

# Item no.

Report to: **Development Control and Regulatory Panel**

Date: **31 January 2006**

Report of: **Head of Planning and Building Control Services**

Subject: **Applications under the Town and Country Planning Acts  
Town and Country Planning Act 1990  
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**

Ward: **All**

## **A INTRODUCTION**

Members are advised that in preparing the attached report full consultation responses are not presented. Care is taken to ensure that principal issues of all relevant responses are incorporated into the report. Notwithstanding this Members are invited to view all submitted plans and consultation responses prior to the Panel meeting by contacting the Head of Planning and Building Control Services.

The Easington Local Plan was adopted by the District of Easington on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2001. Together with the Durham County Structure Plan it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. All relevant policies have been taken into account in making recommendations in this report. A view as to whether the proposals generally accord with policies is identified in the relevant section.

Section 54A of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act (as amended) requires the Local Planning Authority to have regard to the development plan policies when they are relevant to an application and hence are a material consideration. Where such policies are material to a proposal, section 54A requires the application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The recommendations contained in this report have been made taking into account all material planning considerations including any representations received and Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Circulars. Consideration has been given to whether proposals cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

Members attention is drawn to information now provided in respect of time taken to determine applications. Following each recommendation a determination time is provided based on a decision at this Panel. Where a decision time exceeds the 8 week target a reason for this is given in brackets.

In considering the applications and preparing the report the District of Easington has fully taken into account the duties imposed on Local Planning Authorities by the Human Rights Act 2000. In particular, regard has been given to Articles 6, 7, and 8, the First Protocol and Section 6. Where specific issues of compliance with this legislation have been raised these are dealt with within each report.

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## **B SPEAKING AT THE PANEL**

The District Council is one of the few Councils in the country who allows verbal representations when decisions on planning applications are being made. The Panel has to balance listening to views with the efficient conduct of the business of the Panel. The following procedures have therefore been agreed. These procedures will be adhered to in respect of the items within this report. Members of the public will also be expected to follow these both in their own interests and that of other users of the service.

1. The Planning Officer will present his report.
2. Objectors and supporters will be given the opportunity to speak. Five minutes will be given to each speaker. If there is more than one speaker upon an issue, the District Council recommends the appointment of a spokesperson and that speakers register their request prior to the Panel meeting.
3. After registered speakers have had their say the Chair of the Panel will ask if there is any other member of the public who wishes to speak. Those who do may be allowed to speak. The Chair of the Panel will exercise discretion in this regard. Where the number of speakers or the repetitive nature of the points that may be raised may impact on the other business of the Panel then the Chair will restrict the number of speakers and progress the matter.
4. The applicant or representative may then speak for a duration of up to five minutes.
5. At the discretion of the Chair, objectors or supporters or applicants may ask officers questions then may be asked questions by Members and Officers
6. The Members of the Panel will then finally debate and determine the application with the assistance of officers if required.

## **C RISK ASSESSMENT**

A risk assessment has been carried out in respect of individual cases. Overall, it is concluded that any risks to the Council, for example relating to an appeal being lost and costs awarded against the Council, are low, provided that decisions are made in accordance with recommendations. Risks will increase when decisions are made contrary to recommendations, and the degree will vary depending on the particular case.

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## D GENERAL APPLICATIONS

05/254

**SEAHAM NORTH (SEATON WITH SLINGLEY) – Proposed Development of Golf Course, including Clubhouse, Driving Range, Hotel & Car Parking (Reserved Matters) at Sharpley Springs Golf Course, Sharpley Hall Farm, Seaton for Mr. S. Weightman**

### **Planning History**

91/261 – Outline planning permission granted for the above in May 2001 subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement requiring the Golf Course to be laid out and ready for use before the commencement of the construction of the Hotel. *Note – part of the site is within Sunderland City Council's area.*

04/1125 – Renewal of above permission – details to be submitted by 15 June 2005. Approval February 2005

### **Consultations**

The application was advertised in the press and a site notice was displayed and local residents were consulted.

A local resident has objected raising the following issues :

- Access road to the clubhouse is inadequate to take additional traffic.
- Junction with main road will be dangerous with paintball business and fishing lakes opposite.
- Noise from late night use of the clubhouse will be a nuisance.

