

PONTELAND CIVIC SOCIETY



Chairman Philip Ham
Pontcivic@hotmail.co.uk

Secretary Pat Cooper
www.pontcivicsociety.pontelandonline.co.uk



Multi storey structures on land area north of historic listed dwellings

May 2014

12 High View Ponteland Newcastle upon Tyne NE20 9ET

PONT.APS.2017.04

29 August 2017

Dear Sir,

Re. Planning application 17/02747/REM Proposals for residential development at the site of Northumbria Police HQ to the north of Ponteland village.

The application being pursuant to an outline permission obtained at the beginning of 2014, to enable the Police Authority to negotiate with regard to land disposal.

In April 2015 representatives of the Civic Society, the Chairman Phil Ham, committee member Wil Moses and myself met at County Hall with Senior Planning officer, Jo-Anne Garrick and NCC Landscape architect Charlotte Clover to discuss the development of this site as well as other aspects relating to future housing development in Ponteland.

There was general agreement that the overall site area was capable of accommodating a greater number of dwellings than was currently being proposed,

That there was an urgent need to prepare an overall planning brief for the area, to help with the creation of a satisfactory sense of place and ensure the economic use of land.

The Society had previously submitted an outline design brief for consideration by the County Council and we would again refer the Planning Authority to the suggested site layout that formed part of that document.

Aspects of these latest proposals are in urgent need of further consideration.

1. ACCESS - VEHICLES

The Ministry of Transport's preferred line for the Ponteland bypass skirts the southern boundary of this land area and there is a clear need for any development here to be laid out in a way that will facilitate the provision of a connection to that bypass once it becomes available. In its present form the layout is incapable of incorporating a satisfactory link.

Any link road needs to be centrally located to minimise through traffic and allow Police vehicles to come and go without having to pass through areas of residential development. This would position this road on the western side of the tree belt located between the two retained Police buildings, extending southward to join the bypass.

We would see this road aligned so as to create a site for a centrally located 'focus' building and be designed to permit direct access to future community and employment facilities sited between the two main belts of trees. Again, the aim being to avoid any traffic that such facilities might generate, having to enter areas of housing.

We support the adoption of the road skirting the north side of the listed cottages as the main east/west distributor together with the removal of the road located on the other side of these buildings. However, we are opposed to the creation of an inner ring road encircling The Green. Such an arrangement would encourage traffic movement and compromise road safety, particularly for young children who would be expected to make use of the green space. The southern road needs to terminate at the Police car park entry.

Public transport requirements can be dealt with in other ways. A dial-up taxi or mini-bus service could be an option here.

2. ACCESS – Cyclists, Pedestrians

High levels of air pollution coupled with a marked increase in levels of obesity in young children, and in the wider population, makes it imperative that Planning Authorities and developers adopt a more positive approach to the provision of safe pedestrian/cycle routes within any new development.

Footpath /cycleways need to be located so as to provide safe direct access to a full range of community facilities and be separate from the frame of vehicle movement.

In this instance It would be appropriate to locate an east-west cycleway through the landscaped burn area with carefully positioned links through to The Green and beyond.

In addition there needs to be a link running down the east side of the Police car park and extending southward beyond the site to follow the line of the field hedgerows to provide direct access to the school and shopping areas and avoid the need for pedestrians and cyclists to have to make their way down North Road.

3. HOUSING

There needs to be broader range of housing provision here to better relate to the requirements of the wider Ponteland community and we take the view that the proposed design approach which adopts a low density rural theme is inappropriate in this context.

This is a 'brownfield' site which has been much used, with significant areas dominated by substantial multi storey structures. The precedent that this sets needs to be exploited and the opportunity taken to develop multi-storey apartment blocks within the land area immediately north of the listed buildings and at the south west corner of The Green alongside the Police communications building. We have in mind the kind of development that exists at Mayfair Gardens in Ponteland village with one, two, and three bedroom apartments grouped around partially enclosed landscaped courtyards. The various design guides quoted in the application provide examples of other similar, but more contemporary, schemes.

