

Statement by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning

15 December 2020

Development Management

Although the Covid pandemic has required Development Management to work in different ways, the service has still provided a quality planning service. The average time for new applications to be validated has been 4 days and 78% of major planning applications and 82% of minor planning applications have been determined on time in the year to date.

£2.3 million of Community Infrastructure Levy investment has now been allocated to be spent on the North Northallerton Sports Village, the Sowerby Sports Village Thirsk and Sowerby Leisure Centre and Bedale Leisure Centre.

Local Plan

The four-week programme of Examination in Public hearings for the Hambleton Local Plan took place between 20th October 2020 and 18th November 2020 and was one of the first in the country to facilitate virtual attendance. This enabled the events to be progressed on time despite the nation entering a second national lockdown on 5th November 2020. Only the Inspector and representatives of the Council were allowed to be present in the COVID-secure Chamber in the Civic Centre from that point onwards, but all third parties were still accommodated in the hearings as up to 40 people per session joined via ZOOM or tuned into the livestreams on YouTube to contribute to and follow the discussions as they happened.

The Inspector concluded the programme by specifically thanking the Council for being able to keep everything on track and by predicting that other Councils would be concerned about following such a successful approach as virtual attendance is likely to be here to stay for a while at least. The barrister representing the Council stated that this form of event was the best he had experienced to date and that the technology used was particularly impressive. The Council can be proud of this achievement which keeps the Local Plan on course for adoption in 2021.

In the meantime, as would be expected, there were a number of matters arising which require further clarification and information from Officers, Consultants and even the Inspectors themselves. Once further evidence has been gathered there will be a need for further consultation on the following:

- The Habitats Regulation Assessment and the Position Statement from Natural England regarding this;
- The Capacity Study for the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment;
- The Sustainability Assessment Addendum on economic options and some alternative site appraisals;
- An additional note on the proposed targets for housing numbers;
- The Local Green Space Assessment; and
- Standards for the provision of Playing Pitches.

There will also be a need for a limited number of focussed “mop-up” hearings around these issues where they have not been fully discussed so far. The tasks issued by the Inspectors, on which work is already underway, will require main modifications to the Local Plan which will be consulted upon. The Inspectors will issue a report, which will be the subject of fact checking by Officers, before the final version of the Plan is presented to Members for adoption in the summer of 2021.

Housing

Adaptation works and applications for adaptations under the Disabled Facilities Grant have continued throughout the Covid pandemic with 40 completed adaptations and 30 adaptations committed and due to commence. This means that Hambleton have committed the full amount of the DFG budget, £467,017, to be spent in year and will be supported by an additional £50,000 of capital funding from the council to meet demand of this statutory function.

Housing completions for 2019/20 have achieved 224% of target, delivering 651 completions against a target of 290, 31% of which were affordable.

Councillor David Webster
Portfolio Holder for Planning