

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 6TH FEBRUARY, 2018

- Present: Councillor S Cudlip (Chair), R Arthur, Mrs J A Bell, Mrs K Brace, S P Colborn, D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings, Ms R M Gratton, G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy, T Shepherd, B Taylor, Miss L Willis.
- Observer: Mrs G Bleasdale.
- Apologies: Councillors Mrs B E Allen, E Bell, Mrs S Forster, Mrs S Pratt, K Shaw.

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Councillor Mrs G Bleasdale declared an interest and took no further part in the voting thereon.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9th JANUARY, 2018

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of these meetings, copies of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

3. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr John Wood from Tolent and Mr Mark Massey from IDP the Planning and Architectural Consultants representing the developer.

Mr Massey thanked Members for inviting him to the Town Hall to discuss the South Seaham Garden Village proposal on the land which was formally to be used as the film studios.

Mr Wood stated that Tolent are the landowners, the developers and they will also be the contractors which makes this proposal quite unique. Normally if planning permission is granted the landowner would sell the land and make a healthy profit and then the developer would also want to take a profit. There is already a plan in

place with the Homes Group to build 50% affordable housing. The land will be sold to Homes Group at a reduced cost and the people who buy the land for private housing buyers will then supplement the other things which are planned at the village.

Tolent were keen to build the film studios but unfortunately the recession came along and the money was no longer available to do this and the site has stood dormant since then. An agent has been marketing the site over this period of time. The site was zoned as a strategic site for employment and Tolent can make a contribution towards that, however due to the industrial parks at Nissan and Wynard Park the site would stand dormant as this wouldn't work.

If the Garden Village is given planning permission Tolent intend to set up a Construction Industry Board (CITB) Academy. Apprentices will be employed and registered properly and the build will last for 10 years. 500 quality jobs will be created for apprentices to be trained so the money will be invested in the area. There will be a house type which will be affordable to every income stream.

Mr Massey stated that the Garden Village movement was started in the 1920's and it is all about creating a community not just for the few but for the many. The Garden Village will be available to everyone from the very young to the very old and right at the centre of the village will be care for the elderly including extra care, nursing care, bungalows and retirement accommodation. Tolent want to have a rounded community. The site is to be 50% landscaped garden so there are not lots of houses crammed together. This is not a volume house build. There will be 1,500 homes, it's about health and wellbeing, about community and all ages. Due to this it has been possible to attract the National Centre for Ageing in Newcastle, Sunderland University and Northumberland University to look at ways in which to break down the barriers for living and to make sure that people can be looked after from cradle to grave. Tolent believe the site will be a world class site for innovation. It will help to train care workers for the next generation as people in the centre of the village will be sustained and supported in their own houses and bungalows and not in an institution. They will have digital support and care being provided.

Tolent have been working closely with Durham County Council over the past 18 months who have been refining the plans. As more details emerge it is hoped that this can be shared with the local community for their thoughts on the matter. Tolent believes it is a major opportunity for the town as it isn't just about housing, it's about creating innovation and high quality jobs.

The government are supportive of the Garden Village movement and Tolent believe it will be the best due to Land Value Capture and the involvement of local universities this will be something unique. The land is expected to have pathways for country walks along with lots of space to enjoy the wildlife which again does not happen in run of the mill volume housing estates.

The job creation is about having good quality jobs, as well as the construction skills academy there is a commitment to provide jobs in community health and wellbeing. The reason Northumbria University is excited about the development is that as well as using innovative technology people can be supported and provided for in their own homes which will ease the strain of local hospitals.

The Garden Village will attract investment from both Sunderland and Northumbria Universities because it will be an innovation location which will bring people into the area to see ways in which Seaham does amazing things. It is believed that between £120-£150m worth of grants can be attracted into this location. Northumbria University have already made 3 applications for funding on the basis of this and the Local Health Authority have also said they are very happy with this and want to see how accommodation for Doctors and Nurses can be provided here.

There will be 20,000 sq ft of space for the Health Authority and Universities and within this space developers have been talking to Google and other IT providers who have shared their support.

Another space of 20,000 sq ft will be to integrate health and wellbeing into the community to develop digital technology to assist with this process.

