

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held in the Jubilee Social and Community Centre, Highcliffe, Spittal, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 2JL on Thursday, 22 March 2018 at 4.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor G. Castle
(Chair, in the Chair, items 134 - 135 and 141 - 149)

Councillor T. Thorne
(Planning Vice-chair, in the Chair, items 136 - 140)

MEMBERS

T. Clark
G. Hill
A.H. Murray
W. Pattison

G. Renner-Thompson
G. Roughead
C. Seymour
J.G. Watson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M. Bird
G. Bucknall
M. Bulman
G. Fairs
B. Hodgson

P. Jones
D. Lally
C. McDonagh
E. Sinnamon
R. Sittambalam
N. Snowdon

Senior Democratic Services Officer
Area Highways Manager (North)
Lawyer
Highways Development Manager
Area Manager (North),
Neighbourhood Services
Service Director, Local Services
Chief Executive
Planning Officer
Senior Planning Manager
Senior Planning Officer
Principal Programmes Officer
(Highways Improvement)

S. Holmes - Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust

Eight members of the public were in attendance for the planning section from 4pm, and 15 members of the public were in attendance for the other Local Area Council business section from 6pm.

(Councillor Castle in the Chair.)

Ch.'s Initials.....

134. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Castle welcomed everybody to the meeting and explained the format.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bridgett, Lawrie and Moore.

135. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday 22 February 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to being amended to include an omission from Minute 134, as it had been formally agreed to extend the meeting, so the following wording be added:

At this point, as the meeting was approaching three hours in length it was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue beyond three hours in duration.

(Councillor Thorne then in the Chair.)

136. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The report explained how the Local Area Council was asked to decide the planning applications attached to the agenda using the powers delegated to it. (Report enclosed with official minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

137. 17/03816/FUL

**New 4 bed dwelling. Extend existing private track to site boundary, turning area and parking - Amended 15/02/18
Land South Of Fence Wood, Felton Fence, Felton, Northumberland, NE65 9HY**

Senior Planning Officer Ragu Sittambalam introduced the application with the aid of a Slides presentation.

Paul Conn, agent for the application, then spoke in support of which his key points were:

- the applicants had lived locally for 20 years, running successful businesses
- a stone house had not been an option due to topographical factors
- his company had designed the first National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 55 house in County Durham. Work had taken place on this design with the planning department and consultees

- the house would be completely off grid; it would be powered by photovoltaic panels, use water from an on site bore hole, and have a large glazed area. It would be insulated and airtight
- it would provide ecological benefits, including a new wetland area and wildflower meadow. There was currently no ecology present on the site
- it had been a collaborative process and accorded with all planning policy.

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

- no other houses in Northumberland operated off grid like this one would, but there were examples of others in the UK
- recent case law had concluded that innovation would be considered on a local rather than a national basis
- the NPPF policy stipulation that developments in the open countryside should be restricted to those for occupation by rural workers near their place of work did not apply, as an NPPF exemption applied: the application had exceptional design and innovation, so there was no need to link it to an agricultural function
- any future similar applications would also be subject to the same Paragraph 55 requirements.

Councillor Castle then moved the officer recommendation to grant the application, which was seconded by Councillor Watson.

Members then made the following key points:

- its off grid status was welcomed; such design had been done elsewhere was applauded
- the attached conditions made it a good development. It fitted into the countryside well
- it would be helpful to get feedback from the developer in the future, as areas of the UK might benefit differently from local levels of solar energy
- it was exceptionally designed and innovative
- a member thought that a stone built property would have been preferable.

Councillor Castle considered that the application met all the reasonable criteria, it was important to adapt to consider other styles of building, and it was of appropriate design within its setting.

The motion was then put to the vote, and agreed by nine votes in support to one against, and it was thus:

RESOLVED that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report.

138. 17/04638/FUL

**Construction of a new single storey low energy "passivhaus", including parking forecourt, separate home office pavilion and storage shed.
Demolition of existing wooden shed and removal of trees to eastern area of garden plot.
Land North East Of 26 Main Street, Main Street, Felton, Northumberland**

Planning Officer Chris O'Donagh firstly provided an update: paragraph 7.1.6 should have referred to sandstone coloured brick, not walls; the Conservation Officer had assessed the application on the basis of it being sandstone brick. He then continued introducing the application with the aid of a Slides presentation.

