

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Planning Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 3 January 2017 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor K Davidson (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors D Boyes, J Clare, P Conway, M Dixon, I Jewell, B Moir (Vice-Chairman), H Nicholson, G Richardson, A Shield, P Taylor and R Young

1 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Laing.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Applications to be determined

a DM/16/01417/FPA - University Hospital of North Durham, North Road, Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for a two storey Emergency Department and surface car parking and demolition of old hospital buildings at University Hospital of North Durham, North Road, Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

C Baxter, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph, photographs from the south and west of the site and access to the east of the site, proposed layout plan, proposed elevations and proposed floorplan. The presentation also included a visual image of the proposed new Emergency Care and Urgent Care facility.

Councillor Nicholson expressed concern about the extra traffic which the development would generate and referred to the appointment of a Travel Plan Co-ordinator as mentioned in paragraph 57 of the report. Councillor Nicholson also asked whether it might be possible to have an ambulance only lane on the approach to the hospital.

J McGargill, Highway Development Manager replied that any additional traffic would have an impact on the highway network, which was known to be already saturated. The development of a Travel Plan and appointment of a Travel Plan Co-ordinator, which was covered by Condition 10 of the planning conditions may offset traffic generated by encouraging the use of other methods of transport. The development would result in further delays on the highway network with up to 100 peak hour journeys being generated, however there were daily, weekly and monthly traffic fluctuations. Ambulances would enter the site from the Aykley Heads roundabout and exit via Southfield Way. The applicant had no concern about this because it was a blue light service.

Councillor Davidson informed the Committee that the last word in paragraph 58 of the report should read 'refusal' rather than 'approval'.

Councillor Boyes referred to the previous decision by the Area Planning Committee (Central and East) to grant permission for the demolition of Dryburn House. On that occasion the Committee had conducted a site visit and Councillor Boyes asked why no site visit had taken place for this application. Councillor Davidson replied that he had discussed the need for a site visit with the Senior Planning Officer prior to the publication of the Committee papers. The main issue on the site was the demolition of Dryburn House which was a listed building and this had already been determined by the Area Planning Committee. This would have been a delegated decision had it not been called in by a local Member. He had therefore decided that no site visit was necessary for the application to be determined.

Councillor Dixon, in moving approval of the application, hoped that the extra traffic generated from the development would add grist to the mill for a Western or Northern Bypass for Durham as currently the highway network operated at a maximum. He also hoped that the applicants would lend their voice to support the construction of a Bypass in the future.

The Highway Development Manager replied that a Western Bypass would take some traffic off the A167 and would reduce delays. This was currently being pursued through the County Durham Plan.

C Cuskin, Planning and Development Solicitor advised the Committee it must consider the application on the basis of the current state of the highway network and that the issues of the Northern and Western Bypasses were not relevant to the determination of this application.

Councillor Shield informed the Committee that he shared the concerns expressed about the highway network. He asked what impact the proposed development would have on the existing Accident and Emergency provision and how it may impact on service delivery.

Professor Chris Gray, County Durham and Darlington NHS Trust's Executive Medical Director informed the Committee that the proposed scheme would enable the Emergency Department to be fit for purpose. The current Accident and Emergency Department was designed to handle 32,000 admissions per annum and was currently handling 65,000 per annum. The Department had been refurbished year on year to meet the extra demand to a point where it could not be further developed. The proposed new Accident and Emergency Department would be designed to improve patient flow through the hospital. During the construction of the new facility the current level of service would be maintained.

Councillor Moir informed the Committee that the proposed new facility would benefit residents of County Durham and seconded approval of the application.

Councillor Taylor informed the Committee that the current Accident and Emergency Department was operating under extreme pressure and was no longer fit for purpose, operating at over double capacity. Although it was regretful that a listed building was to be demolished, he would rather save lives than save buildings.

Councillor Clare also expressed concern about the impact of the proposed development on the highway network. County Durham needed this development and Councillor Clare asked what element of future-proofing had been built in to the development. Professor Gray informed the Committee that the proposed development had built in a 3% growth per annum and should be future proof for 10 years.

Councillor Richardson, while supporting the application, informed the Committee that the Accident and Emergency provision at a newly built hospital at Bishop Auckland had been removed only a few years ago. The Bishop Auckland facility had been built for Accident and Emergency admissions but was not now used. This should be something to be addressed by the NHS. Additionally, this application was proposing a 222 space car park and Councillor Richardson stressed the need for parking charges to be controlled.

Councillor Davidson informed the Committee that the issues raised by Councillor Richardson regarding Bishop Auckland hospital and car parking charges were not part of this application.

Councillor Boyes referred to the loss of some trees which were protected by Tree Preservation Orders. He asked whether there should be a specific condition for the replacement of these trees or whether Condition 9 of the permission was sufficient.

The Senior Planning Officer replied that the Plan Ref 9016-013/101 B under Condition 2 of the permission indicated where trees were to be planted to mitigate the loss of the Tree Preservation Order trees. Condition 9 included the protection of trees which may die, were removed or became seriously damaged within 5 years of completion of the development. In response to a follow up question from Councillor Boyes, the Senior Planning Officer confirmed that the same number of trees would be planted as were removed.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the Conditions contained in the report.