

Item no.

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

Date: **21 February 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 28th 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.

Another local resident has expressed support for the proposals as originally envisaged, that is the Hotel and Club House on one site.

County Highway Authority:

Requires footpath links to be provided along the approach road to the Club House, as depicted on submitted plans together with bus stop improvements in the vicinity. Further improvements to the unclassified road were discussed with the applicants, and it was agreed that the road would need to be widened back to its original extent by “edging back” the grass verges. Resurfacing would also be required. Other details of the proposals are considered acceptable.

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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 (18th) 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.

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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:

- 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

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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.

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.

Another local resident has expressed support for the proposals as originally envisaged, that is the Hotel and Club House on one site.

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County Highway Authority:

Requires footpath links to be provided along the approach road to the Club House, as depicted on submitted plans together with bus stop improvements in the vicinity. Further improvements to the unclassified road were discussed with the applicants, and it was agreed that the road would need to be widened back to its original extent by “edging back” the grass verges. Resurfacing would also be required. Other details of the proposals are considered acceptable.

Landscape Consultant:

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

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.

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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.

05/889

MURTON WEST – Proposed Erection of Dwellinghouse (Outline)(Resubmission) on Land East of Postgate Chase, Church Lane, Murton for Mr A Jones

Planning History

95/633 - House and access (outline): Approved 01/96.

98/651 - Renewal of outline permission for house and access : Approved 12/98

99/807 - House and detached garage and access : Approved 10/99 (These three applications all relate to the existing dwelling known as 'Postgate Chase'.)

05/372 - Proposed House (Outline) : Refused 06/05.

Consultations

Parish Council - concern over vehicular access on busy road.

DCC Highways - require reduction in height of existing boundary wall, the location of the new vehicle access to the site to be as far west as possible in the plot and the provision of an in-curtilage vehicle turning facility.

EDC Landscape Unit - no objections.

EDC Environmental Health Unit - contaminated land risk assessment needed.

Northumbrian Water - details of water supply and sewerage requirements; existing public sewer across site.

Neighbours - 41-name (25 properties) petition of objection referring to the site being too small, detriment to amenity and visual setting of war memorial; dangerous access; diversion of sewer likely to cause unnecessary disruption.

Development Plan Policies

District of Easington Local Plan

- 1 General Principles of development
- 35 Design and layout of development
- 67 Windfall housing sites
- M3 Visual amenity of Murton war memorial

Comments

The application site comprises the eastern part of the piece of land currently occupied by the house known as "Postgate Chase", directly opposite the war memorial in Church Lane, Murton. As such, it falls to be considered as a "brownfield windfall site" on which housing development is acceptable in principle.

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The immediate area around this site in this part of Church Lane is characterised by substantial dwellings in quite large plots of land, typically extending to about 500 square metres. The application plot amounts to some 400 square metres. A previous application for a similar proposal on this site was refused in June 2005 basically because the plot was only some 250 square metres but the applicant has decided to increase the plot size by demolishing the conservatory on the side of 'Postgate Chase' to enable the western boundary of the plot to be closer to the existing house.

The plot is now considered to be large enough to accommodate a dwelling of a similar size to many of those on nearby plots while providing a reasonable amount of amenity space. The spacing and privacy guidelines contained in the Local Plan are achievable except the provision of 10.5 metres from the rear elevation of the house to the boundary as shown on the submitted plan where only some 4 metres can be achieved. This dimension, however, is essentially the same as at the existing 'Postgate Chase' and a larger space at the side of the proposed house would provide an adequate garden/amenity area commensurate with the size of the proposed house and in keeping with much of the surrounding area. The conservatory which would be removed from the eastern elevation of the existing "Poolgate Chase" opens into the privacy guidelines if the conservatory were to be replaced by a window to the existing lounge. It should, therefore, be made a condition of any permission that no new lounge window should be fitted in either the resulting area of new walling or anywhere else in the east elevation of the house. This would not be problematical to the applicant because the lounge already has windows in both the front and rear elevations of the house. On this basis, it is considered that the proposed erection of a house on this site would be in accordance with the policies contained in the District of Easington Local Plan.