Julie Wilson, agent for the application, then spoke in support, of which her key points were:

- she was qualified in European standards for passivhauses, and had completed several passivhaus projects in Scotland
- the applicants wished to build the property for their long term needs; it was single level, accessible, with low energy costs, in a bio-diverse landscape. It would be to German passivhaus standard: highly insulated, air tight with virtually no heating needed. There was only one in Northumberland so far, but they were widely used across Europe, with 30,000 in Germany
- it was to the rear of 26 Main Street, which was an original burgage plot from the 13th century. It acknowledged these boundaries. It was one of only four from 45 local burgage plots not built on or merged into larger plots
- it would use open timber and was designed to link and connect all elements on site including the orchard. The applicants would cultivate food. The garden would be fundamental in linking the house and garden. It would have south and west facing glazing. The property would be located to the east of the plot, as per the Conservation Officer's recommendation
- some low quality sycamore trees needed to be removed; this would benefit the allotment as currently they took away nutrients and were overshadowing. The use of mixed hedging would benefit biodiversity on site.

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

- the archaeology team did not need to be consulted as it was not considered to be site of interest; it had been a gardening plot for hundreds of years
- there would be some harm to the conservation area, but the Conservation Officer had judged that it would be less than substantial harm
- Recreation Lane was maintained by Felton Parish Council
- it was the case officer's opinion that the modern design was acceptable; NPPF guidance did not recommend stifling innovation. There could be some harm, but it would provide public and environmental benefits. It was the case officer's role to weigh potential harm against any benefits
- the burgage plot would still remain; the property would fit into its linear form
- one house would not outweigh harm, but it was a special house
- the allotments would benefit from the removal of the trees, which also consumed thousands of litres of water per day
- the application was being presented to this meeting for discussion as it was considered that Felton Parish Council had submitted valid objections
- Felton Main Street was mostly composed of stone buildings, but there were a mixture of modern and traditional houses on Recreation Lane.

Councillor Watson moved that the application be granted as per the officer recommendation. This was seconded by Councillor Castle.

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

- some houses might not be to some members' specific taste but this application was supported. It was a new means of modern living and hopefully would work well
- if it was on the Main Street then it might have been inappropriate for its setting, but it was set back far from it
- it was not damaging the burgage plot, but instead was a sensitive development on it. It had good green credentials
- Recreation Lane residents might like to discuss any road maintenance issues before the development began
- the neighbouring Field House was not a listed building.

On there being no further debate, the motion to grant was then put to the vote, agreed by seven votes in support to one against with two abstentions, and it was thus:

RESOLVED that the application be GRANTED subject to the conditions in the report.

139. 16/04630/FUL

**Proposed erection of building containing 1 no. private dwelling house and 3 no. duplex holiday lets
Signal Cottage, Island View, Amble, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 0SF**

Members were advised that this application had been withdrawn from the agenda. The agent/applicant had revised the description of the proposed development. This was a material change to the development so needed to be re-consulted on.

140. Planning Appeals

The report was for members' information to report the progress of planning appeals. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as part of Appendix A.) Members agreed that it was useful to receive updates on appeals and it was:

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

OTHER LOCAL AREA COUNCIL BUSINESS

On the conclusion of the development control business at 4.52pm, the meeting then adjourned as the remainder of the agenda consisted of other Local Area Council business which was scheduled to begin at 6.00pm.

(Councillor Castle back in the Chair: 6.00pm.)

141. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

This item was to reply to any questions received from members of the public, which could be received in writing in advance or asked at the meeting. Questions could be asked about issues for which the Council had a responsibility.

Karin Graham, Berwick Town Council referred to the question that she had asked at Council on 21 February, including a supplementary question. She considered that risk assessment policy on winter services operations was not implemented in the Berwick area, that the gritters were old, said that no mobile phones were provided, there were no 360 degree cameras on trucks, limited budgets were available and insufficient operatives were on vehicles.

Exchanges then followed about what happened regarding the written response to these issues that had been organised for and sent to Councillor Graham, although Councillor Graham replied that she had not received it.

In response to a further question, the Chief Executive advised that it was not appropriate to refer the issue to another council committee as it was an operational matter. Every council department had health and safety arrangements that linked together for the necessary corporate health and safety requirements.

