- the development would bring low predicted traffic movement in addition to the existing high traffic stream in Morpeth
- the decision was up to members whether to retain the four refusal reasons or reduce them. It did not change the committee's original decision overall
- details of the analysis undertaken about the proposed signals was included in Appendix 3 of the transport assessment. It was based on assessment of the maximum anticipated queue of vehicles by 2032 if the signals were introduced.

Councillor Bawn then moved that refusal reasons 1, 2 and 4 be retained, so that only refusal reason 3, regarding flooding, be withdrawn from those to be defended.

This motion was not seconded, so thus fell.

Councillor Dickinson then moved the officer recommendation to only defend refusal reasons 2 and 4. This was seconded by Councillor Armstrong.

Debate then followed, of which the key details of matters not concerning legal professional privilege included:

- members noted that the statement of case had to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by 20 December 2018, which would require much preparatory work. The inquiry would then take place in June 2019
- concern was expressed about previous traffic light systems, which did not suit Morpeth's network, with reference to the Telford Bridge traffic lights erected then removed afterwards following protests. However the member acknowledged that it was better to focus on the stronger refusal reasons.

On being put to the vote, the motion was approved by six votes in support and three abstentions, so it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that in respect of the appeal lodged with the Planning Inspectorate concerning refusal of planning application reference 16/04486/FUL, the Council will defend only refusal reasons 2 and 4 of that decision but not refusal reasons 1 and 3.

*(Councillor Ledger and the press and public in attendance all then returned to the meeting.)*

## **75. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE**

Members were asked to note the progress of the planning appeals. (Report enclosed as Appendix D).

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

*(5.25pm: Councillors Dickinson and Ledger then exited the meeting. The meeting adjourned until 6.00pm. Councillor Jackson arrived at the meeting.)*

## OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

### 76. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

This item allowed members of the public to ask questions, either at the meeting or submit them in advance.

**Alan Sambrook, Pegswood Parish Council** raised that a decision on a recent planning application for Pegswood included a Section 106 contribution for local education. However this funding was being allocated to Ashington Academy. Given that a number of local feeder schools including Pegswood and Ellington continued to be maintained by the County Council but Ashington was academised, why was the money going there and could a share of it be retained for education in Pegswood?

The Chair confirmed that a written answer would be provided, but Councillor Towns firstly contributed as local member. He had also queried the situation; officers had confirmed that Pegswood Primary School had adequate provision and no impact was expected locally for children in that age range, so there was no requirement to extend its facilities. However, Ashington was the catchment for older pupils and that was where the need for facilities was, in addition to a share of the funding in question being spent on countywide special educational needs. There were no grounds under S106 regulations to require the funding to be allocated in Pegswood.

**RESOLVED** that a written reply be sent to Councillor Sambrook.

### 77. PETITIONS

Members were advised that no new petitions had been received nor were any reports required on petitions previously received, but also informed that the promised six month update on the petition about Riversdale House, Stakeford, would be presented to the Local Area Council's meeting on 14 January 2019.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### 78. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received the following updates from the Area Managers from Neighbourhood Services and Technical Services:

#### **Neighbourhood Services:**

- five refuse collections had been received, which provided the extra capacity that officers hoped for. Some new refuse collection routes had been implemented
- the year's grass cutting programme had been completed; the intended 14 cuts had been undertaken
- the NEAT teams had been working on tidying land at war memorials
- a new roadsweeping vehicle had also been attained.

A member reported concerns expressed by a resident that litter picking activities in Lynemouth were insufficient. Mr Wardle advised that details of litter picking schedules would be provided and the concerns expressed would be looked into. Walkabouts and inspections were regularly undertaken. Litter picking requirements needed to meet a required standard.