County Highway Authority – Now satisfied that revised plans comply with policies and guidelines. No Travel Plan needed as less than 30 will be employed on the site.

Economic Development Unit:-

Support the proposal as there is a need for quality hotel provision in the district and this would serve part of that need, and support leisure and tourism.

The scheme should fit well into the locality, supported by a comprehensive landscaping scheme.

Parish Council – Comments awaited.

Landscape Consultant –

Now satisfied with landscaping proposals for the golf course and hotel/club house.

Environment Agency – No objections subject to conditions relating to surface and foul sewage disposal.

City of Sunderland Council – No objections.

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Sport England – No objections.

Environmental Health Officer – No objections.

Northumbrian Water – No objections.

Durham Wildlife Trust – County Wildlife Site at Slingley Pond ( 1 Km to the south) may be affected by the development. There are records of various protected species close to the site plus a water course within the site which may be affected by the development. Request an environmental impact assessment is produced.

Conservation Officer – Concern over visual impact of hotel in open countryside location. No objection to other elements of the scheme.

English Nature – No objection as submitted details imply there will be no net loss to nature conservation features within the area.

Durham County Planning Policy Team – A Travel Plan should be prepared to ensure greater use of public transport, cycling or walking to the site. The Transport Plan, Access and Parking Guidelines should be applied to this application. ( See Highway comments above).

## **Development Plan Policies**

### *Durham County Structure Plan*

- 4 Conservation and enhancement of countryside.
- 5 North Durham Green Belt

### *District of Easington Local Plan*

- 1 General Principles of development
- 2 Protection of countryside.
- 6 Green Belt
- 15 Nature Conservation.
- 35 Amenity
- 36 Access/parking
- 86 Countryside recreation.

## **Comments**

The site is located adjacent to the B1404 road just west of Seaton, in the open countryside. The application seeks the approval of details following the grant of outline planning permission. The hotel and clubhouse would be located on separate sites, the former accessed directly from the B1404 and the latter from a side road adjacent to Sharpley Hall.

The applicants have submitted a supporting statement with the application, summarised as follows –

“The course is set up as two loops of 9 holes both commencing and completing in the area set aside for the clubhouse and practice bays. Access to these facilities is via the unclassified road to the west side of the site.

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The hotel is sited in the south-east corner of the site in an area of land that overlooks but is out of play of the golf course with direct access off the B1404. The hotel is therefore entirely separate from the clubhouse.

## The Clubhouse

The clubhouse is a brick built structure with clay pantile roofing partially set into the slope of the hill. Both materials have been chosen as locally sourced.

The design of the clubhouse is as follows:

On arrival a sheltered landscaped forecourt is to the left with parking to the right. This arrangement ensures that the view of the building is not obscured by parked cars. The parking is set in two lines with a substantial (2.0 metres) planted area separating the lines. Additional screening is provided to the boundary of the car park.

While the access road and vehicle set down area will be hard paved reflecting their heavy use the car park will be kept informal with only a gravel finish and no demarcation of parking bays.

The main clubhouse is two storeys with the lower level set into the slope of the hill. The main facilities are at the upper (entrance) level and consist of a pro shop and single combined lounge bar with a central entrance hall. Off the entrance hall is the office and off the lounge bar is the kitchen. The building is arranged around a small open courtyard that will provide a sheltered area overlooking the finishing (18<sup>th</sup>) hole. Large hardwood framed windows are positioned to obtain views of the course and the landscape beyond down to the coast.

At the lower level the lockers and changing facilities are provided with direct level access to the course. These are fully accessible via an ambulant disabled standard staircase or a wheelchair stair lift.

Also at the lower level is a service area for the storage and charging of golf buggies. This has a separate direct level access.

The 16 bay covered practice area is designed to be a modest structure of minimum dimension and height set behind a landscaped berm to further reduce its impact. This is a timber clad steel framed structure with a flat roof finished with a gravel ballast.

The outfield is to be floodlit and full details of this scheme are included (from Philips Lighting). The hours of operation of the floodlighting scheme would be until 10pm nightly.

