



## **Minutes of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee held on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in St James Church Rooms, Pottergate, Alnwick at 6.00pm**

**Present:** Cllrs M Swinbank (Chair), P Broom, P Edge, A Fletcher, J Humphries, A Symmonds, G Watson, L Wearn and C Westendarp.

**In attendance:** W Batey, Chief Officer & Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk; T Kirton, Project & Funding Officer; Carlo Biagioni, Alnwick Chamber of Trade; Phillip Angier, Local Living and 3 other members of the public.

### **P17/63 Apologies**

Cllr. Harrington.

### **P17/64 Planning Application (17/04374/FUL)**

Councillors had been sent a document from Phillip Angier which he also summarised at the meeting:

Phillip Angier felt that the proposed application was contrary to the spirit of the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan and was outside the area for development. He explained that there was no real detail in the planning application about the businesses who will take up the units. He reiterated that he opposed the proposed development.

Carlo Biagioni (CB) explained that 20 members of the Chamber of Trade were against the proposed development and only 1 in favour. He felt that the proposed development would badly affect the town centre which already had 12 empty units. He asked if an impact study had been undertaken. The Town Clerk advised that it had.

CB asked if this had included the impact on other businesses. The Town Clerk advised that the assessment had included details of other businesses in the town and how they might be affected.

CB asked what the Town Council thought the town centre would look like in 3 years' time. The Town Clerk advised that one of the Town Council's identified priorities was to look at the vacant premises in the town centre.

The Town Clerk gave councillors an assessment of the application including the actions which would need to be addressed.

The application was discussed by councillors and the agreed comments to be submitted were:

#### **17/04374/FUL**

The Town Council **SUPPORTS** the application. This support is conditional upon the following requirements being met:

- Given the importance of the Retail Impact Study and Sequential Test to the principle of whether the development is acceptable or not, there is need for an independent retail planning expert to scrutinise fairness and accuracy in the RIA. NCC may need to commission this separately if they do not have the necessary expertise in house.
- An analysis of expected job losses in the Town Centre as a result of the falling retail share should be provided against which a view can be taken against projected employment gains
- If the application is approved a controlling condition will need to be applied to the convenience/comparison split and to the total floor space such that it cannot be changed without a further application and further Retail Impact Study. The Retail Impact Study can only seek to justify this current scheme. Any change in floor space either in total or between the 2 elements of convenience and comparison would need to be the subject of separate assessment.

- Giving the proximity of the new High School, a safe pedestrian crossing of Taylor Drive is required.
- Whilst the boundary of the site is well served by bus stops, a bus service which goes into the development is expected
- The loss of the pond is noted but a suitable replacement should be provided in the vicinity of the site and could be combined with a sustainable drainage system.
- The development site includes the Willow Burn and this will need to be protected during development works including the proposed culverting of the stream.
- Confirmation and details of the replacement trees for those being felled, is required before determination.
- Clarity regarding the actual provision of cycle racks and electric charging points is required before determination.
- Confirmation that the proposed surface water drainage systems are acceptable, is required before determination
- It should be a requirement to provide town centre signage and information e.g. Town Map and bus service details but this could be conditioned.
- A Visual Impact Assessment of the development from key inward viewpoints should be provided as part of the scheme before determination.
- The Town Council would like to discuss S106 possibilities with the Planning Officer, including bus shelter provision, possible bus station improvements and parking improvements, such as seasonal park and ride from the site to the town

The Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan which was made in July 2017 should be used when reviewing all planning applications within Alnwick & Denwick. The following sets out the relevant Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan policies and Town Council comments and was submitted as part of the Town Council's comments:

### **WILLOWBURN RETAIL PLANNING APPLICATION – 17/04374/FUL**

### **ALNICK TOWN COUNCIL – BACKGROUND COMMENTS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

#### **The site**

The Site is not allocated on the Neighbourhood Plan proposals map for any specific purpose. At the time the plan was developed the site was in private ownership (part of Covance/Arcinova) and there were no known intentions to develop the site for retail.

In the neighbourhood plan section 6.3.2 deals with out of town retail. It suggests that the town may need to accommodate some further retail development out of the town centre, if no further town centre development opportunities are forthcoming due to space considerations. Although the point is made this should represent a net gain in retail choice, jobs and trade, not a displacement from the town centre.