Tolent wants to ensure that there are community facilities right from the start of the development. Before houses are built they want to develop a coffee and bakehouse etc which will attract people of all ages. It is also planned to have a primary school on the site.

The 1,500 homes will be split up to cover all needs from first time buyers to families to retirement homes. The site was chosen as it is near to the A19 which is an arterial road, there are employment parks nearby and it's a beautiful setting close to Seaham.

The land is in a single ownership and it's in line with government policy, its inclusive to all parts of the community and it offers affordable housing in a beautiful sociable setting.

The Chair then opened the meeting for questions.

1. A Member stated that innovation was talked about there is an ideal opportunity here to have environmental innovation to get as far as possible to zero carbon emissions within this village. Has that been factored into the buildings such as solar and wind power? Also the impact the village will have on the surrounding infrastructure such as schools, roads, current provision for healthcare has that been factored in also? Also you are talking about affordable housing which is a term used very often, is this affordable housing or is it social housing which is totally different. 1,500 houses is a large plot and the Member stated he was happy that this would improve the job prospects for young people in this area but do Tolent understand the impact this will have on the surrounding communities.

From the point of sustainability Chris Haggan from the Home Group is at the forefront of looking at sustainability for construction and energy efficiency. Home are committed to it. They are currently trialling 42 homes in Gateshead to enhance performance using modern methods of construction. With regards to the impact on the surrounding infrastructure a lot of work has been carried out over the last 4 years with Highways Engineers, Environmental Consultants and Colleges and Tolent are aware of the impact the Garden Village is going to have. Contributions via section 106 are going to be made should planning permission be granted via highways, health and

all the ways in which Members would expect Tolent to contribute towards and this is included in the business plan.

With regards to health, schooling and the traffic infrastructure all of that has been researched and again this is part and parcel to section 106 contributions.

Mr Haggan stated that Home Group are a charity that provide affordable social housing and care and support services. Home Group have a legal agreement with Tolent to deliver out of the 1,500 houses 750 affordable homes. Historically most of the affordable housing has been for rent, they also have shared ownership whereby people buy a share of the property and pay rent on the remainder of the value of the property. Home Group are also looking at other options specifically for the South Seaham project such as rent to buy, equity loan, reduced market rent and Home Group are open to other suggestions from the local community as to what may be required. Specifically 10% of the properties will be for social housing so out of the 750 units 150 of these will be for social housing which would be recognised as the old Council Housing. These houses will be mixed within the other types of housing so they are not in a specific area as Home Group are committed to providing a mixed community space. The Home Group can sell the houses at competitive prices as the private houses land can be sold to developers for 10 times more than Home Group will pay. This is a legally binding agreement.

This build will take 10 years to complete so won't appear overnight. Durham County Council are asking for contributions towards schools, roads, healthcare and over a 10 year build this can all be factored in. There is also a primary school planned on the village.

2. A Member questioned about healthcare and stated that she had previously stated at a County Council meeting that Doctors surgeries are full to capacity in Seaham already and can't take the workload could Tolent take the healthcare further at the village and have a Doctors surgery build there? Also Tolent are building a school on the site so can this be built a bit bigger as the predicted figures from Durham are not always correct. Schools have been built with music and art rooms and then a few years down the line these are turned into classrooms due to capacity issues?

Yes a Doctors surgery could be possible because there are grants available but this build can go ahead with no grants as they are not needed. There is already a value for the land which Tolent can sell to the likes of Barratts and Bellways and Tolent know what the capital receipt will be so know that the housing for Home Group can be subsidised and the money is available to put the infrastructure in place. This can be placed in the agreement and then Tolent will have to carry this out.

Throughout the discussions with the Council, the NHS and the Care Commission Tolent are here today to find out what the issues are from the local community's perspective. The care side have stated there is enough provision in Seaham already but from this meeting it is ascertained that there isn't.

A Member stated that from Durham's figures there will be a further 199 children who will need school places but this should be taken care of if Tolent are going to build a primary school.

Mr Wood stated that he is a Director of Wise Academies. He is aware of pupil admission numbers (PAN). Tolent wants to work with the communities to give them something special and unique as the money is available to do it.

A Member stated that it is a very interesting project and the thing that highlights it is that it won't gridlock Seaham. There will be major problems in North Seaham and Parkside with new builds but this proposed project is ideal for Seaham.

