

# **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 22 June 2023** at **9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Quinn (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors A Savory (Vice-Chair), V Andrews, J Atkinson, D Brown, J Cairns, L Fenwick (substitute for E Adam), N Jones, L Maddison, M McKeon, S Quinn, I Roberts, M Stead and D Sutton-Lloyd (substitute for G Richardson)

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Adam, G Richardson and S Zair.

**2 Substitute Members**

Councillor L Fenwick substituted for Councillor E Adam and Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd substituted for Councillor G Richardson.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held 20 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 5 Applications to be determined

### a **DM/22/03737/FPA - Land To The South Of Highfield, Breckon Hill, Butterknowle, DL13 5QA**

The Senior Planning Officer, George Spurgeon gave a detailed presentation on the report relating to the abovementioned planning application, a copy of which had been circulated (for copy see file of minutes). Members noted that the written report was supplemented by a visual presentation which included photographs of the site. The Senior Planning Officer advised that Members of the Committee had visited the site and were familiar with the location and setting. The application was for the erection of 5 dwellings and was recommended for approval, subject to the conditions and legal agreement as set out in the report.

*Councillors S Quinn and M Stead entered the meeting at 9.34am*

The Principal Planning Officer noted that initially the proposals had been for 6 dwellings, reduced to 5 upon obtaining advice from Planning Officers. He noted that the Parish Council had objected in terms of highway safety, however, the Council's Highways Section had considered a traffic survey and noting low speeds and traffic volume, they had no objections to the proposals. Members noted no objections from the Coal Authority subject to surveys being carried out, and the Council's Ecologist had no objections, subject to a contribution to provide offsite biodiversity as it had been deemed not possible to meet biodiversity net gain on site.

*Councillor N Jones entered the meeting at 9.38am*

The Chair thanked the Senior Planning Officer and asked Ray Slater, neighbouring resident, to speak in relation to the application.

R Slater thanked the Chair and Committee and noted he represented the residents of Highfield, Brecon Hill, those immediately affected by the proposed development. He noted that the majority of the concerns of residents had been addressed within the Committee report, however, a few issues remained.

R Slater noted that it was known that there was a high risk in terms of underground mining, both recorded and unrecorded, and provided that the requisite surveys are carried out and any remedial works undertaken then residents would be satisfied.

R Slater explained that the other main concerns remained as for the original application, in terms of the 30mph signs in their current position at the end of West View. He noted that the proposed development would extend the boundary of the village further along Pinfold Lane. He noted that such signage was not under the remit of the Planning Committee, however, if more signs could be provided further west it was felt that would be of great benefit, noting that while only responsible drivers adhered to speed limits it was felt the more that could be done to make an area safer was beneficial. R Slater noted that comments from Highways that there had been no personal injuries or collisions in the area were not felt to be helpful. He asked if there needed to be an accident before something is done to help prevent an accident, adding there should be foresight in terms of preventing accidents. He noted that requests for parking restrictions on Pinfold Lane had been rejected, with it being stated that it was not needed as good drivers would not park in such a manner. R Slater noted again this was not a matter for the Planning Committee, however, emphasised that it was of great concern to residents.

R Slater noted the one metre high fence proposed and residents requests for this to be stone to prevent pedestrians using such as a shortcut. He concluded by noting one metre high would not dissuade many from using as a shortcut and asked if Members would consider the issue of a stone wall.

The Chair thanked R Slater and asked Chris Pipe, Planning Consultant on behalf of the applicant, to speak in support of the application.

C Pipe thanked the Chair and Committee and noted that the Officer's report was thorough and positive in respect of the recommendation for approval. She explained that the proposals were for five detached properties, half the amount of a previously approval for 10 properties. She added that the current proposals were well suited to the location which was sustainable in terms of services offered nearby. She noted the design of the properties was such to be in keeping with the adjacent housing and complied in terms of scale, layout and style including windows, stone walls and slate roofs. C Pipe noted that the designs were sensitive and minimum separation distances were exceeded to help mitigate any potential harm. She noted the generous space provided would help to give an appropriate level of amenity for new residents.

C Pipe acknowledged the issue of highway safety that had been raised and noted that it had been demonstrated that speeds in the area were low and that the visibility from the proposed splay was satisfactory from the perspective of the Highways Section. She added that, in addition to the parking provision, garages and electric vehicle charging, there had been no objections from the Highways Section.

C Pipe noted that in connection with the high coalfield risk, this was dealt with by condition and reiterated that the Highways Section had no objections to the application. She noted the suggestion as regards a stonewall and added that as some parts were being removed to create the access, those being removed could be utilised to plug the gap and make the proposals more attractive. She concluded by requesting that the Committee support the Officer's recommendation for approval.

The Chair thanked C Pipe and asked the Legal Officer (Planning and Highways), Laura Ackermann to comment prior to the Committee debating the application.

The Legal Officer (Planning and Highways) asked if Councillors N Jones, S Quinn and M Stead who had joined the meeting after the Officer had started his presentation, were sufficiently sighted on the application to be able to take part in the decision. All three Members confirmed they were and had all heard the comments from the registered speakers.

The Chair thanked the Legal Officer (Planning and Highways) and asked the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor J Atkinson noted he was quite happy with the application and presentation from the Officer and therefore he would be minded to approve the application.

Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd noted he had attended the site visit and added that he had worries in terms of sight lines on Pinfold Lane, with bus traffic and a tight right-hand bend. He added he felt that sight lines would be impinged and asked for any information relating to the parking situation of an evening. The Senior Planning Officer noted that residents had provided photographs as regards parking issues, and Officer had acknowledged that there would be some displaced parking, however, the issues with on-street parking were existing issues and the displaced parking as a result of the application had not been felt to impact upon highway safety itself. Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd noted the 30mph speed limit did not start until right upon the new development. The Senior Planning Officer noted that the recently carried out traffic survey had shown fairly low speeds of the vehicles and noted that moving the speed signs as part of the application was therefore not justified.

Councillor M Stead noted that, as referred to by Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd, it was felt on the site visit that there was a need for the 30mph signs to be where the village sign was placed, at the junction with Loop Lane. He asked for Officers comments on the issue. The Senior Planning Officer noted that ultimately any movement of the 30mph sign was via a separate process and it had not been felt that it was necessary to move the sign to make the application acceptable.

Councillor S Quinn noted that the application was for five dwellings and noted that the issues raised in terms of parking and the 30mph sign fell outside of the scope of the application. She seconded the motion by Councillor J Atkinson for approval.

Councillor D Brown noted that the main issue was the bend and asked if it was possible for access to be taken at the north of the site, as it was noted there was a previous access. The Senior Planning Officer noted that the proposed access was an existing access that served detached bungalows, with the access from Loop Lane being a private access and the applicant had chosen not to use. He reiterated that Officers were satisfied with the proposed access from the south of the site, adding that it may not be possible to bring the north access up to an adoptable standard. The Chair allowed C Pipe to provide some additional context. C Pipe noted that the northern access could not be widened sufficiently to be brought up to an adoptable standard and passed too close to an existing bungalow.

Councillor D Brown asked, if the Committee were minded to approve the application, whether it could be stipulated that works were undertaken over the five weekdays, to minimise impact to residential amenity. The Senior Planning Officer noted that it was not usual to condition as such, adding that Monday through Saturday was felt to be a balance between completing the works in a timely manner and impact upon amenity. He noted Officers felt the conditions as set out within the report was appropriate, however, noted that was a matter that the Committee could decide upon. Councillor J Atkinson noted his proposal was as per the Officer's report.

Councillor M Stead noted the comments from Officers as regards the highways issues adding that residents' comments on the issues raised in terms of parking, traffic and the speed sign should be noted.

Upon a vote being taken, it was:

## **RESOLVED**

That the application be **APPROVED** as per the conditions and Section 106 Legal Agreement set out within the report.

### **b DM/22/01017/FPA - Land to the Southeast of Canney Hill, Coundon Gate, DL14 8QN**

The Senior Planning Officer, Gemma Heron gave a detailed presentation on the report relating to the abovementioned planning application, a copy of which had been circulated (for copy see file of minutes).

Members noted that the written report was supplemented by a visual presentation which included photographs of the site. The Senior Planning Officer advised that Members of the Committee had visited the site and were familiar with the location and setting. The application was for 14no. Affordable rent dwellings comprising 10no. wheelchair user bungalows and 4no. houses with associated landscaping and access and was recommended for approval, subject to the conditions and legal agreement as set out in the report.

The Chair thanked the Senior Planning Officer and asked Lauren Tinkler, representing the applicant, Canney Communities Community Interest Company (CIC), to speak in support of the application.

L Tinkler thanked the Chair and Committee and noted that the CIC had been set up in August 2019 led by likeminded people who wanted to enable disabled people and their carers to have properties designed to meet their needs. She thanked the Council and Officers for their help and assistance, including the Head of Housing. She noted that the CIC had been successful in obtaining two grants, one from Homes England in terms of consulting on development plans. She noted a local consultation event that had enable views to be brought forward from older people, people with disabilities, young people, families with disabled children and disability groups, with all saying there was a need for this type of housing provision. L Tinkler noted that professionals were instructed in terms of the plans as surveys required and explained that the proposals were the only community led project in the county developing accessible housing. She noted there was already interest in 50 percent of the properties and noted that should approval be granted, the CIC would work in partnership with a local housing association. She concluded by reiterating that the properties would be 100 percent affordable properties in perpetuity and asking that Members approve the application.

The Chair thanked L Tinkler and asked the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor A Savory noted that there would always be a need for bungalows, and those proposed to help meet the needs of disabled people was very much welcomed. She moved approval as per the Officer's report. Councillor J Atkinson seconded approval. Councillors M McKeon and V Andrews both noted their support for the application.

Councillor M Stead asked as regards the access to the site, if it could be shown on the projector screen. The Senior Planning Officer brought up the requisite slide on screen and noted access was via an existing turning head within the cul-de-sac.

Upon a vote being taken, it was:

**RESOLVED**

That the application be **APPROVED** as per the conditions and Section 106 Legal Agreement set out within the report.

**6 Meeting Times**

Several Members noted the start time of the meeting being 9.30am and noted whether a start time of 10.00am would be preferable to allow Members to get to the meeting on time. The Chair noted the comments and that they would be fed back accordingly, though he understood the times had been set when the cycle of meetings for 2023/24 had been agreed.