During the consideration of the application, it has come to light that there is a sewer running across the front of the site which places constraints on the development of the site. The applicant has confirmed that he is prepared to have the sewer diverted and has made a marginal amendment to the proposed siting of the house in order to facilitate the implementation of his proposal.

The Highways Authority has made a number of comments relating to the provision of a satisfactory access from the site to Church Lane. These are set out in the "consultations" section of this report and the applicant has agreed to comply with conditions reflecting those requirements.

Murton Parish Council have expressed "concerns.... over the vehicular access to this proposed house..." but the Highway Authority advice indicates that the proposed access can be acceptably designed and positioned.

A petition of objection to the proposal has been received from local residents. This petition contains 41 names and relates to 25 properties, 13 of which are reasonably close to the application site. The petitioners' points of objection (summarised) are:

- i) that the increase in the size of the site in comparison to that in the previously refused application still does not provide an adequately sized house plot in this location;

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- ii) that the reasons for refusal of the previous application still apply to this proposal;
- iii) that the increase in traffic on Church Lane and the dangerous position of the proposed vehicular access to/from the site are likely to make the proposed access fail to “meet highway regulations”.
- iv) that there does not appear to be a sufficient increase in the size of the application site compared with that in the previously refused application to accommodate a vehicle turning facility within the site; and
- v) that the ‘re-directing of major drains.... will involve major work and will cause unnecessary disruption to other local occupiers.”

The matter of the increase in the size of the plot from 250 square metres to 400 square metres has been covered earlier in this report as has the consultation reply from the Highway Authority. While the diversion of the sewer across the site will, of course, involve some inconvenience to local residents, it is not considered to be a problem of such proportions as to merit the refusal of an otherwise acceptable planning application. Taking all relevant matters into account, including the objections received, the proposal is considered to be acceptable.

Recommend Conditional approval (Standard outline conditions; details of access; internal reversing facility; contaminated land assessment; no windows to replace conservatory at “Postgate Chase”)

Reason for Recommendation

The development accords with current planning policy guidance including Local Plan policies 1, 35, 67 and M3 and is not considered to be unacceptable in terms of the amenities of people living in the vicinity of the site.

Decision time 14 weeks (target not achieved - delayed due to installation of new computer system, and need to reconsult after amendment)

2005/0915

EASINGTON VILLAGE AND SOUTH HETTON (SOUTH HETTON) – Proposed Extension at Rear to provide a bedroom and shower room at 19 Keswick Terrace, South Hetton for Mr J College

Planning History

No previous applications are recorded against the property.

Consultations

The Parish Council have been consulted without response.

Three neighbours have been consulted. No written objections have been submitted, but verbal comments have been received.

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Development Plan Policies

District of Easington Local Plan

- 1 general principles of development
- 35 design and layout of development
- 73 extensions and/or alterations to dwellinghouses

Comments

The proposal is to provide facilities at ground floor for a disabled person and because of the space requirements inside the bedroom element, the extension is to project 4.095 metres from the rear elevation of the house and as such is considered to exceed the Council's guidelines by about 1.4 metres in length. The subject property is one of a pair of semi-detached properties occupying a large corner site and has a detached pre-fabricated garage adjacent to the house.

Discussions have taken place with the applicants' agent to secure an amendment but nothing has been achieved; the agent and his County Council Occupational Therapist advisor are adamant that the size of structure shown is necessary to meet the spatial requirements for this patient's needs. No alternative siting is considered to be acceptable to the County Council, as additional cost would be incurred to relocate the garage so as to reposition the extension to the side.

In support of the proposal, the applicant's Occupational Therapist advises that he is an amputee needing use of a wheelchair. He requires a ground floor bedroom, toilet/shower facilities and a ramped access. In future, he is likely to require a larger-than-normal hospital bed, and assistance from carers and/or a hoist, necessitating adequate space. Care and Repair, who would be providing the facilities, endorse these comments, indicating that the adaptation will serve the longterm needs of the applicant, allowing him to live independently and safely.