3. The landscaped areas aren't going to be adopted by Durham County Council so there will be an additional charge to each householder to look after the landscape, there is a lot of landscape so he is concerned that it will be a high price for people in affordable homes as they will be paying rates and the landscape.

Mr Haggan stated like Tolent said it will be about selling the land at a premium for the private housing and the landscaping will be a big job which they are hoping to create apprenticeships from. It will be tied in so the affordable housing get a subsidised rate.

4. A Member questioned whether the homes will be leasehold or freehold?

The houses for sale will be freehold.

5. A Member stated that Tolent had mentioned about the Doctors but what has been done about the emergency services such as ambulances, Police and Fire Brigade. A Member stated that she had personally had two incidences recently where there were no ambulances locally and a family member was having a suspected heart attack. The ambulance was coming from Hartlepool and took 25 minutes to get here. So 1,500 houses how is that going to affect the emergency services?

So far Tolent have listened to the NHS but when they next meet they will put that question to them. So far Tolent have been receiving what the NHS have been telling them but each time they listen at meetings such as this it empowers Tolent to ask more searching questions. Tolent hadn't realised that this was a problem and it will certainly be addressed.

The area has a good strategic route for such things as ambulances and they can get there very quickly.

With regards to the traffic gridlock Tolent appreciate it will cause more traffic but the junction with the A19 has been looked at very carefully and how it operates and there may well be some changes needed around it.

There are buses running up and down the A182 about 4 per hour and these would be diverted into the site and the bus companies have stated they will do that as not everyone has a car especially older people who don't drive. Highways have been looked into carefully and discussions have been held with the County Council and Highways England.

6. A Member stated that in the presentation held at Durham it was stated that there would be pooled cars from Nissan where there would be joint use of electric cars do you want to explain that more?

In the centre of the village there is space for a 75 bed care home and assisted living. Crown Care who have been supporting Tolent in this have said that the size of the development Tolent could probably have 4 rental cars which are Nissan electric cars which can be pooled. Throughout the Garden Village Tolent are looking to have electric car charging points as the work carried out with Northumbria University they have linkages with Nissan. Nissan are keen to look at further technology on a small part of the village for things such as the development of driverless cars. So Tolent are looking to put lots of different ideas into the village to make it unique which would put Seaham on the map.

7. A Member stated that Tolent have also discussed at a previous meeting how to overcome social isolation and introducing technology into the assisted care homes and assisted living. A place where people can talk on skype to their relatives rather than being isolated on their own.

Professor Glenda Cook at Northumbria University has a thing called a SEAL which can be rented. It is a robotic piece of equipment which people stroke and it purrs at them. Apparently it is very successful and she has a number of these which provides tactile and emotional support to people. There is also another thing which she has which is called HEN Power. It has been successful with elderly men in the region who may have suffered the loss of a loved one and they are given a hen to look after. It's a North East invention which has gone global. These are simple things to get people living again and to keep them supported and sustained.

The theory behind these ideas is that they can be tested here and then made here in the surrounding areas which could encourage employment.

8. A Member stated that we live in an age now of an ageing population so what percentage of these homes will be for the elderly and whether there will be one or two bedroomed and will they come with a passive house design?

By 2020 25% of people in the UK will be over 65 and therefore Tolent's proposals will mirror that. That will be right in the heart of the village. In terms of passive housing and sustainability Homes are in the middle of driving beyond passive housing and driving construction techniques hopefully for the next 50 years. Tolent are very lucky to have Homes investment and technology commitment.

The Member asked whether this would be the same as the Racecourse Estate?

This is a Gentoo project and won't be done in the same way as passive housing. It's called Fabric First environmentally friendly.

There will be no standard house types like Persimmon or Barratt whereby if you buy a house in London or Sunderland it is the same house. Every scheme and design is bespoke to what the community wants. It takes a lot of time and money to do it but that is the direction they want to take. They don't want to build boxes they want to design something unique. As this is being tested at Gateshead by the time planning permissions are granted Homes will have an understanding of what works and what doesn't.