### **Technical Services:**

#### **(1) Winter Preparedness and Resilience Report for the Local Area Council:**

- **Management/Supervisors/Drivers:** All rotas and drivers were in position and on rota. They were continuing to train and invest in a number of additional employees including apprentices through their HGV and Winter Service training.
- **Fleet:** A fleet of 28 front line gritters were on station. All vehicles were now in location and had been since 29 October when the current year's Winter Services Rota was implemented. As part of the fleet replacement programme, five new gritters were expected soon and would replace current operational gritters. In addition the vehicles came fitted with 360 degree cameras around the vehicle. These recorded to a hard drive and could also be remotely monitored by supervisors and managers via a live feed. They would provide a high level of driver safety.
- **Salt:** All the summer order of rock salt has been delivered and at the start of the season the Council had approximately 37,500 tonnes with all depots being at capacity. This included a strategic/resilience store of 4,000 tonnes.
- **Weather Monitoring:** As per the previous year, this was between the Meteogroup (forecaster) Vaisala management equipment software and forecast weather stations and monitoring stations. Three experienced, specialist winter service managers/ decision makers were in place over the the winter period who monitored all forecast weather and weather stations 24/7 from October to April. These staff co-ordinated all winter services operations across Northumberland when they were on duty. This was usually once every three weeks over the winter period.
- **Additional Support Farmers and Sub contract:** support had all been checked and was all in place should any serious snow be encountered over the coming months.
- **Cross Boundary Working:** Arrangements were in place with all adjoining authorities to ensure continuity between operational boundaries. The Council could now salt the entire length of the A69 from Newcastle to the M6 in Cumbria. Northumberland County Council also completed the weather forecasting and decision making for Newcastle City Council's winter services operation.
- **Winter Storms/ Flooding:** Despite performing very well during the event, further lessons had been learnt from 'The Beast from the East' earlier in 2018. Key lessons were the collaboration with neighbouring authorities and agencies throughout the event and the assistance and commitment by farming contractors. The contact centre was the first point of contact for all requests and emergencies, allowing officers to log and track the request throughout the event. Where applicable and when the weather dictated, staff on rota would also respond to flooding and other storm related issues supporting the existing out of Hours rota in anything above and beyond the normal response levels. The authority currently received severe weather warnings well in advance of events from several sources including the Met Office and in several forms. This gave the ability to track storms and plan resources around the potential impact.
- **New Salt Barns:** A contract had recently been awarded a contract to construct two new salt barns in Allendale and Blyth for 4000T salt capacity. Salt covers were also

being implemented at the strategic store in Powburn and proposed for Rothbury. Salt bins and Heaps Area teams were replenishing all bins and heaps. Further replenishments would be completed upon request throughout the winter period.

- **Alerts/social media:** Gritting actions were posted on the NCC website, Twitter and Facebook. This was across our regular winter period from the start of November to the end of March, unless required to extend the service due to weather. Officers asked members to advise people to use the 0345 600 6400 telephone number for winter service requests or any emergencies. This would ensure the calls were logged correctly and dealt with in the most efficient way possible.

**(2) General update:**

- the Merton car park development at Ponteland had been very well delivered, on time and within budget. It was well used and the time limits worked well
- a large amount of patching work had been undertaken in the Darras Hall area, in particularly Middle Drive and Eastern Way. Work had taken place with the Darras Hall Committee. A road patching scheme had been undertaken in Pinewood Drive in Morpeth; other local work planned for Morpeth included Green Lane, Betts Lane and Spelvit Lane
- two flood protection schemes were planned for Morpeth, at Mitford and High Stanners.

A member expressed his thanks for the new car park in Ponteland, which had more than doubled the parking capacity at the site. The scheme had been delivered with as little disruption as possible, and should benefit the local shops.

Members praised the increased quality in road patching work. A member expressed thanks for the patching undertaken through Ulgham and Longhirst, and another member asked for an update on works due to the entrance to the Kylins. Members advised that this was currently being considered by Planning Services, who would advise Technical Services once it was ready to proceed. Members agreed that these measures would ensure that the Council was more resilient especially if more severe inclement weather hit like it had in February/March 2018. Reference was also made to the new machine demonstrated at Hauxley that could clean footpaths as well as roads. Additional funding had been received for the following year's road maintenance budget. Thanks were expressed to all staff involved in this work.

**RESOLVED** that the updates be noted.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS - CORPORATE**

### **79. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE**

#### **Economic Strategy**

Principal Policy Officer Rob Strettle provided an update on the current refresh of the Northumberland Economic Strategy. (Copy of presentation enclosed with the official minutes of the meeting.)

