

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE (NORTH)

At a Meeting of the **Area Planning Committee (North)** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 18 May 2023 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor W Stelling (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors G Binney, J Blakey, L Brown, J Griffiths, D Haney, C Marshall, E Peeke, J Purvis, K Shaw, W Stelling (Vice-Chair), S Wilson and D Sutton-Lloyd

Also Present:

Councillor B Coult

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Jopling, M McGaun and A Watson.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd substituted for Councillor P Jopling.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting held on 27 April 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Applications to be determined by the Area Planning Committee (North Durham)

a DM/23/00589/FPA - Langley Cottage, Low Moor Road, Langley Park, Durham, DH7 6TJ

The Committee considered a report of the Planning Officer regarding a First-floor extension above part of bungalow, single storey extensions to south

west and north east elevations and raise height of ridge (resubmission) (for copy see file of minutes).

J Pallas, Planning Officer provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location, aerial photographs, photographs of the site and existing and proposed plans. The application was recommended for refusal.

Councillor B Coult, local member for the Esh and Witton Gilbert division addressed the Committee in support of the application. Mr and Mrs Taylor bought the bungalow with a view to making it their home, one where Mr Taylor who had Motor Neurone Disease could enjoy the garden and surrounding views. Members who attended the site visit had a good opportunity to view the property within the grounds and also note the large scale properties nearby.

Councillor Coult stated that officers had expressed concern around the proposed extensions not being considered sympathetic to the characters of the host building but advised that the extension would be built in brick to match the existing walls and that natural slate would be added to the roof, and the UPVC windows replaced with traditional timber frames to blend in with the semi rural area. Councillor Coult disagreed that the proposal would make the property look overly suburban. She advised that concerns had also been raised regarding the scale and mass of the alterations, however she pointed out that within the vicinity there was a large scale two storey house with garage, and an additional property undergoing significant development.

Councillor Coult went on to quote Policy 39 of the County Durham Plan (CDP) and stated that the property was approximately 45 years old and the proposed works would not cause unacceptable harm. When exiting Langley Park, Langley Cottage could not be seen until the start of the boundary wall. Mr and Mrs Taylor intended to plant trees to the north east of their garden to create a natural boundary which would minimise any visual impact on people travelling along the A691 and advised that the proposed extension to the south west of the property was already screened by hedgerow.

Finally, Councillor Coult confirmed that no objections had been received from local residents and stressed that the proposal would not have a negative impact on the landscape and would be built sympathetic to the semi rural surroundings. Councillor Coult confirmed that herself and Councillor Simpson fully supported the application and encouraged members to approve it.

Mr T Greenwell, Agent addressed the Committee. He advised that Langley Cottage was of poor architectural merit and the proposals would improve the aesthetics of the property and would better suit the needs of the owners. He confirmed that traditional natural materials would be used and advised that

the first floor bedroom, serviced by a lift, would allow for views out and free up space on the ground floor. In his opinion, the proposals were modest in scale and met all requirements at Policies 29 and 39 of the CDP. Mr Greenwell considered the application low key and believed the proposals would significantly improve the existing property.

Mrs H Taylor, Applicant addressed the Committee. She explained that her husband had motor neurone disease and they had purchased Langley Cottage and submitted the planning application to plan for their future. Mrs Taylor advised that the cottage had small boxed sized rooms, one garage, low ceilings and stated that some of the spaces within the property were unusable and it was therefore not the sizeable property as had been stated by the planning officer. Mrs Taylor explained that the southern end of the property was private, and the proposal was to include a first floor bedroom which would be accessed by a private lift and would allow her husband to enjoy the views out and stressed that this would have no impact from the outside. Mrs Taylor stated that planning officers had not visited the site prior to a decision being made and that misleading photographs of the property had been taken using Google Earth.

L Dalby, Principal Planning Officer responded to Mrs Taylor's comments regarding photographs from Google Earth and clarified that the photographs were the planning officer's own photographs and had been taken whilst on site.

Councillor Wilson appreciated that the proposals would significantly change the footprint and whilst he accepted the property was in an area of high landscape value, he pointed out that there was a service station garage in proximity. Councillor Wilson **moved** the application for approval.

Councillor Shaw **seconded** that the application be approved.

Councillor Brown asked why the application submitted in 2022 had been withdrawn. The Planning Officer explained that officers had raised concern regarding the proposal and this had led to the withdrawal. The Planning Officer advised that the only change to the new application submitted was the choice of materials explaining that brickwork had now been proposed rather than render.

Councillor Marshall stated the agent and applicant had eloquently outlined their case and whilst he accepted the views of the planning officer, he felt that the original build would have had a greater impact on the landscape than what was proposed in the application. He believed that the current proposals would meet the future needs of the family and did not consider the 0.5m increase in height to have a detrimental impact on the landscape.

The Principal Planning Officer clarified that the ridge height of the existing property would be increased by 0.5m and in addition to this there would also be an additional storey to the property which would be 2.4m in height.

Councillor Haney noted that the proposals were larger than what currently existed however felt they would be aesthetically pleasing. In response to a question from Councillor Haney regarding an additional storey, the Principal Planning Officer stated that the dwelling was in an area of high landscape value and any increase to the scale of the dwelling would affect the openness of the countryside.

Councillor Haney further asked what weight planning officers could give to an applicant and their disability. The Principal Planning Officer advised that officers must consider the dwelling and clarified that it was not a personal consent. He informed Members that officers had discussed alternative options with the applicant including extending the ground floor level of the existing property.

Councillor Haney believed that the proposal did not constitute unacceptable harm and confirmed that he supported its approval.

Councillor Brown stated that the application conflicted with several planning policies, and although each application needed to be considered on its own merit, she expressed concern that if approved, it could be used as a benchmark for future applications. Councillor Brown was sympathetic to the applicant but on balance confirmed that she supported the officer's decision to refuse the application.

L Ackermann, Legal Officer (Planning and Highways) asked Members if they agreed for any subsequent conditions to be delegated to officers in consultation with the Chair, should they be minded to approve the application. Members agreed.

The Chair confirmed Councillor Wilson had moved the application for approval and this had been seconded by Councillor Shaw.

Resolved

That the application be **APPROVED** with conditions delegated to officers in consultation with the Chair.