## The Hotel

The 126 bedroom hotel is approached via a separate access drive to a vehicle drop off area under cover of an entrance canopy. There are 146 car parking spaces as well as a separate service ramp providing access to basement service rooms.

The hotel is arranged round a central circulation area in a manner to allow for the following:

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- a) The building will be constructed in phases, commencing with the core, south and west wings. The design allows for the addition of the east and north wings with minimum disruption.
- b) The design creates four distinct 'L' shaped courts which will break down the scale of the building visually. From any viewpoint only one courtyard will be visible effectively reducing the impact of the building. Each of the wings will use the same central circulation.

The building is designed as two full floors plus a reduced width second floor, again to reduce the impact of the building. This second floor will be largely glazed in contrast to the lower two floors which will feature brick facings.

The clubhouse contains no function, committee or other meeting rooms as it is intended that all activities of this nature will occur at the hotel”.

The principle of creating a golf course with associated club house and hotel was established via the outline planning permission referred to above. This application relates to detailed issues, the main ones which will be covered as follows.

**Design** – The club house is of a single storey modern design with sloping monopitch roofs forming an enclosed courtyard. Brick and clay pantiles are proposed to be the external materials. The hotel is a pitched roofed 2/3 storey design in a cruciform configuration, again to be built in brick and pantile.

It is considered that the design is appropriate in the context of the new golf course development, and the use of appropriate materials in the construction, together with landscaping as proposed will help ensure the character and open nature of the Green Belt is maintained.

**Landscaping** – Extensive “on and off course” landscaping is proposed which will assist in reducing the initial visual impact of the new buildings and golf course. A management plan is proposed which will maintain the landscaping after planting.

**Highway Issues** – The Highway Authority is now satisfied with the proposals, in particular the hotel access, new bus stops and internal car/cycle parking. It is considered, therefore that there are no highway grounds for refusal, notwithstanding the concerns of the local resident.

**Amenity Issues** – It is considered that the overall effect of the development on local residents will not be such as to represent a serious loss of amenity. Road safety issues relating to the club house access are covered in the following application report. Any problems of noise emanating from the club house are likely to be insignificant given its distance from the existing dwellings, (some 150 metres).

**Effects on Wildlife** – A comprehensive evaluation of the site and its wildlife has been undertaken by the applicants and the effects of the development are considered to be acceptable by English Nature.

It is considered that after considerable discussions with the applicants that the development is now acceptable and will conform to the County Structure Plan and Easington District Local Plan and will not cause material harm to the character or open nature of the Green Belt.

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**Recommend** Conditional approval (conditions relating to landscaping, materials, surface and foul sewage disposal and revised plans).

**Decision time** 10 Months – target not achieved due to extensive discussions with applicants and subsequent revised plans and consultations.

## **Reason for recommendation**

The development accords with current Structure and Local planning policy guidance including Local Plan Policies 1, 2, 6, 15, 35, 36 and 86 and does not harm the character of the Green Belt.

**05/255**

## **SEAHAM NORTH – (SEATON WITH SLINGLEY) – Proposed access to proposed Club House at Sharpley Hall Farm, Seaton for Mr S Weightman**

### **Planning History**

91/261 – Outline planning permission granted for the Golf Course development in May 2001 subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement requiring the Golf Course to be laid out and ready for use before the commencement of the construction of the Hotel. *Note – part of the site is within Sunderland City Council's area.*

### **Consultations**

The application was advertised in the press and a site notice was displayed and local residents were consulted.

A local resident has objected raising the following issues :

- Access road to the clubhouse is inadequate to take additional traffic.
- Junction with main road will be dangerous with paintball business and fishing lakes opposite.

County Highway Authority –

Now satisfied that revised plans comply with policies and guidelines.

Landscape Consultant –

Roadside hedge should be “gapped up” to achieve a continuous hedgeline.

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## Development Plan Policies

### *District of Easington Local Plan*

- 1 General Principles of development
- 35 Amenity
- 36 Access/parking

## Comments

This application relates to the creation of a new vehicular access and visibility splays associated with the proposed clubhouse referred to in the above report, Ref. 05/254. Improvements to the road verge and the provision of a footpath will take place via a legal agreement with the Highway Authority.