Key details included:

- the purpose of the refresh of the emerging Economic Strategy

- the brief, to focus on delivery and how the Council could provide solutions; showcase Northumberland's world beating sectors, land for growth and world class culture; tell people about Northumberland and demonstrate its competitive advantages
- key actions included refreshing the economic policy and evidence context; renewing and refocusing existing themes and delivery programmes; establishing a comprehensive Northumberland Regeneration Investment Programme and Town Forum programme
- timescales: engagement up to November 2018 followed by approval/relaunch in early 2019
- economic trends for Northumberland
- policy and funding opportunities
- examples of local assets
- the framework and priorities for delivering the strategy
- the three objectives of the Economic Strategy: to grow the business base; support inclusive employment; and deliver productive places
- the six priorities of the Economic Strategy: deliver industrial growth; support enterprise and investment; develop a skilled workforce; enable inclusion in the economy; connect the county; invest in the county's towns and communities
- the next steps.
- the presentation also included a link to the councils External Funding Bulletin and members were encouraged to promote this service to partners.

A member asked if details about the External Funding Bulletin could be circulated as widely as possible, and the presentation be sent to town/parish councils. This would be arranged, including publishing the presentation on the Council's website.

Another member referred to the successful operation of the Morpeth Forum, which included county councillors and town councillors and worked with local developers. It was delivering real benefits for the town. If other towns were looking to set up a local forum, they could get in contact with the Morpeth Forum to find out more.

Mr Strettle was thanked for his presentation and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted and that details regarding the External Funding Bulletin be circulated to interested parties including town/parish councils.

## **80. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

### **Empowering Communities Project**

Consultant in Public Health Dr Jim Brown provided a presentation about the Empowering Communities Project (copy of report about the project and the presentation given to the meeting enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix E).

Key details of the presentation included:

- the need for a cultural shift in improving health and wellbeing; moving away from single issue, individual lifestyle change; focusing on what made people well and wellbeing; building on the positives; working more with communities

- national and local drivers for change
- community centred approaches: strengthening communities; volunteer and peer roles; collaborations and partnerships; access to community resources
- the benefits and risks
- features of the Empowering Communities project (30 months): the roles of Locality Co-ordinators, who would be embedded within the voluntary and community sector/not for profit host organisations; grants for community-centred approaches; the objectives of the project; the role of Locality Co-ordinators in the first six months in their positions and after the first six months; the roles of host organisations, the recruitment process for the five Locality Co-ordinators
- the request to the Local Area Councils: to help Locality Co-ordinators to identify local communities' asset, including skills/knowledge/commitment of community members; local groups and organisations and informal networks; physical, environmental and economic resources; assets of external agencies; and to work with the Locality Coordinator and communities to identify needs, build on aspirations and link assets to strengthen individuals and local communities.

Allana Mason, Locality Coordinator for Castle Morpeth area, Debra Dodds, Operations Manager, Self Directed Support, Prevention and Carers and Julia Marley, Team Manager were also in attendance to introduce themselves to members.

In response to a member's question about how the project would be evaluated and the types of outcome that would make the project be considered a success, members were advised that ongoing work would consider this question, including how stakeholders were able to contribute to priorities, plus how people linked to wider assets, any cultural changes, and the impact of any grants received. Social prescribing was also important, including helping mental wellbeing outcomes. It could impact on primary care; for example resulting in a reduction to GP usage; such targets could be discussed further with the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Councillor Towns added that he was the vice-chair of the Voluntary and Community Sector Working Group, which could welcome an update in 12 months' time about any evaluation of the project, so could be added to their work programme.

Cabinet member Councillor Jones thanked Mr Brown and stressed the need for a focus on what made people well rather than ill. She welcomed the progress of the project and seeing it come to fruition.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

### 81. COMMUNITY CLOTHING SCHEME

Members received information about the community clothing scheme in Northumberland (leaflet attached to the official minutes as Appendix F).

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**82. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES**

Members received an update report on Member's Local Improvement Schemes, as of 1 November 2018 (attached to the official minutes as Appendix G).

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**83. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

Members received the latest version of the Local Area Council's work programme (attached to the official minutes as Appendix H).

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**84. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Monday, 10 December 2018 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth.

**CHAIR** .....

**DATE** .....