Shortly afterwards, copies of a response to all of the issues raised was then made available at the meeting; Councillor Graham and all members of the Local Area Council each received a copy. *(Copy of response enclosed with the official minutes of the meeting.)*

Brian Darling, local resident referred to his membership of Berwick's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and expressed concern about proposals for Spittal Point. He did not support the proposed splitting of sites into smaller zones, and expressed concern about time taken for the application for the site. He referred to the Gillespie Report of 2006 and its identification of 10 sites out of 56 being treated as one overall site so that a harmonious design could be provided across all of them.

It was then clarified that this related to a planning application due to be presented soon to the Strategic Planning Committee. It was therefore not appropriate to discuss such live planning matters at this meeting. The local member would however have the opportunity to address the Strategic Planning Committee in the public speaking slot when the application was considered.

Jeannette Beresford, local resident expressed her thanks for the minibus service arranged for Highcliffe and Spittal. She also expressed concern about Berwick taxi drivers however having to travel to Alnwick to get their vehicles tested.

David Spencer-Barclay, local resident referred to the concerns he had raised at Berwick Town Council's annual meeting about illegal traffic movements of vehicles travelling side by side in one lane on from the A1167 by the Leaping Salmon. The police had said that the County Council would need to address this. He asked if

the County Council was thus adhering with sections 2 & 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1984?

As this was a detailed technical question, a written reply would be provided for Mr Spencer-Barclay; he would provide his contact details for the Senior Democratic Services Officer at the end of the meeting.

A local resident asked about progress on the development of a new hospital for Berwick. He referred to an article in the Berwick Advertiser in October 2012 about a preferred site, but expressed concern about the time taken since and what the costs of different consultation processes must have been over the six years.

The Chair responded that an update on this issue was due later on the agenda. It was agreed to bring forward the item would be considered next and Mr Holmes, the presenter, would respond to the points raised.

RESOLVED that responses be organised as required.

DISCUSSION ITEMS - CORPORATE

142. UPDATE ON BERWICK PRE-CONSULTATION ENGAGEMENT

Stephen Holmes, Deputy Director of the Community Services Business Unit, Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust, provided a verbal update about a pre consultation engagement exercise with partners Northumberland County Council and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to consider the possibility of the new hospital in Berwick being part of an integrated development including health, social care and leisure services.

Key details included:

- after the completion of an outline business case in December 2017, work was taking place to establish a full business case
- engagement work had taken place to seek views on what should be included in the hospital development
- understandable concerns were expressed by residents and others about the time it had taken for the new hospital to be developed. References were made to previous consultations and decisions about locations that had ultimately not delivered. In particular a question was asked why the development on the High School field had not taken place. This was at the time of the London Olympics and a decision by government to cease all plans for the sale or development of school playing fields
- it was recognised that developments in health delivery meant people spent less time in hospital than they once did and the Trust's focus was much more about delivering healthcare to patients within their home/community. The new hospital would very much be designed with that in mind, using technology, linking with primary care, public health and social care
- there was an opportunity to link in with changes to the local leisure centre and create a joint development

- three possible sites had been identified that had a large enough footprint: the Robert Lodge site, Swan Centre site and the Newfield site
- financial challenges existed across all public sectors at this time, no more so than in Local Government and Health and it was recognised that a joint development, whilst delivering benefits of integration and delivery, would also be more cost effective
- the pre-consultation engagement was coming to an end, and a public meeting was planned for during April
- details would be provided about residents' views expressed, following which a business case would be developed
- further consultation would then follow from around May/June, following which advisors could be appointed to develop possible designs.

Members welcomed the very clear update. A member asked what plans were envisaged for the current site, and any updates on cross border working. Mr Holmes advised that should the development take place on a different site, the current one was proposed to be used primarily for people with disabilities and older people. It was not intended to sell off the land, but use its value for older people in Berwick. The issue of cross border working was something for the Clinical Commissioning Group and Mr Holmes agreed to take this matter up with them directly.

Another member stressed the importance of cross border working and seeing the detail of what residents thought should be included in the development.