The lane off which the access is proposed runs north off the B1404 running west to rejoin it about ½ kilometre away. An unadopted track runs off it north into the City of Sunderland area.

The submitted plans show a new vehicular access being created off this lane into the Golf Club Site, with visibility splays north and south being provided together with footpath provision towards the B1404.

A number of site visits have taken place between the applicants and the Highways Engineer and he is now satisfied that road safety will not be compromised by the proposed development.

On this basis, it is considered that there are no highway grounds for refusal, notwithstanding the concerns of the local resident.

Providing the existing roadside hedge is retained and improved, it is considered that the development is acceptable in amenity terms.

**Recommend** Conditional approval (conditions relating to landscaping and highway details).

**Decision time** 10 Months – target not achieved due to extensive discussions with applicants and subsequent revised plans and consultations.

## Reason for recommendation

The development accords with current planning policy guidance including Local Plan Policies 1, 35 and 36 and does not give rise to an unacceptable impact on road safety.

05/777

**THORNLEY & WHEATLEY HILL (WHEATLEY HILL) –Erection of Two Kennel Blocks (retrospective) on Allotment at Rear of Wheatley Hill Working Men’s Club, Quilstyle Road, Wheatley Hill for Mr. G. Jones.**

## Planning History



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None

## Consultations

Parish Council - Query on land ownership - resolved

DCC Highways - Query on parking spaces - resolved

DCC Environmental Health – Reference to complaints from local residents about noise from dogs barking and from an electricity generator; and about disturbance from floodlighting.

Neighbours - 7 anonymous letters of objection referring to:-

- (a) noise from barking dogs;
- (b) noise from electricity generator;
- (c) effect of noise problems on house sales;
- (d) physical and mental distress caused by noise from dogs;
- (e) inability to sleep, open windows, sit outside or work from home;
- (f) too many dogs too close to houses;
- (g) owner of dogs does not live nearby.

## Development Plan Policies

*District of Easington Local Plan*

- 1 general principles of development
- 34 allotments and garage sites
- 35 design and layout of development

## Comment

This is a retrospective application for the retention of two kennel buildings on an allotment lying to the north of Wheatley Hill Working Men's Club. The buildings are constructed of concrete blockwork with a rendered finish and plastic-coated corrugated steel sheet roofs. They were erected in 2004 and this application resulted from visits to the site and discussions with the applicant by the Council's Investigation Officers. The two buildings contain eight and fourteen individual kennel compartments respectively, two of which are used for feed storage, and equipment. However, it appears to be normal practice for two dogs to be accommodated in each kennel unless particular circumstances dictate otherwise, so the total maximum capacity of the kennels is some 35-40 animals. The dogs are all greyhounds.

This is a backland location served by an unmade lane and circulation area. The application site lies immediately to the rear of the Wheatley Hill Working Men's Club, with other allotments to the north, farmland to the west and another allotment (used by the applicant and occupied by pigeon lofts) and a compound to the east. Further away, but still within a matter of sixty metres of the kennel blocks, are houses in The Avenue and Quillstyle Road; and beyond those are Cypress View, First Street, Ashmore Terrace, Meadow View and Wordsworth Avenue. Four new houses are currently being built on a site to the east of the nearby Co-operative Store on Quillstyle Road. In total, there are almost a hundred residential properties within a radius of 200 metres of the kennel blocks.

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The main consideration raised by this application is the effect of the proposal on residential amenity and, in this respect, it is the problem of the potential for noise disturbance which is the main issue. While there have been a number of anonymous objections to the application as a result of the usual neighbour notification procedures, these amount to only seven, with noise from barking dogs being the predominant point raised and one letter mentioning noise from an electricity generator. However, it has not been possible to verify the accuracy of the claims in the letters relating to the amount and timing of the alleged problems because all the objection letters have been sent anonymously, claiming that, in the words used on one of them "... people have already been 'warned off' regarding objections". There have also been a number of noise complaints made to the Council's Environmental Health Unit since the kennels were erected although the number of actual complainants has reduced.