**Policy TCR3** deals with Out of Centre Retail it deals with

Comparison A1 retail development provided criteria are met being along a corridor following South Road and linking South Road and Willowburn.

*Comment: This site is on Willowburn Avenue and whilst it well away from the Town Centre, at best it could be described as being on the edge/ or at the limits of the corridor.*

The neighbourhood plan criteria are:

- a) There are no suitable town centre or edge of town sites

*Comment – The application contains sequential test study done by Lichfields for the developer, the application considers 4 sites, - Towergate, the Bus Station, Robert Adam Court units, Corn Exchange, plus individual vacant units like the former Council Chambers and concludes none are suitable, mainly because of size and existing uses.*

- b) The economic benefits can be achieved without a negative impact on the town centre.

Comment

- *The application contains a retail impact study done by Lichfields for the developer.*
- *Existing town centre convenience stores are Morrisons (1700m<sup>2</sup>) Iceland (470m<sup>2</sup>) and Co-op (370m<sup>2</sup>)*
- *The application suggests existing stores will lose trade by 2022 as follows: Morrisons 7.1%, Sainsburys 9.4%, Aldi 4.5%, Lidl 5.1%, other Alnwick stores 4.3%*
- *The impact on Comparison goods stores would be between 2.4% and 2.6% this is both for the Town Centre and the existing Willowburn Retail Park*
- *Overall the consultants conclude there would not be any significant adverse impact on town centre vitality and visibility, all existing food stores in Alnwick are performing well, most of the comparison goods trade diversion is predicted to be from spend which would have been outside the town/area. They suggest Alnwick town centre is performing well and could pick up spin off business from the development. This is easy to claim but is there evidence in the shape of what happened post the development of Sainsbury/Homebase/Argos to support this claim?*

- c) The scheme will enhance retail choice and quality within the town as a whole.

*Comment: The proposal is for a) A food store approx. 1500m<sup>2</sup> (Premium retailer envisaged), a smaller food unit or non-food retail 352m<sup>2</sup> (possibly a second location for an existing local store), and three units of non-food retail of a total of 1872m<sup>2</sup>, a drive through coffee shop and car parking with 226 spaces. It is difficult to form a view about enhanced quality and choice, without knowing details of occupants.*

The Neighbourhood Plan adds that proposals will need to incorporate provision for appropriate signage; information and/or transport improvements between the site and the town centre and proposals for more than 1000m<sup>2</sup> net retail floor space, will be subject to sequential and retail impact testing.

**Relevant Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

<b>ADNP Policy</b>	<b>ATC Comment</b>
<b><i>Town Centre &amp; Retail</i></b>	
<b><i>Policy TCR3 Out of Centre Retail</i></b>	<i>See above comments, the developer outlines the necessary requirements, through the retail impact study and the sequential test, This is a key issue and this should be independently checked by a retail planning expert to validate their conclusions.</i>
<b><i>Economy &amp; Employment</i></b>	
<b><i>Policy E1 Providing for Economic Growth</i></b> <i>Development proposals which support job opportunities and sustainable development and economic growth of Alnwick as a major service centre will be supported where they can be</i>	<i>130 fte jobs will be created, but this need to be considered alongside the outcome of the retail impact study findings and some job losses may result in the town centre. Only if there is considerable net gain can this be taken as a plus point.</i>