The neighbour from whom representations have been received, albeit verbal, has recently received planning permission for a rear conservatory on the other side of the boundary fence. This proposal was submitted initially not complying with policy and an amendment was sought, the permission for which has now been implemented. The neighbour is concerned that there is no scope for an alteration to the size or positioning of this proposal, given that his extension was reduced in size to comply with guidelines.

Because of the position and height of the extension on the joint boundary it is considered that it would adversely impact to some extent on the amenities enjoyed by the adjoining dwelling, particularly with the recent development of the conservatory. As such the proposal would not comply with the Council's guidelines and policy relating to the size of extension permitted. However, this needs to be considered against the applicant's requirements and personal circumstances in terms of whether this can justify an exception to policy. The possibility of amendments to the size or position of the proposal has been investigated, without success. An extension of 2.7 metres would accord with guidelines and would still have some adverse impact. Furthermore, no formal, written objection has been received.

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On balance, taking all relevant matters into account, it is considered that the applicant's personal circumstances and the identified need for the proposal are sufficient to override the amenity concern in this instance and justify an exception to policy. Accordingly the proposal is considered to be acceptable. Given the particular circumstances in this case, it is considered that approval would not set a precedent for other extensions to exceed the Council's guidelines.

Recommend Unconditional approval.

Decision time 11 weeks (delay due to negotiations with Agent and backlog from introduction of new computer system).

2005/0944

PETERLEE (PASSFIELD) – Proposed Residential Development and Ancillary Retail and Leisure at East Durham & Houghall Community College, Burnhope Way, Peterlee for East Durham And Houghall Community College

Planning History

A number of applications were approved between 1993 and 1997 for extensions to the college.

An application to use the car park for car boot sales was refused in 1997 on traffic generation grounds.

Consultations

Countryside Officer – No objections in principle but concerned that the majority of the trees around the edge of the site should be retained as they offer an attractive mature edge to the site and will contribute to the overall character of the development.

Bats may be present in the existing buildings and appropriate protecting conditions are requested and a survey required before permission is given.

County Highways – Existing access onto Essington Way will need upgrading to cater for the increased variety of traffic. A cycle route should be created along the perimeter of the site to connect to the existing cycle network in Peterlee.

Northumbrian Water – No objections.

Peterlee Town Council – No comments received.

Easington Planning Policy – Site is Brownfield and appears to conform to the relevant windfall residential and retail policies of the Local Plan. High density development will be in line with PPS 3 draft.

Regeneration Unit – Supports the comprehensive redevelopment of the site with the library relocated or incorporated within the site. Will form an important part of the Peterlee Master Plan.

Environment Agency – No objections subject to a flood risk assessment and appropriate conditions.

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Relevant Planning Policies

National Policy

- Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (February 2005)
- Planning Policy Guidance 3: Housing (March 2001)
- Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (March 2005)
- Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (March 2001)
- Planning Policy Guidance 17: Open Space, Sport & Recreation (July 2002)

Regional Policy

- Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (2002)
- Regional Spatial Strategy: Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East, Submission Draft (2005)
- Durham County Structure Plan (Adopted March 1999)

District of Easington Local Plan

- 1 General principles of development
- 35 Amenity
- 36 Access/parking
- 67 Windfall residential brownfield sites.
- 101 Peterlee retail/leisure development.
- 104 Edge of town retail development.

Comment

This outline application relates to the comprehensive redevelopment of the existing East Durham and Houghall Community College with a mixture of residential, retail and leisure development. The site is located at the junction of Essington Way and Burnhope Way, adjacent to the town centre.

The applicants have submitted a comprehensive supporting statement with the application which is available for inspection in the planning offices, there follows however a summary of the proposals for Members' information.

Redevelopment of the Burnhope Way Campus is necessary to ensure the comprehensive redevelopment of the Howlatch site to provide a modern day further education facility to meet the needs of the community, including a high quality vocational facility. The proposed new facilities at Howlatch are, however, dependent upon the revenue funding from the sale of the Burnhope Way campus which will become surplus to requirements once the new college building has been developed. The redevelopment at Howlatch will clearly bring significant education benefits and have a positive impact on the Peterlee and wider area of East Durham.