Members of the public then commented, of which key points and details of responses were as follows

- regarding the perimeters of selecting the site, mostly this concerned the size required for the development, this pointed to council land, which was the biggest size available and would not cost to purchase. The public could however suggest other areas - this would form part of the public meeting
- in connection with any development being driven by the Council owning development sites, reference was made to the preceding work with both Berwick town councillors and county councillors; it was a fundamental part of Berwick's regeneration plan and not something to be done in isolation
- it was suggested that chemotherapy treatment would be welcomed as a service. This had been raised by some respondents, and would form part of business case considerations
- responding to a question about the timescale for starting the building work, it was noted that consultation would take place, followed by the process of appointing a design and development team. It was difficult to commit to any timescale without details of what was proposed to be included
- it was noted that the Cramlington hospital had taken 10 years planning, although Berwick was not on the same scale
- a resident stressed that it should be easier for Berwick residents to access accident and emergency departments.

To conclude the Chair welcomed and thanked Mr Holmes for the frank presentation and how residents' views were being heard. A further update could be provided in due course if needed.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

143. PETITIONS

(a) Receive any new petitions: members were advised that three new petitions had been received recently; one about the condition of Alnwick bus station, one about a request for measures to reduce speeding on Derwentwater Terrace in Scremerston, and one about a request for a 20mph speed limit outside of Lowick First School. Each would be addressed through the petition protocol, and reports about each presented to a future meeting of the Local Area Council.

(b) Consider reports on petitions previously received: no reports were due for this meeting.

(c) Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered: an update was circulated at the meeting (copy attached to the official minutes of the meeting) about the Border Buses petition received in November 2017, for which a report was considered at the Local Area Council's meeting on 25 January 2018.

The Service Director of Local Services explained how the pilot scheme operated by Woody's Taxis had been in operation since 29 January 2018. The feedback so far was that it was used fairly well, with around 18 passengers travelling per evening. This was not however sufficient to commercially operate it in the longer term, but its operation had been during two months of inclement winter weather; many holiday park users might use it in months to follow. Funding was due to finish at the end of May 2018; further dialogue could take place with the operator.

Lead petitioner Ms Beresford was very happy with the situation and expressed her thanks for the service organised and for listening to residents' concerns.

Responding to a question, it was hoped that the number of users would increase. The vehicles could be also used for other related uses/required journeys.

A member added that it would be concerning if the finances and viability was hampered by the provider's firm having to travel to Alnwick to get their vehicles tested, especially when County Council vehicles were tested in Berwick. She intended to raise this further with the licensing department.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

144. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

This item enabled members to raise any issues about services provided by the Local Services Group with the Area Managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services in attendance.

The following issues were raised by members:

- thanks expressed for the resurfacing from Felton to Old Swarland Road
- further concerns were expressed about the surface of the Rothbury to Weldon Bridge Road. There were drainage and subsidence issues
- members were advised that Pepper Haugh to Embleton Terrace was in the schedule for patching work
- regarding the impact of the recent inclement weather, the condition of roads had deteriorated. An additional £900,000 had been received from the Government, but it could take three or four months to get back to the previous condition. There was sufficient funding to meet the immediate repairs required in the current round.
- thanks were expressed for work at Longhoughton and efforts to get through the snow to reach a stranded vulnerable older resident in Craster
- there could be an impact on the Local Transport Plan for the next year; it was stressed that town/parish councils needed to be informed if any schemes due were not to go ahead
- it had been a desperately difficult four weeks, but residents had expressed thanks to a member for Local Services' work with roads and pavements
- clarification was provided that issues regarding gaswork repairs should be raised with the streetworks team
- any requests for placing defibrillators at public conveniences should be raised with Mr Hodgson in Neighbourhood Services
- thanks for work done to Seahouses public conveniences
- it was requested whether the pothole reporting app could be amended so it was possible to report more than one pothole at a time, as currently people had to fill in their contact details for every pothole they reported
- a request for the resurfacing of Spittal Hall Road to be brought forward if possible due to the number of potholes, and a welcoming of the forthcoming removal of its speed bumps. It was noted that it would not be possible to remove speed bumps from another local road around the same time as that would need its own consultation process first.