<i>achieved without significant impact on the environment.</i>	
<b>Policy H2 (refers to improving public transport to the site)</b>	<i>The travel plan contains details about raising awareness, promoting walking/cycling, publishing public transport information etc. The proposal should also include some offsite works such as new shelters on Willowburn Avenue. Whilst there are bus stops on Willowburn Avenue and Taylor Drive, there is no proposal for buses to come into the development.</i>
<b>Transport</b>	
<b>Policy TRA1</b> <i>requires developments to have safe and convenient pedestrian access and the enhancement of provision for walking including public rights of way will be supported</i>	<i>There is an onsite provision of a 3m combined footpath/cycle path alongside the main road in the development. Footpaths are continuous within the development A Toucan crossing is proposed on Willowburn Avenue No crossing is proposed on Taylor Drive Further off site pedestrian access works, will be necessary</i>
<b>Policy TRA2</b> <i>has similar requirements regarding cycling.</i>	<i>There is an onsite provision of a combined footpath/cycle path alongside the main road in the development. Cycle racks are mentioned, but are not clear on the plans Further off site cycling access works, will be necessary</i>
<b>Environment</b>	
<b>Policy ENV4</b> <i>Protecting Biodiversity- where biodiversity is lost, provision should be made for creation of equivalent areas in vicinity of the site</i>	<i>The site includes a pond which at the consultation stage was listed as of 'parish value'. At that stage it was indicated to be replaced on site (plans showed this) but the final plans show no pond. The pond has been partially drained. Policy ENV4 requires an equivalent area to be replaced. The Willow Burn will need protecting during development works</i>
<b>Policy ENV6</b> <i>relates to the protection of trees</i>	<i>There are no TPO's on the site. Some trees are removed (approx. 75) to facilitate development or in the case of 2, due to their condition, those adjacent to the A1 are retained. New planting is proposed to replace those lost, but details are not given. There should be a detailed landscaping scheme prepared and submitted before determination.</i>
<b>Policy ENV7</b> <i>requires full landscaping and tree planting proposals to add to the distinctive character of the area</i>	<i>As above</i>
<b>Policy ENV8</b> <i>requires green infrastructure to be protected and the enhancement of public rights of way will be supported.</i>	<i>Loss of the pond as a piece of green infrastructure conflicts with the policy and it should be replaced (see ENV4)</i>

<i>Policy ENV9 requires major developments to have Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs).</i>	<i>Some of the car park surface is permeable; it is not clear to what extent the proposed drainage meets sustainable drainage requirements.</i>
<b>Heritage &amp; Design</b>	
<i>Policy HD1 seeks to protect the landscape setting and ensure they do not harm the distinctive landscape or historic character</i>	<i>The existing screening from the A1 slip road remains, but no visual layouts have been submitted to assist with gauging the impact The ADNP makes a major point about the impact of development on the landscape setting of the town. A Visual Impact Assessment of the development from key inward viewpoints should be provided as part of the scheme before determination.</i>
<i>Policy HD4 relates to the approaches to the town and seeks to ensure they are in keeping with local character</i>	<i>As above</i>

**P17/65 Matters Arising from the minutes of the previous meeting**

None.

**P17/66 To minute responses made since last meeting:**

**17/03828/FUL 3 Sawmill Industrial Estate Alnwick Northumberland NE66 2QW NO OBJECTIONS**, in principle, but prior to any approval being given, we would like to see a copy of the Design and Access statement (which is missing from the application) and a scale plan showing the location and layout of the proposed 16 car parking spaces.

Proposals of this nature can be supported by policy E3 in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan providing they contribute to the creation and retention of employment and/or reinvestment in the built fabric and infrastructure.

The policies in the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan which was made in July 2017 should be used when reviewing all planning application within Alnwick & Denwick.

**P17/67 Planning Applications**

**17/03830/VARYCO**

Alnwick Town Council **OBJECTS** to this application due to the location, density and height of the proposed 3 storey dwellings, the negative visual impact they would have on neighbouring properties and their location in relation to the retained part of Allernburn House.

The application does not support the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan policies:

**H4 Housing Design**

New housing, including conversions and the development of individual plots in the plan area, will be required to demonstrate that a high standard of design will be achieved.

**HD4 Design in the Wider Town**

Outside the historic core of the town new development (including extensions, alterations and changes of use to existing buildings) is encouraged to take the following design principles into account:

- a) Footprint: expected to respect the density and grain of the surrounding distinctive suburban townscape
- b) Design: expected to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness whilst not discouraging appropriate innovation
- c) Quality: expected to respect and enhance the quality of the surrounding suburban townscape and any historic content, in design, materials, detailing and finishes;
- e) Size and scale: expected to respond positively to local character

- f) Materials: expected to be sympathetic to the local materials that are traditional in the surrounding suburban townscape

The policies in the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan which was made in July 2017 should be used when reviewing all planning applications within Alnwick & Denwick.

It was agreed that the remaining planning applications would be dealt by email.

**P17/68 Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.17 p.m.