The existing Burnhope Way campus can be classed as brownfield land for the purposes of considering the application and there is no presumption against its redevelopment at a local level. The Council obviously recognises the role that East Durham and Houghall College plays in the

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delivery of education within the District and the redevelopment of the site will clearly facilitate this role.

Furthermore there is an acknowledgement at a strategic and local level that the town of Peterlee is in need of significant regeneration so that it can support the District of Easington and the East Durham area. Proposals to regenerate the town centre of Peterlee have been ongoing for at least five years since the existing local plan was adopted, in response to the decline of the settlement, and this remains a key aim of the forthcoming Local Development Framework.

The redevelopment of the Burnhope Way Campus for residential development with ancillary retail and leisure uses will make a significant contribution to the regeneration objectives of the Council for Peterlee as set out in the adopted local plan forthcoming Local Development Framework. The development will provide a sustainable mixed use community in accordance with the principles of PPS1 and PPG3: Housing that will provide good quality residential accommodation including to meet the existing shortfall including 'executive' type homes.

The inclusion of ancillary retail and leisure uses, as part of the development will enhance the role of the existing town centre, particularly through the inclusion of retail floorspace to meet anticipated future need. The development will also contribute to the wider enhancement of the appearance of the built environment, being progressed by the Council and English Partnerships through a masterplan for Peterlee, and the night time economy of the town.

The mix of land uses proposed will also ensure that the development is utilised by both residents and visitors, ensuring it becomes an integral part of the town centre, with key linkages through the site from the town centre and adjoining residential areas.

Although it is perhaps unfortunate that the masterplan is not already in place the Regeneration Framework undertaken by Grimley on behalf of the Council and other stakeholders gives a clear indication of the priorities for Peterlee in terms of regeneration and these have been reflected in discussions with officers from the Council to date. Accordingly, the development proposal is expected to make a successful contribution to the regeneration of Peterlee in accordance with national, strategic and local planning policy and guidance whilst at the same time providing for an increased standard of education provision in the District that will in turn contribute to the wider economy.

Policy Context

As has been noted above, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the Easington Local Plan. There is however other policy guidance which needs to be taken into account.

PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

This document provides national guidance on sustainable development and sets out the following important principles:

- Making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life;
- Contributing to sustainable economic development;

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- Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities;
- Ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and
- Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

This document also places emphasis on the provision of good design within new development in the interests of delivering sustainable development, and states that good design should:

- Address the connections between people and places by considering the needs of people to access jobs and key services;
- Be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environments;
- Be an integral part of the processes for ensuring successful, safe and inclusive villages, towns and cities;
- Create an environment where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities available to members of society; and,
- Consider the direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment.

PPG3: Housing

The Government believes that it is important to help create mixed and inclusive communities, which offer a choice of housing and lifestyle.

The guidance goes on to state that local planning authorities should avoid housing development that makes inefficient use of land, and provide for more intensive housing development in and around existing centres and close to public transport nodes and concentrating most additional housing development within urban areas.

The guidance also refers to the importance of promoting mixed-use development in highly accessible locations. It outlines the importance of good design in planning and provision of higher density development.

PPS6: Planning for Town Centres

Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS) has now replaced PPG6. The policies in the statement cover town centres and main town centre uses in accordance with the Government's key objective to promote vital and viable town centres. The main town centre uses to which the document applies include retail uses, leisure and entertainment facilities, offices and arts, culture and tourism.

The key messages for the review are as follows:

- A re-emphasis of the 'town centres first' objective;
- The need for a plan led approach at both regional and local levels;
- The need for local planning authorities to plan for growth and growing town centres;
- The need to tackle social exclusion by ensuring access for all to a wide range of everyday goods and services; and
- The need to promote more sustainable patterns of development with less reliance on the car.

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PPG13: Transport

This seeks to promote sustainable development patterns in order to reduce the need to travel through influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses to reduce journey lengths and make it easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling.

