

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the Special Council Meeting held, in committee, in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB on Thursday, 20th January 2005 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Alderman M Henderson (until 9.05 p.m.)
Alderman P D Robinson MP MLA
Alderman P Osborne

Councillor J Beattie
Councillor Ms J Bunting
Councillor D Drysdale (until 9.10 p.m.)
Councillor Mrs S Duncan
Councillor B Hanvey
Councillor M Long
Councillor Miss R Hughes MBE
Councillor Ms B McBurney (until 9.15 p.m.)
Councillor J Norris
Councillor Mrs G Rice (from 7.10 p.m.)
Councillor M Robinson (from 7.45 p.m.)
Councillor T Sandford
Councillor J White

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Technical Services & Environmental Health, Planning Officer and Assistant Members' Services Officer.

APOLOGIES:-

Apologies were recorded on behalf of Alderman Hall

2005/03 : PRESENTATION ON BEST PRACTICAL ENVIRONMENTAL OPTION (BPEO) BY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DOE (NI) – ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE SERVICE

The Director of Technical Services & Environmental Health gave Members a brief update on the background of the Best Practical Environmental Option (BPEO) and welcomed Dr Eugene Kelly to the meeting.

Dr Kelly took Members through his presentation highlighting the various scenarios and statistics involved.

The Director of Technical Services & Environmental referred Members to tomorrow's meeting at Galgorm Manor and felt that the presentation had been timely as it addressed the key elements which were to be discussed with regard to Land use, Planning and Procurement issues.

At this point, the Mayor thanked Dr Kelly for his most informative presentation.

2005/04 : REPORT FROM THE PLANNING OFFICER – COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO BELFAST METROPOLITAN AREA PLAN (BMAP)

Tabled:- Report from the Planning Officer (copy previously circulated).

The Planning Officer took Members through his report, which had been previously circulated for their attention.

Alderman PD Robinson referred to the Planning Officer's use of hectares within his report and asked that he amend this to equate the land areas into actual housing numbers, which would be more comprehensible for ratepayers.

Several of the Members congratulated the Planning Officer on the content of his report and following discussion; they agreed to discuss each section of the report in detail.

Housing

Councillor Beattie referred to a recent press article regarding European directives, which may impact on further development in Moneyreagh.

The Planning Officer responded that although there were proposals to build 100 units in Moneyreagh, there were a number of concerns relating to the inadequacies of the existing infrastructure.

Alderman Osborne reiterated his opposition to further development at Stoney Road, Dundonald. He stated that, in his view, Stoney Road was already too narrow to accommodate existing traffic volumes and there was currently a lack of primary educational facilities in the area. Furthermore, he was opposed to the fact that any further development at this location would erode into the greenbelt .

The Planning Officer referred to an Article 40 which had been agreed for this development and identified some of the key site requirements to be satisfied prior to any further development, including improvements to the Stoney Road itself and its surrounding junctions, in addition to the completion of a traffic assessment.

However, Alderman Osborne highlighted that these measures would not address the lack of primary school facilities issues, nor did he feel that they would adequately improve existing conditions.

Councillor Rice then drew Members' attention to the proposals for Carryduff and she expressed her concerns at the existing flooding and sewerage problems in the area, which had existed for over a decade without rectification by the relevant agencies. She felt that the issues of leisure and social needs in the Carryduff area needed further address, in addition to the heavy volumes of traffic already using the southern approaches which would be substantially increased should any further development proceed.

Councillor Robinson entered the meeting at 7.45 p.m.

The Planning Officer replied that prior to further development, there would be a number of requirements to be fulfilled, including a flooding assessment of the area.

Councillors Hanvey and McBurney then expressed their disgust at the proposed 15 units of social housing for the Carryduff area, which would not address current needs. Councillor Hanvey therefore proposed that the Planning Officer contact the Housing Executive to ascertain the degree of waiting lists within the Borough, especially the Carryduff area, and to use this information to highlight the need for greater volumes of social housing within Carryduff. This proposal was seconded by Alderman Henderson.

Councillor Long added that several of the comments raised could also be applicable to the Dundonald area, and reiterated that the Council should insist that all necessary infrastructures should be put in place prior to any further developments.

Councillor Drysdale referred to the lack of social housing in the Ballybeen estate and the volume of privately owned ex-council properties which were being re-let out to housing executive tenants at extortionate rents. He felt that in instances whereby Housing Executive properties were being sold to tenants, there should be a caveat put in place to allow the Housing Executive to purchase back such homes, at a later date, which would hopefully deter opportunists.

