

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 22 April 2022 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor G Richardson (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Savory (Vice-Chair), E Adam, J Atkinson, V Andrews, J Cairns, L Brown, M McKeon, D Oliver, S Quinn, I Roberts and K Robson

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stead, Sterling and Zair.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor K Robson as substitute Member for Councillor S Zair.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Applications to be determined

a DM/21/04141/VOC - Spennymoor Cricket Club, St Pauls Gardens, Spennymoor

The Committee considered a report of the Planning Officer which provided details of an application for a variation of condition 2 pursuant to planning permission DM/20/00416/FPA (Construction of a new cricket pavilion, facilities (using shipping containers) and decking) to allow for an increase in size, changes to design and materials at Spennymoor Cricket Club, St Paul's Gardens, Spennymoor (for copy see file of minutes).

J Byers, South West Team Leader provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph and photographs of the site including the site entrance through the allotment site.

Councillor L Maddison addressed the Committee. She informed the Committee that while she was a Member of Spennymoor Town Council, she was addressing the Committee in her capacity as local Member on the County Council.

Councillor Maddison informed the Committee she had received a number of constituent concerns about the application. While Councillor Maddison did not object to the replacement of the Cricket Club pavilion with the Club having a long tradition on this site there were concerns about accessibility and safety given this would now be a community facility as well as a Cricket Club.

The Cricket Club was not replacing like with like of their original building. The Club first had planning approval for siting of four containers for use by the Club on 25 September 2019. During the Covid lockdown this was increased to six containers in July 2020 and with the attest application issued late December 2021 redesigned the pavilion to be constructed in blockwork with the outer face dressed with a mix of timber and shipping container style cladding with a roof construction. It was not clear whether containers would be used as part of the construction and Councillor Maddison sought clarity on this.

The facility proposed was now intended as a much larger concern than the original small application to be also used by community organisations and businesses. This had the possibility to attract a greater number of visitors including disabled who would require safe and secure access to the facility up to 9 p.m. including during dark winter months.

There had not been a site visit for this application. A site visit would have demonstrated that access to the Cricket Club was through a locked gate. Local residents sought clarity on how this locked gate access would be managed day and night to deter any potential anti-social behaviour on the site. The gate was between two elderly persons bungalows on a tight access into the St Paul's Allotment Site and onward access to the cricket field was along a narrow potholed path with on foot and car access with one way access in and out to the cricket field. There were no lights further into the Allotment Site and cricket field which made the area dark at night. It was noted that safety and accessibility of the site would be managed by Spennymoor Town Council.

A number of residents had indicated that the narrow roads of St Paul's Gardens, comprising in entirety of elderly persons bungalows, were used by allotment holders and sought assurances that visitors to the new Cricket Club facilities would not park on the narrow roads and across driveways where some residents required access at all times for visiting health and care workers. This was already a recognised problem in the area and fencing had been placed to deter parking in close proximity to the allotment site. There was a small parking area for two to three cars for allotment tenants off the allotment site but allotment tenants still used the outer perimeter for parking.

The intended extension of facilities with two added showers, three toilets and a kitchen area may require a greater number of attendances to empty the septic tank and to make deliveries and residents had asked how this would be managed through the narrow entrance to the site.

Confirmation of any Sports England funding had not been submitted to any Town Council meetings despite requests for clarification.

Katherine Hierons, Spennymoor Town Council addressed the Committee in support of the application.

Spennymoor Cricket Club had a presence in Spennymoor for over 125 years, and the St Paul's site had been its home since 1964. The Club's aim was to provide an inclusive environment for everyone to enjoy the sport of cricket at a local level.

Following a fire that destroyed the building the Town Council made a commitment to replace the facility with a more fit for purpose building, that was in line with the needs of the cricket club and the wider community, whilst also capturing the values and needs of funders such as Sport England, as well as updated building regulations

Without the new build the future of the 125 year old Cricket Club would be at risk. Generations of families had played for and supported the club. Without proper facilities, its many local players would need to travel and move to other clubs. Just prior to the fire the club was running two teams, as well as setting up two youth teams for boys and girls. Without appropriate facilities the recruitment of additional new youth players had been very difficult and Covid had not helped. There was a real risk of expulsion from the Darlington and District Cricket League unless planning for the re-build was granted.

The funding for the facility had come from a number of areas, including the cricket club itself, who were pleased to have been able to raise over £12,000 towards the project via fund raising and community donations. This clearly demonstrated the community's passion and belief that the cricket club facility was both a cricket club and important community facility for all.

Whilst the building and grounds were owned by the Town Council, they would be managed on a daily basis by the cricket club management team with a formal agreement in place as with other Town Council buildings such as Tudhoe Cricket Club and community centres. They would be in charge of keys and access.