The general problem and likelihood of noise disturbance to nearby residents resulting from having a large number of dogs housed in such close proximity to houses has been put to the applicant and he has responded with a number of proposals in an attempt to eliminate the problem:-

- a) anti-bark devices have already been installed in both kennel buildings and certain dogs have been fitted with individual anti-barking collars; the applicant has said he is prepared to undertake to fit all dogs with anti-bark collars which would be kept operational at all times of the day and night;
- b) the installation of additional noise insulation to the roofs of the buildings;
- c) replacement of the electricity generator by mains electricity if that can be arranged or, failing that, housing the generator in an insulated store or container;
- d) providing essential ventilation in the summer months by means of a mechanical ventilation/extraction system;
- e) re-direction of the beams of any floodlighting directly onto the kennels so as not to cause disturbance to nearby properties (but if a mains electricity supply can be arranged this matter could be resolved anyway);
- f) restriction of the number of dogs housed in the kennels to a maximum of twenty, if required to do so by a condition attached to any planning permission which may be granted.

All these matters could help to reduce the potential for serious disturbance of local residents and, if the Panel so wished, could be made conditional to any planning permission which may be granted. However, it is considered that the potential for disturbance could not be eliminated altogether nor reduced to a level where no disturbance of residential amenity could be guaranteed. There does not appear to be any way of achieving that situation, so to grant planning permission would be considered to be contrary to policies 1 and 35 of the District of Easington Local Plan. On this basis, the development is considered to be unacceptable.

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## Recommend

1 Refusal for the following reason:

Having regard to the nature and scale of the kennelling activity involved in the proposal and the location of the application site in relation to nearby residential properties, it is considered that the development would be likely to result in conditions seriously detrimental to the amenities of local residents due to noise and disturbance. The proposal is thereby considered to be contrary to policies 1 and 35 of the District of Easington Local Plan.

2. That enforcement action be taken, if necessary, to secure removal of the buildings and cessation of the use.

**Decision Time** - 9 weeks (delayed by installation of new computer system)

**05/823**

**SEAHAM NORTH (SEATON WITH SLINGLEY) – Proposed Visitor Accommodation at Seaton Lane Inn, Seaton Lane, Seaton for Mr Marshal.**

## Planning History

04/503 – Front and Rear Extensions – Approved subject to conditions 9/7/2004  
00/467 – Rear Extension – Approved 13/10/2000  
99/363 – Single Storey Extension – Approved 6/8/1999  
96/394 – Alterations – Approved 5/9/1996

## Consultations

The application has been advertised by site notices and the neighbouring properties have been consulted. Three letters of representation were received relating to this application. Objections were raised regarding the loss of the trees at the rear of the Inn and the likelihood of the proposal exacerbating the existing parking problems associated with the Inn.

Environmental Health comments:

- No comments to make in relation to the proposal.

Tree Officer comments:

- Situated to the Northeast of the existing site, there is a semi-mature to mature Common Sycamore (*Acer Pseudoplatanus*) tree. This tree appears to be in fine health and contributes to the local landscape. There are also two semi-mature Cherry trees that also appear to be in good health within the same plot of land, and although not particularly good specimen trees, these complement the existing tree stock in the area. The Sycamore tree is a focal point when approaching the Inn from the East and would be a loss of amenity value to the local area, and it is believed that this tree is worthy of a Tree Preservation Order.

Durham County Council, Highways Authority, comments:

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- The proposal would result in maintaining the existing level of car parking with 18 spaces being associated with the visitor accommodation and 18 spaces associated with the Public House. This seems to be a reasonable level of car parking and presumably reflects the owners need to diversify the use of the site.

East Durham Business Service comments:

- No objections in principle to the above application that will provide enhanced accommodation facilities for the District.

Seaton with Slingley Parish Council comments:

- Existing car parking problems: at weekends the car park is full and overflow causes congestion and indiscriminate parking on Seaton Lane. The proposal would exacerbate this problem.
- The proposed development would be contrary to development plan policy St1: "Development which would detract from the open nature or the visual amenity value of the village green or the land adjacent to the A19 on the south side of Seaton Lane will not be approved." The proposed development. Although not on this narrow strip of land, is directly adjacent to it and the mature trees and hedgerows.
- The Parish Council therefore feels that this development would be inappropriate and would result in an adverse effect on the character and appearance of this area and is likely to have an adverse effect on road safety in the area.