Alderman PD Robinson then commented that it was his understanding that a percentage of land recently purchased for one of the forthcoming developments in BMAP had been designated for social housing as a stipulation of the development, and he felt that this information would have an impact on the overall social housing figures in the Borough, especially if similar measures were being applied to other such developments.

The Planning Officer stated that the 15 proposed units for Baronscourt had also been a requirement of this development and he stated that it was his belief that this would become a more established theme in the future.

Alderman PD Robinson supported this policy as it would, in his view, ensure a much more balanced housing mix and would reduce the Council's concerns in relation to social housing requirements for the future.

Councillor Rice concurred with the Alderman's comments and requested that future schemes provide greater integration with more elderly and sheltered dwelling units being built as part of the development.

Councillor White agreed that a mixture of family and elderly housing was required, but added that the Housing Executive and Housing Associations were strictly controlled and could not compete with private developers with regard to the purchase of land for social housing developments.

With regard to Carryduff, Councillor Rice expressed concern that the town had no shape or actual centre and she felt that BMAP should provide some sort of vision to show how they propose to oversee future developments in the area and ensure that developers financially contribute to infrastructure improvements prior to the approval of planning permission.

Alderman PD Robinson reiterated that the purpose of BMAP was to make an assessment of the community's needs for the next 15 years, and he referred to problems in the past that had arisen as a result of the Belfast Urban Plan with regards to the release of "whitelands", which resulted in adhoc style developments, such as those in Carryduff. He suggested that the Planning Officer liaise with the Building Control Officer to ascertain the studies they have carried out in the past relating to the number of houses built in the Castlereagh area over the past decade. He stated that it was his understanding that the numbers of units being built had reduced in the last couple of years because of land shortages creating a pent up of demand.

Furthermore, he referred to BMAP's description of "urban capacity sites" and stated that many of these sites had already been developed, or were deemed unsuitable for building and therefore did not exist anymore. He feared that the amount of "windfall" sites would be so dramatically reduced that there would be no available land for building upon in Castlereagh in the incoming years, thereby permitting a stagnation of the Borough, as it would be unable to contain the constituents of Castlereagh.

Alderman PD Robinson concurred with Members' previous comments relating to the content of the Officer's report but felt that the tone of the response did not convey the anger and frustration felt by the Council in relation to the Department's decision to ignore previous Council comments and representations

in the past, and he felt that a change in tone, in addition to the back up material from the Building Control Department, would highlight the Council's frustrations with the BMAP.

Alderman PD Robinson then drew the Members' attention to paragraph 1.1.9 in the Planning Officer's report and asked that these comments be separated to highlight the two different issues.

He then referred to the Dundonald area and the basic thrust of the Regional Development Plan which purported to build houses in areas where the necessary infrastructure and facilities were already in place, thereby reducing the burden of taxpayers by having to develop new infrastructures. He highlighted the Regional Development Transport Plan which was committed to the EWAY pilot scheme and whose success was totally dependent on the volume of customers using the network. Therefore, he felt it was pertinent that the Department should designate areas of housing around the terminus site and the proposed route to maximise usage, which should be partially funded by the developers as they would ultimately gain financially by the scheme.

In light of these discussions, Alderman PD Robinson proposed that the Council make a case requesting that BMAP consider the introduction of a secondary plan, which would consider a site specific proposal relating to E-way to avoid adhoc developments. Such a site would be "ring-fenced" and linked to the Eway but would be partly funded by developers, but would take advantage of the full potential of the existing infrastructure, whilst ensuring the provision of future house building in the Borough. This proposal was seconded by Councillor White.

Councillor Long stated that, because of the encroachment into the greenbelt, he was unable to support this proposal, however he concurred that the Department needed to apply a more structured and coherent approach in consideration of permitted future developments within the Borough.

Alderman PD Robinson advised that although the terminus of the EWAY system would encroach on some greenbelt land, there would still be a significant green wedge of land between Castlereagh and Comber.

Councillor White supported Alderman Robinson's comments with regard to further development in the Dundonald area, and felt that the traffic volumes utilising this part of the Borough, were not as significant as those using the Southern approaches.

Councillor Rice proposed that Carryduff and Dundonald should be incorporated into Alderman PD Robinson's proposal to establish how the necessary infrastructure will be addressed before building commences, and requesting that they detail the type of vision that the Department foresees for both areas as part of BMAP.

Councillor Bunting added that the Department needed to look at the strategic and long-term approach of the Borough as a whole.