After two years of Covid, this application provided a fantastic new facility which would suit and meet the needs of a community amateur cricket club and provide an incredible platform and facility to enable current and future young males and females interested in playing cricket or taking part in physical activity to achieve their level, whatever that may be going forward. It would also assist with mental health and wellbeing of those that attended and watched and reduce social isolation.

The facility had received interest from a number of community groups wanting to use it as a community hub and it would be available outside of matchdays for wider community benefit. It was anticipated that the operating times would be limited to 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and the building would not have music playing or be open to the public outside of these times.

The Town Council, as the owner and landlord of the building, took its responsibilities very seriously and undertook to carry out weekly monitoring inspections of the premises and its activities to ensure compliance and that the Cricket Club themselves were being good neighbours.

The Durham County Council Planning Portal for the past 6 months showed that Seaham, Brandon, Peterlee and Durham County Cricket Clubs had all submitted planning applications to extend or increase their existing facilities, demonstrating these were required and were benefiting individuals and communities.

In relation to parking there would be 18 additional car parking spaces and grass reinforcement mesh would be used to support the parking.

The access road had been the responsibility of the Town Council for some 50 years with no issues and the road would continue to be the Town Council's responsibility, as well as other access roads it was responsible for and would be maintained by its Grounds Staff.

While the septic tank may need to be emptied more frequently it had not caused a problem to-date.

The Cricket Club would manage the site, with an agreement in place from the Town Council, as the Council had with Tudhoe Cricket Club and its community centres.

There were no questions from Members of the Committee.

The South West Team Leader informed the Committee he understood the construction of the pavilion was blockwork with cosmetic cladding of steel containers. This was confirmed as correct by the Town Council.

While there was concern about additional use of the pavilion as a community facility the South West Team Leader informed the Committee that in planning terms the Cricket Club could have used the pavilion for community groups previously without consent.

Councillor Brown referred to the concerns which had been expressed about the access road and asked about the current condition of the road and whether there were any plans to improve it.

K Hierons replied that, once construction was completed, the Town Council had plans to undertake remedial works to the road. Due to Covid the road had not been used much for the last couple of years.

Councillor Atkinson informed the Committee he was in favour of the application which was a community asset and a focal point for the community. Councillor Atkinson **moved** approval of the application.

Councillor Adam endorsed Councillor Atkinson's sentiments. Councillor Adam referred to parts 29 and 39 of the County Durham Plan regarding sustainable design and landscape and was comfortable that the design and layout of the building would be suitable for the area. However, Councillor Adam referred to NPPF and the need to consider climate change. Councillor Adam asked whether any consideration had been given to this in the application. The South West Team Leader replied that the application met requirements for insulation, building regulations requirements and Sports England requirements. K Hierons added that the roof of the pavilion would have a covering which was intended to reduce greenhouse gases and insulate the property. The Town Council had signed up to Investors in the Environment and over the next year would be aiming to achieve a bronze award. Solar panels had been considered for the roof of the pavilion but because of the height of the building there was a danger they could be subjected to criminal damage or damage from cricket balls.

Councillor Quinn informed the Committee she was very familiar with the area having previously worked there as a warden and was not aware of the access road nor had heard of any problems with the cricket club. Cricket was a seasonal game and she could therefore see no problem with lighting in the area nor with security with access being via a locked gate.

Councillors Roberts, Savory and Oliver informed the Committee they were fully supportive of the application.

Moved by Councillor Atkinson, **Seconded** by Councillor Brown and

Resolved:

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

b DM/20/01960/VOC - Land At Hawthorn Drive/Hill Meadows, Low Willington

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of planning permission 3/2013/0257 for the substitution of house types for 37 plots to northern part of site (amended) on land at Hawthorn Drive/Hill Meadows, Low Willington (for copy see file of Minutes).

G Spurgeon, Senior Planning Officer provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph and photographs of the site.

There were no registered speakers on the application.

Councillor Brown informed the Committee that the concerns she had about the application were dealt with by the proposed conditions on the permission but expressed disappointment that the applicant was not in attendance. Councillor Brown asked whether the applicant had made any progress in securing the alternative access mentioned at paragraph 95 of the report.

The Chair informed Councillor Brown that although not registered to speak the applicant was in attendance and asked the applicant if they were willing to address the issue of the alternative access. The applicant informed the Committee that the landowner had been approached and a response was awaited to determine whether a temporary access could be created.

M McKeon asked whether the number of bungalows on the site was being reduced or whether the number was being maintained from the previous permission. The Senior Planning Officer replied that the previous permission proposed no bungalows on the site and this now proposed four bungalows.

Moved by Councillor Atkinson, **Seconded** by Councillor Cairns and

Resolved:

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