

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held remotely using Microsoft Teams on **Thursday 17 September 2020 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor J Clare (Chair)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Atkinson (Vice-Chair), D Bell, J Blakey, L Brown, I Jewell, J Maitland, S Quinn, G Richardson, J Shuttleworth, F Tinsley and P Jopling (substitute for S Zair)

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors E Huntington and S Zair.

#### **2 Substitutes**

Councillor P Jopling was present as substitute for Councillor S Zair.

#### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record to be signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendment;

Removal of the following sentence at page 9 of the document;

*'Having listened to the views of Councillor Atkinson, he agreed that the proposal would bring a lot of benefits to the area, but this was not the right area.'*

#### **5 DM/20/00826/FPA - Lartington Lane, Lartington, Barnard Castle**

The Committee considered a report of the Planning Officer regarding an application for the erection of timber cabin to host pony training events and to

provide holiday accommodation and erection of a timber field shelter at Lartington Lane, Lartington, Barnard Castle (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included a site location plan, aerial photographs and photographs of the site.

This application had been presented to the Committee on 23rd July 2020 with a recommendation for refusal due to the landscape impact and potential impact on the adjacent ancient woodland. In considering the merits of the development members resolved to defer the application until the impact of the development on the adjacent ancient woodland had been established.

Following this resolution, the applicant undertook an impact assessment on the ancient woodland, whilst further engaging with officers to address landscape concerns following members discussions during the committee.

Amended plans had since been submitted revising the position of the buildings, reducing the height of the larger building, improving the landscaping of the development and clarifying associated details within the site.

Councillor Tinsley referred to the summary of the report which made reference to associated economic benefits and asked if they had been quantified in any way or whether they were based on assumptions. The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that there were some general assumptions with regards to associated economic impact rather than any specific assessment.

Councillor R Bell, Local Member had submitted a letter in support of the application which was read out to the Committee. He confirmed that he had spoken at the Committee in July and in support from from a landscaping perspective, and on the issue of ancient woodland. He noted that the applicants had produced further improvements, addressed the woodland issue, and moved the position of the buildings to create a courtyard effect which would hide the parked cars and hardstanding area, further mitigating landscape impact. Councillor Bell reiterated his support for the application and looked forward to its approval.

The Applicant, Ms A Eccles thanked the committee for considering the revised application and appreciated the time and effort officers had put into it. She confirmed that the main concerns outlined at the previous meeting had been the impact on the woodland and the visual impact on the landscape and had since been concluded as a low impact development.

The layout had been revised which had addressed the overall impact and an existing field shelter would be demolished in addition to the removal of the

dutch barn. The building would address low carbon, using eco-friendly materials, mainly timber, which was ecological and sustainable. The new access track would include wildflower grass verges and provide additional screening by way of a new native hedgerow which provided an additional habitat for wildlife, including a number of bird nesting boxes. There would be a sophisticated effluence disposal system in place which would be maintained annually and external lighting would be kept to minimum and at a reduced illumination level, to avoid disturbing wildlife.

Despite the UK leaving the European Union and the Common Agricultural Policy, the Government wanted to continue to conserve native livestock and this project aimed to protect the Dales Pony, which was a recognised UK native breed. The project also provided a rural tourism facility offering accommodation and she referred to Visit County Durham which confirmed figures showed a demand for rural holiday accommodation and visitor attractions.

Finally, Ms Eccles hoped a satisfactory conclusion could be reached to ensure that they could proceed with their application for a rural grant, the deadline of which had been slightly extended, but time was running short.

Councillor Shuttleworth confirmed that during these uncertain times any application that would support the economy should be supported and he moved the application for approval.

Councillor Brown confirmed that as the member who moved a recommendation for deferral at the last meeting, she was now delighted to see the concerns had been mitigated and she seconded the recommendation to approve.

Councillor Tinsley said it was positive that the applicant had made attempts to rectify the issues discussed in July which had been deferred on the basis of the impact on the ancient woodlands, however his concern at the time was on the visual impact.

He reminded the Committee that this was an area of high landscape value and designated as such because it was of benefit to the area and had a real amenity value. Although the Applicant had reduced the height of the timber cabin by 76cm, it was in his view, questionable as to whether it was material or not.

Councillor Tinsley asked for clarity with regards to condition 4 with regards to the occupancy of the proposed dwelling and queried the limitation of the occupancy for people who had a different address. He asked whether this would prevent the dwelling becoming a second home or holiday home and

questioned whether a restriction could be used similar to that of caravan parks, restricting certain times of the year, to overcome that problem.

Councillor Tinsley confirmed that despite an attempt to reduce the impact on the woodland and visual impact, he was still concerned that the positive economic benefits had not been quantified.

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that condition 4 was a standard condition as the planning authority were moving away from seasonal conditions due to economic benefits that could be delivered throughout the year. This would not be possible if parks were restricted to be closed during winter months. The condition was deemed to be reasonable for the development and would restrict someone living there whilst also limiting it to holiday use.

Councillor Blakey confirmed that the way tourism was going, this area needed investment and therefore she supported the development.

Councillor Atkinson confirmed that he was in favour of the application previously and was still of the same opinion. He did not have a problem with the visual impact and he referred to a similar business in another area of the County which had taken off and in terms of quantifying the economic impact it couldn't be foreseen, but similar ventures had done well and he supported the application.

In response to a question from Councillor Clare, the Principal Planning Officer confirmed that the Landscape Officer was satisfied that the conditions attached met their requirements with regards to the visual impact and materials to be used.

Councillor Clare confirmed that the Committee had to find the right balance between preservation and development and he felt it was correct to defer the application previously but he now agreed with the recommendation and supported the application.

## **Resolved**

That the application be APPROVED subject to the conditions outlined in the report.