



Chair - Councillor E G R Jones

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

A G Cooper

A P Edgeller

B Mckeown

A Nixon

G P K Pardesi

M Phillips

C V Trowbridge

Officers in attendance:-

Mr S Manley - Development Management Support Officer

Ms L Pogson - Development Lead

Ms R Hurst - Principal Solicitor

Mr A Bailey - Scrutiny Officer

PC78 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F Beatty (Substitute M Phillips), A D Hobbs and P W Jones.

PC79 Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

Councillor B McKeown declared that he would be speaking as the Local Ward Member in respect of Application Number 19/31487/COU and would not be participating in the discussion and voting thereon.

Councillor B McKeown declared that he had been lobbied in respect of Application Number 19/31487/COU.

Councillor B McKeown left his place at the table at this point and took his seat in the public gallery.

PC80 Application No 19/31487/COU - Proposed change of use of concrete runway for storage of vehicles and associated perimeter fencing and landscape improvements - Land at former Airfield, Hixon

(Recommendation Approve, subject to conditions).

Considered the report of the Head of Development regarding this matter.

The Committee viewed the proposal from the runway and bund.

The Committee arrived at the site at 10.50 am, departed at 11.20 am and reconvened at the County Buildings at 1.00 pm.

The Development Lead reported upon an amendment to the report.

Public speaking on the matter was as follows:-

Mr P Hopcroft raised the following points during his objection to the proposal:-

- Represented Hixon Parish Council
- Consideration had not been given to the impact of this proposal on the visual amenity of the area
- This proposal could take up to 7 years to be properly screened
- There are properties that overlook the area
- The increase in the size of the bunds would have little effect
- The existing bunds were of poor quality and the soil needed to be rebuilt
- Queried who would enforce the rebuilding of the bunds
- Expressed concern that the damaged vehicles on the site would leak contaminated fluids into the drains causing pollution
- There were no petrol interceptors on the site
- The land was categorised as commercial and the threat of pollution was high

Mr B Weatherley raised the following points during his support for the proposal:-

- Spoke on behalf of the applicant
- Explained the need for the proposal
- The site had a well-established use for vehicle auctions
- There was now a requirement for space between the vehicle auctions
- A full explanation of the need for the proposal had been provided in writing by the applicant
- The site was needed for the applicant's business who had a site adjoining this one on a section of a concrete runway
- Permission had been granted for a previous storage facility
- This proposal avoided the need to transport the vehicles from a separate site, reducing emissions
- The applicant had searched for alternative sites, but this was the most suitable to reduce environmental impacts
- The applicant had viewed a facility at Meaford, but this was too far away and inefficient in terms of additional fuel and time
- The nearest dwelling was over 250 m away
- The applicant had been sensitive to residential amenity and had made genuine efforts to ensure that the area was landscape, especially the public footpath
- The bunds would be higher than their current level and the density of planting would be double the volume as to what was currently there

- The proposal would therefore improve the character and appearance of the current site
- The bund would be 4m, much higher than the current 2.4m
- The Rambler's Association had raised no objections
- Screening would be provided for surrounding properties
- There had been no objections from third parties
- The proposal would bring economic benefits, including 10 immediate jobs, the supply to local businesses and employee spend
- This was a logical proposal on a brownfield site with extensive supportive documentation and planning policy
- There were no statutory objections
- Requested the Committee to approve the proposal

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor B McKeown, Haywood and Hixon Ward Member, addressed the Committee and raised the following issues:-

- Spoke as the local Ward Member for this proposal
- The site currently looked disgraceful
- Several military planes had been previously stored there without permission
- Spoke against this to the Committee at the time, which caused a debate concerning the definition of a run way
- The site was previously run by the military, but was now decommissioned
- Queried whether this site could be classified as brownfield
- The military had now left the site and it was instead filled with private heavy goods vehicles outside of the industrial estate boundary
- There was no obvious sign of landscaping over the last five years
- Was pleased to see the improved proposals for landscaping on this application
- Queried how the five-year monitoring of the landscaping would be enforced
- Quoted a letter from the applicant dated October 2022 who had confirmed that they would be willing to accept a condition concerning an inspection of the landscaping of the site at each anniversary
- The site was currently untidy and it was time to make a decision

The Committee discussed the application and raised a number of issues, including:-

- Clarification that the applicant had raised no objection to accept a condition concerning an inspection of the landscaping of the site at each anniversary, but that officers had confirmed that this was not necessary
- Confirmation that landscape architects had been appointed from Manchester and the landscaping must be implemented properly

- Clarification that the site was outside of the Neighbourhood Plan, but it was a brownfield site and it was for the Committee to take a balanced view as to whether the proposal was permissible
- Confirmation that the site had been the subject of other permissions and that fact that it was outside of the settlement boundary did not preclude consideration of this proposal
- Could not envisage how this proposal would increase employment in the area or improve the environment
- Concern that this site could be further extended
- The nearest property was 260 m, which was significantly more than the 14 m minimum distance
- Concern that the site had not changed since the Committee's last visit
- Confirmation that if it was believed that the area was being used as a scrap yard, then this was an enforcement issue
- The applicant was not applying for a scrap yard though, but a vehicle storage facility
- Confirmation that the bunds that were currently on the site were temporary and could be removed if permission was refused
- Clarification that the site was being used to store damaged vehicles that would be repaired and sold on
- Clarification of the surface water drainage condition
- Queried whether additional conditions could be placed upon the application relating to the annual inspection of landscaping and the removal of the concrete surface
- Concern that the applicant would not adhere to the conditions
- Concern over the potential environmental impact on the nearby salt marshes
- Confirmation that the Local Lead Flood Authority had requested appropriate conditions
- Clarification over whether the proposed bunds would screen the site
- Confirmation that the Committee could not refuse the proposal due to concerns over the adjoining site
- Some of the reasons that the Parish Council had objected to the proposal in 2019 were appropriate to this proposal
- Confirmation that no environmental objections had been raised
- Clarification of enforcement legislation
- Advised that if the Committee were minded to approve the proposal, the conditions could be delegated to the Head of Planning in order to ensure the incorporation of additional conditions related to the annual inspection of landscaping and the removal of the concrete surface

A proposal that was moved by Councillor A G Cooper and seconded by Councillor M Phillips that Planning Application Number No 19/31487/COU be refused on the grounds of visual impact, was subsequently withdrawn and not put to the vote.

It was then subsequently moved by Councillor C V Trowbridge and seconded by Councillor A P Edgeller that Planning Application Number No

19/31487/COU be approved, subject to the conditions to be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Development.

On being put to the vote the proposal was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that Planning Application Number No 19/31487/COU be approved, subject to the conditions to be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Development.

CHAIR