Alderman PD Robinson concurred that strategic planning was required, and suggested that the Planners should look at the Millmount “committed site” and expand their proposals to extend and develop it as a commuter village to complement EWAY. He further added that with regard to Carryduff, although the vast majority of sites were committed, there was a requirement for 200 additional units in “uncommitted” sites, but the Department should consider the existing infrastructure and its problems, previously highlighted by the Council, prior to any further development.

The Planning Officer stated that he also would add within his response that the Council request specific areas for social and sheltered housing.

Employment

Members discussed the Planning Officer’s comments relating to employment and those areas zoned for employment/industry within the Borough.

Alderman P D Robinson drew Members’ attention to the proposal to develop land at Comber Road for light industrial usage and suggested that, in light of the other industrial sites proposed for the Borough, the existing residents at Comber Road had expressed a wish to retain the north side of the Comber Road for residential use.

The Planning Officer responded to comments regarding the Maryland Industrial Estate site and reiterated that there further expansion of the site had not been scheduled, which was an anomaly that needed addressing.

Alderman PD Robinson stated that, in his estimation, once the other light industrial sites had been constructed in the Borough, there would be limited extent to expand Maryland and he felt that further housing would be more appropriate for Crossnacreevy as it would boost the heart of the village, which had suffered in the past with the closure of the O’Neill Memorial Primary School.

The Planning Officer reiterated that he would include Members’ comments with regard to the expansion of the north side of the Maryland site to incorporate a mix of housing.

Transportation

The Planning Officer referred to Members’ previous comments and agreed to highlight the fact that the success of the EWAY pilot scheme was dependant on

maximum usage, which should be reflected in the volume of housing concentrated at the terminus and along the route.

In addition, he stated that the details of both EWAY and the proposed SuperRoute were very basic and that the details of the protected route corridors should be made known, as several of the Members had expressed concerns regarding its implications on Lagan Valley Regional Park, Belvoir Park and Belvoir Park Golf Club.

Councillor Rice suggested that the Council emphasise that traffic implications, which would make full use of facilities, e.g. the introduction of a tram type system for the super route, which would double the amount of passengers that could be transported.

The Planning Officer advised that the super route would follow on from the Eway system. He commented that the new link road proposed should be brought forward as an advanced proposal ahead of the super route.

Councillor Hanvey referred to the proposed development at Primrose Hill and felt there was no vision in projected traffic implications and he highlighted the present road system, which was currently logged jammed.

Following further comments, the Planning Officer said he would take these on board, but reiterated that the Council had always supported the provision of a super route in the Borough.

Alderman PD Robinson referred to the proposed informal Park and Ride at Carryduff and felt that the north side of the town would alleviate any delays, and would complement the proposal for Cairnshill.

However, following discussion, Members agreed that the Planning Officer should request the Department's consideration of a park and ride facility based on the north side of Carryduff with further provision of additional facilities in Ballynahinch and Downpatrick areas.

Retailing

In response to Members' queries, the Planning Officer commented that the Hydebank site had been identified solely as a development opportunity.

Councillors Long and Rice wished to record their opposition to any development of Hydebank irrespective of its category.

Following discussion, Members agreed that as this matter was listed at the end of the Planning Officer's report under the heading "Development Opportunity Sites", a vote should be taken on the matter later in the meeting.

Natural Environment

Alderman Osborne referred to the Enler Site at Dundonald which had been earmarked for residential development and he proposed that the Council request support for health/retail/community facilities at this site as this would release Ballybeen Square for private and social development

The Planning Officer suggested that the body behind the Enler Site development should write to BMAP asking that they delete this proposal from their housing and amend its use and the Council will back this request up in its response.

Waste Disposal

Councillor White highlighted the importance of waste disposal for the Borough and wished to ensure that the Council was pushing for more collective facilities.

Cemeteries

Councillor Rice enquired on the status of the cemetery application and asked if the Council had any plans for a further crematorium in the Borough.

The Chief responded that the Council was considering this issue and were discussing the matter with private developers, but this would be part of the next phase in the project once the planning application for a cemetery had been agreed.

Education, Health & Community Facilities

Councillor Beattie referred to the proposals for Moneyreagh Primary School, which would encroach on the greenbelt boundary. However, the Planning Officer indicated that this issue had already been highlighted to the Department.

Development Opportunity Sites

Councillor Rice stated that she had always stated her opposition to any development of Hydebank on the grounds that it was the only green space in the area, and she indicated that the public was currently using it for recreational purposes.

Councillor Long concurred with her opposition.

Alderman PD Robinson stated that the use of Hydebank was in contravention to council policy and asked that the Officers take the necessary action to secure the facility.