## Development Plan Policies

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1 General Principles of Development

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1 General principles of development  
10 Trees and Hedgerows  
35 Impact of Development  
36 Access  
37 Parking  
97 Accommodation for Visitors  
St1 Safeguarding of open areas

The proposal is considered to be in keeping with the relevant development plan policies.

## Comment

Planning permission is sought for the erection of visitor accommodation to the rear of Seaton Lane Inn, situated on Seaton lane, on the eastern side of Seaton village.

The proposed structure is to be sited adjacent to the eastern boundary of the application site to the rear/south of the existing building. The proposal is to be sited on an existing garden area to the rear of the Inn. The proposed building is to provide 18 bedrooms to be associated with the existing business. Access will be from the existing car parking to the

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west, with emergency access to the rear/southern elevation. The proposed building will be a two-storey pitched roof structure. Windows are proposed to the east and west elevation, two access doors are to be sited in the southern elevation. In order for the development to take place a Sycamore tree and two Cherry trees are to be removed.

The application is situated within Seaton Village settlement boundaries, and is unallocated in the Development Plan. The area of land to the east of the application site is allocated as protected open space. To the rear/south of the application site are residential properties, which are sited, adjacent to the boundary of the area of open space.

Three letters of representation have been received in relation to this application with objections raised regarding the parking provision on the site and the loss of the trees to make way for the development. A letter has also been received from Seaton with Slingley Parish Council objecting to the application on the grounds that the proposal will exacerbate the parking problems associated with the Inn, it will affect the open nature and visual amenity value of the open space to the east of the application site, and will have a detrimental effect on the character of the area.

The Parish Council state that the proposal is contrary to policy St1 of the District of Easington Local Plan as it will detract from the open nature and the visual amenity value of the land adjacent to the A19 to the south side of Seaton Lane. This area of land is situated to the east of the application site, and is separated by an existing public footpath, which runs north to south. The proposed building will be sited adjacent to this area of open space, and will be visible from the both the public footpath adjacent to the site, and from Seaton Lane when entering the village from the east, it could therefore be considered to have a detrimental effect on the character of the area. However, it is not considered to be contrary to policy St1, it is set outside the area of open space, and does not project beyond the established line of development adjacent to the area of open space, set by the existing Inn immediately to the north, and residential properties set to the south. The proposed building is considered to be acceptable in terms of design, incorporating a pitched roof. A condition can be attached to any grant of planning permission ensuring that the materials/finishes to be used are in keeping with the existing building and the character of the area.

The proposed development would involve the removal of three trees along the eastern boundary of the application site adjacent to the area of open space. Objections were received from members of the public objecting the loss of the trees. The Tree Officer has objected to the removal of trees, specifically the Sycamore tree, which is considered to be a focal point when approaching the Inn from the East. Policy no. 10 of the District of Easington Local Plan states that the Council will seek to protect trees and hedgerows by requiring that the layout and design of development proposals where possible provides for the retention and integration of trees and hedgerows. In this instance the applicant has confirmed that it is not possible for the proposal to be re-positioned in order that the tree be retained. The loss of the tree is regrettable, however in order for this development to take place it is necessary. A condition requesting a landscaping scheme can be attached to any grant of planning permission; appropriate landscaping around the proposed building would reduce its impact with regard to the character of the area.

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Objections were received from members of the public and Seaton with Slingley Parish Council regarding the existing parking problems associated with the Inn, and the fear that the proposal will exacerbate the existing problems. Durham County Council, Highways Authority have been consulted on this application and have no objections to the scheme. The proposal includes the provision of 36 No. car parking spaces, which is acceptable in highway terms and is a reasonable level for this type of development. Policy 37 of the District of Easington Local Plan states, "The design and layout of new development should seek to minimise the level of parking provision". The proposed parking provision is therefore considered acceptable and in keeping with the proposed uses of the premises.