The following issues were raised by residents and town/parish councillors:

- concern was expressed by Cornhill Parish Council about the diversion routes organised by Highways England whilst parts of the A1 were resurfaced. For example, the route via Donaldson's Lodge was beset by speeding problems, a lack of speed signs and no cameras. Could town/parish councils be consulted about the diversion routes? Members were advised that the County Council had expressed its concerns to Highways England about the suitability of the route and lack of consultation with town/parish councils. The County Council was responsible for the non-trunk network and had dialogue with Highways England over any proposed diversionary routes to try and mitigate any adverse impacts as far as was possible, but ultimately there was not a process for stopping vehicles from using the highways. The Council would continue to work with Highways

England regarding the rescheduled works and whilst it was expected that the consultation over proposed diversion arrangements would be led by Highways England, any local concerns could be raised directly with the County Council

- details of the schedule for street lighting work was published on the County Council's website; all work was due to be completed by the summer
- gas works in Berwick town centre were due to halt over Easter from 29 March to 3 April, then begin again and be due for completion by 13 April
- it was clarified that any concerns about the work of utility companies should be reported to the Council's streetworks team. If areas had not been restored to an acceptable standard after the work, the utility companies could be recalled to rectify the work at their own expense. Just the areas of repairs considered to be the highest risk were inspected by the County Council; the public and members could report any concerns about poor reinstatement works. An example was also provided about when a subcontractor had resurfaced a road when the weather was too cold for the materials to set, so they were recalled to reset it at their own expense
- thanks were expressed to highways from residents in the Upper Spittal area for their work during the recent cold weather.

RESOLVED that the update be noted and issues raised by members be followed up where identified.

145. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LOCAL SERVICES

20mph Speed Limits Near Schools

A report was presented (attached to the official minutes as Appendix B) to respond to a discussion which took place at a recent Local Area Council Chairs Briefing meeting about the introduction of timed temporary 20mph zones near schools indicated by flashing amber lights.

The Chair explained that he'd requested this report to be produced as there was a very effective arrangement in Scotland whereby zones marked near schools for 20mph used flashing lights around school start and finish times. It was a tried and tested approach, maximised child safety, and should be considered as possible policy. Some 20mph zones did not actually slow traffic down, whereas the flashing lights approach was proven effective.

Members were advised that flashing lights signs generally cost around £4,000 - £5,000 each, and could be considered for areas that did not already have 20mph zones in place and where a permanent 20mph speed limit was not necessary outside of school drop-off/pick-up times due to the nature of the area and classification of road. The signs could also flash warnings for the speed limits that applied during other times of the day in that zone.

Members agreed that it was an excellent idea. The Chair suggested that unless there were objections to schemes, they should be implemented where feasible.

Any suggested areas should be raised direct with the Principal Programmes Officer (Highways Improvement). Members were reminded that this could be done by zone rather than limited to being just outside of schools.

It was noted that an area, such as Marygate in Berwick could be covered by one scheme as it included a cul-de-sac. Alnwick Town Council had established a working group that looked at safer routes to schools and boundaries.

Mr Snowdon was thanked for his attendance and it was:

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) support be expressed for timed flashing lights in 20mph speed limits near schools; and
- (3) members submit any suggestions about possible areas that would benefit from this scheme.

INFORMATION ITEMS

146. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2017-18

A progress update was provided on Members' Local Improvement Schemes during 2017-18 as at 1 March 2018. (Report attached to the official minutes as Appendix C.)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

147. BERWICK REGENERATION COMMISSION

Members noted that the next meeting would be taking place on 17 April. Recruitment was also taking place for a project officer to support the Commission's work.

148. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

The report (attached to the official minutes as Appendix D) detailed the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings.

Members were advised that representatives of Alnwick Friends of the Earth were being invited to the next meeting to speak about how the Council dealt with roadside litter. A report would also be produced for May's round of Local Area Council meetings responding to Friends of the Earth's concerns and detailing the Council's litter scheme.

RESOLVED that the work programme and additions to it be noted.

149. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that future meetings would take place on Thursdays, provisionally at 4.00pm, although start times could change from meeting to meeting depending on the amount of business due to be considered. Future meetings due in Alnwick would now take place at St James' Church Centre rather than Northumberland Hall. Future confirmed dates were as follows:

● 19 April 2018	● 20 September 2018	● 21 February 2019
● 24 May 2018	● 18 October 2018	● 21 March 2019
● 21 June 2018	● 22 November 2018	● 18 April 2019
● 19 July 2018	● 20 December 2018	● 23 May 2019
● 23 August 2018	● 24 January 2019	

CHAIR.....

DATE.....