He referred to initial discussion regarding the Billy Neill Soccer Centre of Excellence and the Ice Bowl and the original reluctance of certain members of the public when it was first discussed, however, he highlighted the success of the facility, which provided value of money to ratepayers. He felt that some of the opposition to the closure of the football facilities had come from Belfast City Council Members, and he noted that their failure to provide similar facilities of standing to their ratepayers. He felt that any development of Hydebank would be an asset, which will benefit the whole Borough and highlighted that under BMAP, the actual type of development had yet to be determined.

Councillor Bunting referred to the earlier agreement by Members in the meeting to take a vote on the matter as the Planning Officer had to submit his response on behalf of the Council by the 25th January 2005.

The following Members voted in favour of the Officer's proposal to develop the Hydebank site:-

Alderman PD Robinson
Councillor J Beattie
Councillor J Norris
Councillor J White
Councillor M Robinson

Councillor T Sandford
Councillor J Bunting

The following Members vote against the proposal

Councillor B Hanvey
Councillor M Long
Councillor Mrs S Duncan

Councillor Ms R Hughes MBE
Councillor G Rice
Alderman P Osborne

Therefore, it was agreed that the Council should support the retention of Hydebank Playing Fields as a development opportunity site.

Following members discussion, on the aforementioned points, it was therefore

RESOLVED:- That,

- (a) The Planning Officer amend his report to equate land size in the numbers of housing units which would be a more comprehensible format for ratepayers to understand.
- (b) The Planning Officer to change the tone of his response to convey the degree of anger and frustration that had been felt by the Council, as a result of the Department's failure to take previous comments and representations into account when preparing the BMAP.

(b) The Planning Officer be instructed to contact the Housing Executive to determine the degrees of waiting lists within the Borough, especially Carryduff, and this information to be used to back up the case for greater social housing volumes in the Carryduff area.

© The Planning Officer be instructed to ascertain if the recent sale of land for a forthcoming development in the Borough had had a percentage of its land designated for social housing needs.

(d) The Planning Officer be instructed to liaise with Building Control to ascertain the findings of studies and data collected re: the numbers of units built in the Castlereagh area over the last decade, and to use this information to back up Members' concerns in the Council's response to BMAP.

(e) The Planning Officer to amend paragraph 1.1.9 to separate the two issues outlined.

(d) The Planning Officer be instructed to include in his response, the Council's request for the Department to consider an additional plan separate from BMAP, which would consider a site specific proposal relating to EWAY to avoid the adhoc developments that had occurred in the Borough in previous years. Furthermore, that they "ringfence" the site, and any development be partially funded by developers, this would make full potential of EWAY, whilst maximising its use and retaining its future as a transport measure.

(e) Alderman PD Robinson concurred that strategic planning was required, and suggested that the Planners should look at the Millmount "committed site" and expand their proposals to extend and develop it as a commuter village to complement EWAY. He further added that with regard to Carryduff, although the vast majority of sites were committed, there was a requirement for 200 additional units in "uncommitted" sites, but the Department should consider the present infrastructure and existing problems, previously highlighted by the Council, prior to any further development.

(f) The Planning Officer stated that he would add within his response that the Council request specific areas for social and sheltered housing.

(g) Alderman P D Robinson drew Members' attention to the proposal to develop land at Comber Road for light industrial usage and suggested that, in light of the other industrial sites proposed for the Borough, the existing residents at Comber Road felt that the north side should be retained for residential use.

(h) The Planning Officer reiterated that he would include Members' comments with regard to the expansion of the north side of the Maryland site to incorporate a mix of housing.

2005/06 : POTENTIAL SURPLUS LAND ASSET – DECLARE SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENTS – LAND AT THORNDALE PARK, CARRYDUFF

Tabled:- Report from the Planning Officer

The Planning Officer outlined the background of this matter for Members' attention and sought the Council's approval to declare the land surplus.

Councillor Rice queried the relocation of the playground, and the Planning Officer responded that this issue would be reviewed once the disposal of land had occurred.

Following a proposal from Councillor White, which was seconded by Councillor Norris it was

RESOLVED:- That,

- (a) The Council approve to declare as surplus to requirements the land at Thorndale Park and authorise its disposal.
- (b) The Council authorises Officers to conclude their investigation of the disposal options and associated valuations and report back to the Council as necessary.

2005/07 : WATER REFORM PUBLIC SEMINAR – BELFAST CITY HALL ON 2ND FEBRUARY 2005

Tabled:- Correspondence from the Chief Executive's Department, Belfast City Hall dated 13th January 2005 (circulated at meeting).

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, any Members wishing to attend this seminar should contact Members Services by tomorrow afternoon.

As there was no further business the meeting concluded at 9.55 p.m.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MAYOR