

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 17th February 2016

1. Planning and Development

Planning & Development Committee considered the following major planning applications at its 5th February committee:

- demolition of the shops and flats, together with the car repairs garage at Newbridge Court (the Rievaulx Drive shops next to the retained Endeavour Public House). The proposal is for a rebuild on the same footprint, to form a ground floor convenience store and two smaller shops, with 21 flats on the 1st and 2nd floors and the formation of 36 car parking spaces. The scheme has generally been well received by the residents and Community Council;
- alterations to and rebranding of the former bowling alley, (Riley's snooker centre building on Linthorpe Road) to form the Tees Valley Arena;
- conversion of the former Art Gallery (320 Linthorpe Road) to form 7 apartments. This is a long awaited reuse of a key building in the Albert Park Conservation Area.

The Planning Application for residential development of 124 homes at Hemlington Grange has now been submitted by Taylor Wimpey, it is hoped to take the application to Planning & Development committee in April for a decision.

The owner /developer of 15-25 Albert Road has given notice of his intention to start work on the approved scheme. This is for conversion of the buildings in the Historic Quarter Conservation Area to create shops/offices/café on the ground floor and 10 flats on the upper floors. The initial works will need to deal with the demolition of the existing secondary buildings (outbuildings and garages) at the rear of the site to allow access for contractor vehicles. This will secure the existing vehicle access along Dundas Mews.

2. Quarter Three Housing Starts and Completions

181 dwellings were completed in quarter 3 of 2015/16, giving a total of 545 completions so far this year. It is projected that total numbers for 2015/16 will exceed 700 dwellings for the second year in a row. This is the highest level of sustained housing growth the town has seen in 35 years. Two thirds of the dwellings completed in the quarter were for properties of 3 or more bedrooms and over 60% were detached and semi-detached representing a significant increase in properties in the higher Council Tax bands D+. This will assist in the Council's aims of rebalancing the housing stock of the Borough, and help with the Council's MTFP.

Housing starts remain at a relatively high level, indicating that the high levels of housing growth will continue into 2016/17. A total of 121 new dwellings were started in quarter 3, taking the total for the year to date to 339 starts. Significantly starts in the quarter were focused on detached dwellings (54%) and dwellings of 4 or more bedrooms (56%) indicating that the upper housing market in Middlesbrough remains strong.

3. New Homes Bonus

Planning recorded 678 net additions in 2014/15 (base date April). Assuming an average Council Tax Band C, the New Homes Bonus (NHB) would be £894,104 for the year and £5,364,625 over 6 years. If average Band D is used figures increase to £1,005,867 / £6,035,203 respectively.

Potential additional Council Tax from 678 net additions is £998,456.7 based on Band C or £1,123,269.7 based on Band D including Fire and Police contributions for 2015/16.

The actual draft allocation of NHB for 2014/15 (base date Oct) was based on 771 net additions giving rise to £1,167,257 for the year and £7,003,540 over 6 years. Based on the 771 net additions and the breakdown by Council Tax Band on the NHB website, the additional Council Tax would be £1,176,465.5 (including Police and Fire contributions).

The NHB calculator shows that 514 of the 771 net additions were Band C or lower (skewed by 240 student flats at Rede House).

4. Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan

The Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) was submitted to Government in March 2014 and led to Tees Valley Unlimited securing a Growth Deal worth around £104m. The Tees Valley Combined Authority will be formed in April 2016 and is working in shadow form and a Devolution Deal was agreed with Government in October 2015. In light of these changes and changing economic circumstances including significant job losses in the steel industry the SEP is now being reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and accurately reflects our vision and priorities for the area.

The SEP Review will result in a clear mandate for businesses, partners and stakeholders; which can be used to encourage partners to deliver shared priorities and be used to attract investment. It will also set out the Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership's approach and priorities for investment for both public and private sector.

Middlesbrough Council has had early input into the SEP review and wider consultation will be undertaken with partners and stakeholders during the Spring period, prior to finalisation in July 2016.

5. DigitalCity

Teesside University submitted an ERDF bid in late 2015, in order to continue the delivery of DigitalCity.

Middlesbrough Council and the other Tees Valley Local Authorities contributed to a visioning workshop to help steer the future direction of the initiative.

6. Retail

Chicago Rock transformation on Wilson Street is nearing completion to cater for events such as weddings, conferences and award ceremonies.

Bakers Tailoring is relocating to its own premises on Linthorpe Road (former H20 hairdresser).

The Oak on Newport Road has now closed; on the same stretch Lazy Joes vintage retailer has opened new two story premises next to the British Heart Foundation store.

7. Industrial

Park Electrical Distributors is creating 8 new jobs with a new 15,000 sq ft industrial unit in Riverside Park.

The North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC) has relocated to 50 staff to Royal Middlehaven House and will sell the building on Exchange Square for commercial redevelopment.

HM Revenue and Customs is to close its Middlesbrough offices on Russell Street. Six North East sites in total will be shut over the next six years. The closures will be phased with Russell Street to close by 2018/19 with staff relocated to a new regional centre in Newcastle. The Middlesbrough offices currently employ 244 staff.

8. Unemployment

Unemployment claimant count has increased to 4.4%, with a slight increase for the 18-24 year olds to 5.6%