Regional Planning Guidance for the North East accords with the broad aims of the above as does the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East draft submission – the emphasis being on attracting and retaining population within the region and focussing residential and other development on brownfield land.

Similarly the Durham County Structure Plan objectives with regard to the regeneration of East Durham support the strengthening of the role of Peterlee by encouraging residential, retail and employment development.

In summary then, it is considered that the proposed development conforms with existing and emerging planning policy both at the National/Regional and local level. It is a sustainable location for Peterlee town centre, it is a near town centre brownfield site, its location will encourage a mix of house types to be developed, but this will rely on ancillary leisure and retail development to be created within an eventual scheme.

Design and layout issues.

This outline application includes no detailed matters for consideration at this stage, although it is anticipated that the existing access onto Essington Way will be used.

Plans submitted with the application however indicate broad locations and linkages with existing development, and the applicants comment as follows on the principles of the proposals.

The indicative layout demonstrates the key principles in the development of the design option. These include:

- *Strong pedestrian links to and from the town centre;*
- *Permeability through the site from The Dene and adjoining residential areas for pedestrians and cycles;*
- *Priority given to sustainable means of transport;*
- *Inclusion of green space and links to enhance wildlife and nature conservation value within this part of Peterlee;*
- *Scale and layout of residential blocks designed to respect the scale and layout of adjoining land uses;*
- *Strong frontages onto Essington Way and Burnhope Way;*
- *Considered design layout to ensure high levels of privacy and amenity for residents;*
- *Medium density development respecting edge of centre location;*
- *Provision of a range of dwelling types;*
- *Car parking to meet the requirements of the development.*

Due to the relationship of the site to main routes into Peterlee and the town centre the indicative layout incorporates strong frontages onto Burnhope Way and Essington Way to signpost the development and the town centre. The inclusion of ancillary uses at ground floor level on the Burnhope Way frontage facilitates this design approach as it enables the

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provision of a higher density scheme within the southern section of the site with flats above. This approach also enables the provision of a mix of tenures at the site to meet the needs of existing and future residents whilst in turn providing a sensitive response to issues of noise and amenity generated by Burnhope Way.

A smaller scale of development is proposed to the rear of the site incorporating a mixture of town houses and semi detached dwelling houses. These could be sensitively designed and located by use of the internal road layout and gardens to ensure a high standard of amenity and privacy for all residents. It is, however, intended that car parking will not dominate the development with car parking sensitively designed to service the residential properties. In terms of the car parking associated with the ancillary uses it is anticipated that this can be minimised given the sites highly accessible location and the wider regeneration of the town centre that is expected to include a comprehensive parking strategy.

Use of open space and green links through the site will contribute to the design and generate a sense of place that will integrate it with the wider network of open space that surrounds the site. The provision of open space has also been considered with regards to the Councils requirements set out in Policy 66, this space will be in addition to any private garden space provided in connection with the lower density residential development at the site.

Officers concur with the above opinions and consider that in terms of townscape, the existing buildings are not of the highest architectural quality and that the current proposals offer an opportunity to improve the visual character of the locality whilst also providing a strong impetus to the continuing regeneration of the town.

Conclusions

This application represents the comprehensive redevelopment of a prominent site on the edge of the town centre of Peterlee. It is in line with the aims of the Peterlee Regeneration Framework Masterplan one of which is to promote the opening up of the town centre with greater accessibility to the college site being encouraged.

It is considered that the development is in line with existing and emerging planning policies and guidance and will eventually positively enhance the appearance of this part of Peterlee. An outline permission will enable a flexible approach to be taken in considering detailed proposals and help ensure the future of Peterlee as one of the two most important settlements in Easington District.

Recommendation Conditional approval – (conditions relating to full details to be submitted, on site tree protection, Environmental Agency requirements, bat protection).

Reason for recommendation

The development accords with current planning policy guidance including Local Plan Policies 67,101 and 104 and does not give rise to an unacceptable impact on the character or future development of Peterlee.

Decision Time 10 weeks – Target achieved.

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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