The introduction of this form of development would do away with the need to locate a vehicle highway alongside the Smallburn, would help to increase overall density, and thereby make better use of precious land.

Overall the layout of the housing generally is uninspired with stolid rows of two storey detached or semi-detached dwellings parked in rows facing one another across the intervening highway, suburbia personified.



Multi storey apartment development, Mayfair Gardens Ponteland

May 2014

4. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

We feel that in the longer term it would be sensible, both economically and in the interests of creating a sustainable community, to allow residential development to extend to the east and west of the present site. We estimate that in total, if adequate density levels were maintained, the area could ultimately accommodate some 600 dwellings.

This will make it necessary to provide a range of community facilities and we would see this taking the form of a multi storey 'focus' building to include a shop, a creche, some office space, an art and craft studio, a rentable meeting room, and so on. It would also be desirable to include space for units aimed at providing some level of on site employment. Suitable Section 106 agreements need to be applied.

To minimise intrusion into residential areas such elements would be best located at the point where the southern approach from the bypass would intersect with the east-west distributor, between the two north-south tree belts, and land in this vicinity needs to be excluded from residential development and set aside for that purpose.

We would identify the Prestwick Park development on the eastern side of Ponteland as being the kind of development that could be suitable here.



Rentable commercial space at Prestwick Park Ponteland

June 2015

5. LISTED BUILDINGS

We are pleased to note that the various listed buildings are to be retained and renovated but disappointed that the Old School has not been included in the refurbishment programme as we have recently put it forward for inclusion on a local list.

We think this omission is a mistake. Although it has been somewhat disfigured by insensitive alterations it remains a building of considerable character which relates well to the listed cottages. It would be better renovated to provide a useful community facility.

6. LANDSCAPE

We applaud the decision to retain and sustain existing areas of tree and hedgerow planting and the exploitation of the Smallburn to create a linear park that will not only enhance the residential environment but act as a buffer zone between the site and open countryside. The introduction of courtyard apartment blocks in this vicinity will do away with any need to provide for vehicle movement alongside the burn and provide for the inclusion of a safe east west cycleway.

The one serious landscape omission is the removal of the existing tree belt at the south west corner of The Green. We would see this retained to provide a level of

enclosure for the apartment blocks that we would want to see erected in this part of the site.

It is felt that the indicative tree grouping within The Green space itself is too dispersed to make for a satisfactory landscape contribution and would be likely to inhibit some forms of outdoor activity.



The Old School, Police HQ site

May 2014

7. DESIGN

The Design and Access statement supporting this application makes reference to a significant list of advisory documents that are said to have influenced the design approach adopted here.

It includes the Communities and Local Government publication "Manual for Streets", the English Partnerships "Urban Design Compendium, Delivering Quality Places" together with guidance papers published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and other organisations like the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). These are all splendid documents that underline the need for a significant improvement in the design quality of residential environments and provide detailed guidance as to how this might be achieved as well as identifying suitable examples of good practice.

The Government itself has said that,

"It recognises 'quality of place' as an integral element of successful communities that offer a high quality of life".

Given that reference is made to these various publications within the Design and Access Statement it is more than a little disappointing that what is being proposed should fall so far short of the aims and aspirations spelt out in these various policy guides.

These proposals have to be firmly rejected.

This is a quality site, it has great potential to create a splendid 'sense of place', no similar site has come forward for residential development in this part of the world within the past fifty years, it is blessed with a strong mature landscape framework, it is possessed of a splendid village green, it has historic buildings that lend character to its environment. It deserves better !

Ponteland deserves better !

Northumberland deserves better !

Yours sincerely

John Hague for PONTELAND CIVIC SOCIETY

County Planning Officer

County Hall Morpeth

planningcomments@northumberland.gov.uk