9. A Member questioned approximately how long Tolent have been working with the County Council as the planning authority as the site is currently zoned as a strategic industrial site? Obviously this has gone a long way with the information that has been provided today and this will give the Town Council a good idea to how far you are potentially with this and when you are going for outline planning consent.

This is a unique opportunity in the fact that Tolent owns all of the land and they can distribute the profit from the gain of the land sale across the site. There will be a massive construction contract out of this which will create employment. There will be around a £120m build contract which will employ Tolent's staff for 10 years which is a massive incentive for Tolent to do this. This is not pie in the sky it is completely doable and we can share the numbers it does work.

In terms of the planning application Tolent have been speaking to the County Council for a number of years. Planning Officers don't really react one way or another they say you have to look at ecology, archaeology, traffic, landscaping etc and only when you have come back with all of those issues will they then make a recommendation one way or another. At the moment Tolent are getting a fair hearing and are very optimistic. Durham County Council had a new plan which was going to identify a site which was withdrawn so Tolent are in a strange period of where Durham doesn't actually have a plan. Also Durham does not have enough housing for the future so Tolent thinks this will help Durham in providing 1,500 homes over 10 years in a unique way which you wouldn't get from any other smaller housing sites. A public consultation event is taking place in Murton on the 21st February, 2018 at the Glebe Centre 2.00pm-8.00pm which will be advertised in the press and also a leaflet drop will be carried out. This will be to find out what the general public thinks about it and also a stand will be at Byron Place on the 23rd February. After this Tolent will be finalising their application to be placed in March. If everything goes well they are hoping to receive a decision in late summer.

10. A Member questioned whether there has been any consideration to placing swimming facilities in the village as this would be a boost for the people of Seaham who have been wanting this facility for a number of years?

The problem with swimming pools is the running costs. There is no plan for a swimming pool, however Tolent have thought about leisure facilities. Tolent will take the swimming pool down as a note.

11. A Member stated that he is very familiar with this area and ground subsidence is very common up there. The A182 was closed for nearly 3 months.

It has been looked at and investigated so Tolent are aware of the problem, there is no solution to it as yet but they are aware.

The Chair stated that this is a consultation and Mr Consitt would like to ask a question which Members were agreeable to.

Mr Consitt questioned whether there was any provision for outdoor activities as far as the site is concerned. Mr Consitt stated that he works with young people in the community through a community project called Greenscape and its very much about getting people out and involved in the surrounding environment with things such as camping.

The whole principle of the site is about half of the land will be green space and the other half is for development. Within the 50% of green space there will be lots of trails for all ages for walking routes and along the southern edge there is a lot of green space which can be used to walk all the way around the perimeter of the site which produces a lot of opportunity for outdoor exercise as well as sports and recreational facilities.

Mr Consitt questioned whether there was any space for developing a recreational Area. It was stated that there was as there was approximately 2.5 miles of space. Tolent requested to speak to Mr Consitt outside of the meeting as his ideas were very interesting.

The Chair thanked Tolent and their associates for a very interesting presentation and wished them well with this very unique development.

4. PLANNING ISSUES

a) Monthly List

RECOMMENDED the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5510 to 5515 as circulated be noted.

5. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

a) Neighbourhood Services – Highways

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

6. REMOVAL OF STREET LIGHTING AT GEORGE ELMY LIFEBOAT WAY & EAST CLIFF ROAD

A Member stated if the new proposal for the Garden Village goes ahead then the lights may be returned.

A Member has raised a petition from Dawdon residents in opposition to the removal of the lights which he will present to Durham County Council.

A Member questioned whether the Town Council had received anything from Durham County Council on how much it would save by removing the street lights and how much carbon emissions this would save. It was noted that nothing had been received.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information provided by Mr Kevin Robson with regards to the removal of the street lights.

7. SEATON LANE PROPOSAL

RECOMMENDED that Members note the letter received from Mr Graeme Morris MP with regard to his objections to the Seaton Lane junction upgrade proposal.

8. NOTIFICATION OF SPECIAL PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING – TUESDAY 13TH FEBRUARY, 2018, 6.00PM

RECOMMENDED that Members note a special meeting of the above has been arranged to take place on 13th February, 2018 to discuss the Kier Living Scheme and its anticipated benefits for Seaham.

9. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the dates of the consultation meetings can be shared with the press for the proposed Garden Village.