The proposed application is considered to be in accordance with Policy 97 of the District of Easington Local Plan which deals with the development of visitor accommodation, as it is not considered to have any serious adverse affect on the amenity of people living and working in the vicinity of the site or the existing use of adjacent land or buildings in terms of privacy, visual intrusion, noise, other pollutants and traffic generation. East Durham Business Services has no objections to the proposal and consider that it will provide enhanced visitor accommodation for the district.

The main area of conflict in this case is between the retention of a significant tree and the provision of additional visitor accommodation. Overall, it is considered that the tree can be replaced with new landscaping whilst the extension cannot be provided in an alternative location. On balance, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable.

## Conclusions

The proposal is considered to be in keeping with the relevant development plan policies, it is acceptable in terms of siting and design and it is not considered to have any serious adverse affect on the amenity of people living and working in the vicinity of the site.

**Recommend**                      Conditional Approval (Conditions to Include: Materials, Means of Enclosure, Landscaping Scheme, Parking Provision)

**Decision Time**                      Over 8 weeks – Due to publicity requirements.

**05/847**

**SEAHAM (SEAHAM NORTH) - Proposed New Community Facility & Redeveloped Sports Pitches and Wind Turbine (Resubmission) at Land West of New Drive, Seaham for One North East.**

## Planning History

05/505 – New community facility and sports pitches – withdrawn August 2005.

## Consultations

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The application was advertised in the press and a site notice was displayed and local residents consulted. No responses were received from local residents.

Durham County Council, Planning Policy Team's comments are summarised as:

- The application does not appear to raise any strategic planning policy issues and it should be determined in relation to the policies in the District Local Plan. The proposed wind turbine should be in line with local policies on renewable energy.

Sport England, comments are summarised as:

- The site forms part of a playing field. Sport England have considered this application in light of the playing fields policy. The policy seeks to protect all parts of the playing field from development and not just those which are laid out as pitches.
- Sports England are satisfied that the proposal meets one of the exceptions of the playing field policy in that the proposed development is ancillary to the principle use of the site as a playing field.
- Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to the application subject to a condition being attached about a turf/grass consultant undertaking a detailed assessment of playing field quality.

County Highways Authority comments :

- No objections subject to some minor amendments to the submitted plans – comments awaited on the amendments.

Northumbrian Water, comments are summarised as:

- The developer should make early contact with them regarding the water and sewage supply and connections.

Environment Agency, comments are summarised as:

- No objections but recommends conditions relating to details of surface water drainage, car parking drainage to pass through trapped gullies.

Seaham Town Council, comments are summarised as:

- The main car park may be insufficient to cater for parking needs. The Town Council asks that the car parking be checked to see if the provision needs to be to a specific standard.
- The location of the car parking and access could lead to access in east Shore Village being used for visitor parking. The Council's view is that a small link should be provided to access the development directly from East Shore Village.
- There should be anti vehicles barriers to prevent vehicles misusing the site.
- The access road is along a bridleway/byway. Legitimate users should be able to use it. There will be a requirement to provide a minimum open access route for the bridleway and as such a barrier is unlikely to be allowed.

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- One North East should be asked as part of this application to ensure that the section of new drive which provides the link to the cycle route up to the new bridge be resurfaced.
- The timber clad nature of the building could be at risk from arson attacks, the building should be treated with fire retardants. Shutters should be used to protect the large areas of glazing.
- The Town Council is pleased to note that the building incorporates a number of environmentally friendly measures.

Seaham Environmental Association, comments are summarised as:

Pleased that environmental concerns have been addressed but -

- After consulting the theatre community, SEA has concluded that there is a major flaw in the planning proposal and therefore wishes to make a formal objection.
- At the public consultation it was stated that there would be a direct replacement for the stage. Theatre community and SEA were supportive as long as the stage would be of a size to allow large-scale productions.
- The proposed stage is inadequate, much greater depth is required, and there is no provision for the use of each wing. And good electrical supplies should be available.
- There are four theatre groups in Seaham. Non-provision could jeopardise their ability to continue providing amateur theatre and limit youth and community development.

## **Development Plan Policies**

### *District of Easington Local Plan*

- 2 General principles of development
- 35 Impact of Development
- 36 Access
- 89 Development of new or improved leisure and community buildings
- 90 Protection and provision of outdoor sports facilities.
- S24 Formal recreation facilities.

