

QUARTERLY REPORT ON EXTENSIONS TO TIME PERIODS WITHIN WHICH OBLIGATIONS UNDER SECTION 106 CAN BE ENTERED INTO

Purpose of the Report

To provide Members with a quarterly report on the exercise by the Head of Planning of the authority to extend periods within which planning obligations can be secured by (as an alternative to refusal of the related planning application).

Recommendations

a) That the report be noted

b) That the Head of Planning continue to report, on a quarterly basis, on the exercise of his authority to extend the period of time for an applicant to enter into Section 106 obligations.

Introduction

The Committee, when resolving to permit an application subject to the prior entering into of a planning obligation, usually also agree to authorise the Head of Planning to extend the agreed period of time for an applicant to enter into the Section 106 obligations, if he subsequently considers it appropriate (as an alternative to refusing the application or seeking such authority from the Committee).

When this practice was first established it was envisaged that such an extension might be agreed where the Head of Planning was satisfied that it would be unreasonable for the Council not to allow for additional time for an obligation to be secured. It was recognised that an application would need to be brought back to Committee for decision should there have been a change in planning policy in the interim. It was agreed that your officers would provide members with a regular quarterly report on the exercise of that authority insofar as applications that have come to the Committee are concerned. The report does not cover applications that are being determined under delegated powers where an obligation by unilateral undertaking is being sought. It also does not include those situations where obligations are secured "in time".

This report covers the period between 14th April 2020 (when the Committee last received a similar report) and the date of the preparation of this report (11th June 2020).

In the period since the Committee's consideration of the last quarterly report, section 106 obligations have not been entered into by the dates referred to in Committee resolutions, or in subsequent agreed extensions, and extensions have been agreed with respect to some 3 applications.

The Council needs to maintain a focus on delivery of these obligations – which can become over time just as important (to applicants) as achieving a prompt consideration of applications by Committee. In some cases applicants have however little immediate requirement to complete such obligations, being content to rest upon the resolution of the Committee. Indeed it can be in their interests to delay matters in some cases, particularly where the Council has agreed to accept less than policy compliant contributions on the basis of a viability appraisal. Expectations and requirements vary considerably. It is the issuing of the decision notice, rather than the consideration of the application by the Committee, which is the basis for the measurement of whether the decision has been made "in time" insofar as the speed of determination criterion for designation of poorly performing LPAs is concerned.

Furthermore Local Planning Authorities are required, as part of the Planning Guarantee, to refund any planning fee paid if after 26 weeks no decision has been made on an application, other than in certain limited exceptions, including where an applicant and the Local Planning Authority have agreed in writing that the application is to be determined within an extended

period. This provides yet another reason for the Planning Service maintaining a clear and continued focus on timeliness in decision making, instructing solicitors and providing clarification where sought.

As from the 1st June 2018 the Service has signed up to a Staffordshire wide initiative to promote the use of a standardised Section 106 template agreement, with template schedules, which is being publicised so applicants are clear what documentation is required of them to complete the application process – with the aim of reducing delays and costs for applicants and to simplify the planning process.

In cases where extensions of the period within which an obligation may be secured have been considered appropriate your Officer's agreement to that has normally been on the basis of that should he consider there to be a material change in planning circumstances at any time short of the engrossment of the final document he retains the right to bring the matter back to the Planning Committee. Milestones are now being set in some cases. Applicants are also requested to formally agree a parallel extension of the statutory period within which no appeal may be lodged by them against the non-determination of the application, and in most cases that agreement has been provided. An application determined within such an agreed extended period is defined by the government as one that has been determined as being determined "in time".

Details of the applications involved are provided below:-

(1) Land Bound By Ryecroft, Ryebank, Merrial Street 17/00637/FUL

This application for full planning permission for demolition of existing buildings and construction of a mixed use development of student accommodation, retail and commercial units and associated car parking originally came before the Planning Committee at its meeting on the 7th November 2017 (at around week 15). The resolutions of the Committee inter alia required obligations be entered into securing a financial contributions of; at least £542,797 to public realm improvements with the remainder (being at least £250,000) to be spent on the enhancement of public open space at Brampton Park or Queen Elizabeth Gardens, £2,245 towards travel plan monitoring; Real Time Passenger Information system for bus services; improvements to the cycle route from Newcastle town centre to Keele University; Real Time Town Centre Car Parking Capacity Information System; to review and provide/amend traffic regulation and Resident Parking Zones in the event that it has been demonstrated (through surveys secured by condition) that the development has resulted in on street parking problems. The resolution included the requirement that the agreement containing these obligations should be completed by the 8th January 2018.

However a further report came back to the Planning Committee on the 2nd February 2018 which set out that it is not legally possible for the Council to enter into an agreement with itself. The Planning Committee then resolved that all parties should enter by 8th March 2018 into an Agreement under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that a draft S106 Agreement (in the terms as per the resolution of Planning Committee on 7th November), annexed to the S111 Agreement, is entered into once the transfer of the site has taken place.

The 8th March 2018 date was not achieved and whilst further ongoing delays have occurred your Officer has considered it appropriate to agree further extensions of time within which the Section 111 agreement can be secured. However, it appeared that the applicant did not wish to progress this matter and a letter was therefore sent to the applicant, care of their agent, indicating that it was intended to treat the application as 'finally disposed of' under Article 40 of the town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and remove it from the Statutory Register of outstanding applications for planning permission. The letter stated that as the case has now expired and no appeal had been made against non-determination the application would be disposed of after 21 days of the letter. No comments have been received in the 21 day period and as such the application is now deemed withdrawn some 134 weeks since receipt of the application.

(2) 4 Meadows Road Kidsgrove 18/00889/FUL

This application for full planning permission for the change of use from warehouse (Class B8) and taxi base (sui generis) to a Working Men's Club (use class D2) came before the Planning Committee at its meeting on the 21st May (at around week 27). The resolution of the Committee required an obligation to secure the financing of improved glazing provision to any properties which would be materially impacted by the development. The resolution included the requirement that the agreement should be completed by the 28th June.

The agreement was not completed by the 28th June due to a number of delays on behalf of the Council which meant that your Officer agreed an extension of time by which the Section 106 should be completed.

In preparing the obligation it became apparent that the development could not be made acceptable through a planning obligation to finance the provision of improved glazing the nearby residential properties as any sum of money obtained to fund mitigation measures, as may be required, does not guarantee that the measures would be implemented as the owner of the adjoining the Meadows, Aspire, is under no obligation to undertake the required mitigation not being a party to the obligation (and could not be a party as they do not have an interest in the application site).

The applicant eventually withdrew the planning application on the 22nd May 2020 some 85 weeks from receipt.

(3) Compound C and Compound E, Lymedale Cross 18/00997/FUL

This application for full planning permission for a warehouse unit and 7 no. business starter units came before the Planning Committee at its meeting on the 3rd December (at around week 31). The resolution of the Committee required an obligation to secure a travel plan monitoring fee of £2,407. The resolution included the requirement that the agreement should be completed by the 8th February.

The agreement was not completed by the 8th February due to a number of delays on behalf of the Council but a draft S106 obligation is now in circulation and nearing completion. On this basis your Officer has agreed to extend the period within which the S106 obligation can be completed to the 29th June 2020.

Some 56 weeks have now passed since receipt of the application.

Date Report prepared

11th June 2020