

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **County Planning Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 4 April 2023 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor G Richardson (Chair)**

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

Councillors D Boyes, J Higgins, C Hunt, P Jopling, C Marshall, C Martin, M McKeon, B Moist, P Molloy, I Roberts, K Shaw, A Simpson, S Wilson and S Zair

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Bell.

#### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

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

Councillor Higgins declared a non-prejudicial interest in item no. 5a) as local Member of the neighbouring ward Wingate which had been mentioned in the report.

#### **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **5a) DM/21/01313/OUT - Land At Rodridge Cottage Farm Station Town**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for Residential development of 88 dwellings (outline, inc. access) at Rodridge Cottage Farm Station Town (for copy see file of minutes).

G Blakey, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, indicative site layout, aerial photographs, photographs of the site and a summary of objections received.

B Beal spoke on behalf of the Applicant who welcomed the recommendation and he referred to the original outline permission granted in 2019 which was still valid at the time of resubmission. Other than the updated reports and drawings which had been required by Officers, the application was identical.

Progression of the scheme had been disrupted by various working restrictions and market uncertainty as result of COVID-19 pandemic. The site was recognised within the County Durham Plan as housing commitment and the Applicant had worked with Officers on all of the key considerations.

The land and buildings that would make up the Rodridge Cottage Farm development would create a managed transition to the open countryside with a low-density housing development. Material planning considerations had been resolved and attached conditions had been accepted by the Applicant. In the two years since the resubmission, the Applicant had worked with Officers to create an indicative layout with schemes that could add significant value to the final reserved matters scheme.

Mr Beal trusted that members would support the renewal and reiterated that the main planning considerations remained unchanged since the earlier application granted approval. Approval would enable the Applicants to work quickly to secure inward investment and progress to reserved matters to deliver the scheme.

Councillor Jopling queried whether housing would include renewable energy. Mr Beal advised that as this was an outline application, this level of detail had not been explored, however he was confident that the Applicant would be aware of the benefits and include them where possible.

The Principal Planning Officer reminded Members that planning policy only allowed for 10% renewables which would be superseded by building control regulations in June 2023. Future Homes Standards were also due in 2025 which would only increase this even more. These changes would ensure that at reserved matters, schemes would be uprated further than the County Durham Plan requirement. Councillor Jopling suggested Applicants should not wait until implementation of such foreseeable regulations given the current climate.

Councillor Boyes was familiar with the area and as a Councillor in East Durham he confirmed that this was an area that was in desperate need of regeneration. This particular area had lost various businesses premises in

the community over the years. He fully supported the application and moved it for approval.

Councillor Higgins confirmed that it had been over forty years since there had been any development in Station Town and all that was left was a Chapel, a fish shop and a printers, with a Solicitors, Tattoo Shop and Hair Salon nearby.

He referred to the concerns expressed by the Parish Council with regards to the flooding at the new development opposite Mill Bank, which he had often witnessed. He also had concerns that the development would impact GP surgeries and whether they had been consulted to see if they could accommodate patients from this development. Councillor Higgins advised that Wingate had recently increased by 166 houses and there were another 250 under construction. He had been advised by the surgery that they would struggle to accommodate patients who had advised that they had not been consulted.

In addition, the local primary school was oversubscribed and in the process of having additional classrooms built, with the nursery school also being oversubscribed. The education team had no concerns due to school places in the immediate area, which meant children may need to be transported to schools outside the area.

The Principal Planning Officer responded with regards to flooding, that the scheme itself would need to meet all surface water needs, which had been demonstrated in the indicative layout. In terms of the highway flooding, this would be reviewed under reserved matters to ensure the scheme would not exacerbate existing issues.

With regards to consultation with the NHS, the Principal Planning Officer confirmed that the Integrated Care Board had been consulted with regards to the application but had not responded. He also confirmed that as part of the original application in 2019, the Applicant had been required to contribute an additional classroom, however this had since been brought forward and the School Places Manager had confirmed that additional children from this development could be accommodated.

Councillor Martin described the development as a good, low-density scheme which he hoped would not be altered or increased as it moved through to reserved matters. He seconded the recommendation for approval.

Councillor McKeon suggested that as this application had already been approved, it would be difficult to refuse and she was therefore happy to support it and move to a vote.

Councillor Jopling agreed that the area needed investment and with an estate of this size she suggested that business owners may be more inclined to invest in the area. She was confident that the SUDs would mitigate any surface water flooding.

## **Resolved**

That the application be APPROVED subject to the conditions outlined in the report and the completion of a Section 106 Legal Agreement to secure the following:

- Provision of a minimum of 10% affordable housing units on site;
- The requirement to enter into a S.39 Agreement to secure the long term management and maintenance, including a monitoring strategy of the biodiversity land, and;
- £130,292.80 towards the provision or improvements to open space and recreation within Blackhalls Electoral Division.

### **5b) DM/22/01663/OUT - Land to the west and south of Jade Business Park, with all matters reserved - Land To Hawthorn Grid Site, Murton**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for Outline planning application for the erection of a new 400 kilovolt electricity substation, a converter station, and the laying out of replacement public open space on land to the west and south of Jade Business Park, with all matters reserved at Hawthorn Grid Site, Murton (for copy see file of minutes).

C Shields, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photographs, photographs of the site, and a summary of objections received.

The Chair advised that there were no registered speakers for the item.

In response to a question from Councillor McKeon regarding the installation of cabling being considered separately, the Senior Planning Officer advised that the cabling did not require planning permission as it was permitted development.

Councillor Boyes echoed his position at the previous meeting, the need in East Durham and the need for national energy security and moved the recommendation for approval which was seconded by Councillor Hunt.

## **Resolved**

That the application for the for the erection of a new 400 kilovolt electricity substation, a converter station, and the laying out of replacement public open space on land to the west and south of Jade Business Park, with all matters reserved be **APPROVED** subject to the conditions outlined in the report and completion of an obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring future completion of an agreement under Section 39 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to secure biodiversity management for the life of the development.