## **Comments**

This application represents revised proposals to those submitted and subsequently withdrawn in 2005 by One North East. It forms part of the overall regeneration of the Seaham area.

The main component comprises a community centre which includes facilities such as a large hall/ function room with stage facility, bar and games room, kitchen facility, changing rooms for nearby sports pitches and other indoor activities plus a meeting room and crèche facility. In addition, 2 Rugby pitches, 3 Football pitches, 1 Junior Football pitch and a wind turbine (10 metres high) are proposed.

The assessment of this application falls into three principal areas:

1. The principle of the sports/welfare development
2. The amenity impact of the proposal
3. The highways and rights of way access issues.



# Item no.

These three issues will be taken in turn:

## **1. The principle of the sports/welfare development**

The proposed development is on the site of an existing sports/playing pitch that forms a triangle shaped piece of land bounded by New Drive, the railway and the southern area of Seaham Dene.

The application site is allocated in the District of Easington Local Plan as being a Policy S24 site. Policy S24 states that development will only be approved for sport or recreation purposes.

Policy 89 of the Local Plan supports the improvement of existing leisure, sport and community building and facilities provided it does not affect the amenity of the area and makes provision for access and parking (both these issues are discussed later).

In addition Policy 90 of the Local Plan states that development that would result in the loss of an area of outdoor sports will not be approved other than where the development involves the provision of new outdoor sports facilities which are related to existing outdoor sport area.

Planning Policy Guidance 17 (Planning for open space, sport and recreation) under paragraph 18 states:

“Where recreational land and facilities are of poor quality or under-used, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating an absence of need in the area. Local authorities should seek opportunities to improve the value of existing facilities. Usage might be improved by better management or by capital investment to secure improvements...”

Sport England, which is the government’s advisors on sport and sport provision, raises no objection to the proposal and considers that the development of the site meets one of the exceptions of their playing field policy in that the proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field.

Therefore the general principle of the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with both national and local planning policy guidance.

## **2. The amenity impact of the proposed building**

The facility will be some 2000 square metres of floorspace located to the north of the existing cricket pavilion. It will be of modern design and construction, mainly timber clad with a flat roof and a number of solar panels. The building height is approximately 5 metres so will not form an imposing feature in the context of the sports fields.

It is considered that the overall design is acceptable and will not harm the character of the locality. The adjacent landscaped car parking area will further complement and enhance the development when complete.

The wind turbine is of limited height and will not be likely to be visually dominant. Its location is yet to be finalised, this will depend on specific wind conditions on the site.

## **3. Highway implications**

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The Highway Authority have no objections to the overall scheme. New Drive is to be upgraded to adoptable standard with a footpath throughout. Access to the north of the site by pedestrians will be maintained - only authorised vehicular access will be permitted.

It is considered that the improved access will cater for the likely increase in traffic to the site and encourage public use of the new facility.

Revised plans which have now been submitted indicate restricted pedestrian access to East Shore Village and to the overflow car park adjacent to the main area, which is to be walled off.

The section of new drive up to the cycle route is not part of the application site and cannot be resurfaced as part of this application.

Overall it is considered that the development will enhance the locality and provide a much needed facility in this part of Seaham. It is considered that the issue of stage size raised by the Environmental Association is a matter that they should take up directly with the developers who may be able to adjust the internal layout. This is not considered to be a reason for refusal of planning permission.

**Recommend** Conditional approval (final location of the wind turbine, means of upgrading the sports pitches, amended highway details, surface and foul water disposal, final external materials, and landscaping).

**Decision time** 14 weeks – target not achieved due to extent of consultation and intervening holiday period.

## **Reason for recommendation**

The development accords with policies 1, 35, 89, 90 and S24 of the Easington Local Plan.

## **E Background Papers**

The following background papers have been used in the compilation of this report.

Durham County Structure Plan  
District of Easington Local Plan  
Planning Policy Guidance Notes  
Planning Policy Statements  
Regional Spatial Strategy  
DETR Circulars  
Individual application forms, certificates, plans and consultation responses  
Previous Appeal Decisions



**Graeme Reed**  
**Head of Planning and Building Control**