

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber, Crook on **Thursday 15 September 2011 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor M Dixon (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Tomlinson (Vice-Chairman), D Burn, M Campbell, K Davidson, P Gittins, A Hopgood, E Paylor, G Richardson, J Shuttleworth, R Todd and J Wilkinson

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Boyes, P Taylor, M Williams and R Yorke

Also Present:

J Byers – Licensing Team Leader (South and West)
A Inch – Principal Planning Officer
A Caines – Principal Planning Officer
D Taylor – Property, Planning and Projects Manager
D Stewart – Principal Development Control Engineer

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2011

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2011 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to Councillor M Campbell's apology for absence being noted.

With the agreement of the Committee, the order of business on the Agenda was amended to allow items with registered speakers, as listed at 3(d) to (f) on the Agenda to be considered first.

3 Applications to be determined

**3a 6/2011/0189/DM - Land West of Marden House, Darlington Road, Barnard Castle
Outline Permission for Erection of Detached Dwellinghouse**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

A Inch, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site. It was noted that a site visit had taken place that day.

M Peat, the applicant, stated that he was born in Barnard Castle and had lived on Darlington Road for the majority of his life, returning to the area after university to work as a vet in Teesdale. He wanted to continue living in Barnard Castle and proposed to build a house on this site that would respect the architecture and rural character of the area. He wanted to live on this site in particular, as in the coming years he would take a greater role in the running of Marden Farm. He replied to some of the points raised in the Planning Officer's report, as follows:-

The proposal would not fit in with the rural surrounding

The site was between two existing dwellings, with a road to the north, and a further dwelling and farm buildings to the south.

The scale of the building would overshadow the adjacent bungalow

The report stated that there was enough scope within the size and proportions of the site to arrive at a design that would not compromise the amenity or privacy of the occupiers of Roseberry.

He respected any comments made by the occupiers of Roseberry and if permission was granted would consult with them further.

Good quality agricultural land would be lost

The area was mainly used as a holding area after sheep had been through the pens at the farm buildings. The remainder of the field would still fulfil this purpose.

The proposal was outside the development limits of Barnard Castle

If a fence had been erected in line with the proposed development, in all probability the site would have been included as it adjoined 3 existing properties to the east.

There were many houses for sale in the town

He considered that there was a lack of this type of development in Barnard Castle.

Loss of privacy and amenity to the adjoining property

The comments stated in relation to Roseberry were even more true for the other adjoining property.

Increase in traffic

He already passed the site in order to travel to work on a daily basis so there would be no increase in traffic.

Low mains water pressure

Darlington Road had good water pressure. A Northumbrian Water officer had informed him that there was a 4 inch plastic main supply from the Stainton Booster Station that went along Darlington Road terminating at the footpath entrance to Churchill Road. If any house had low pressure it could only be that there was a problem between the mains and the house.

The letters of support were from relatives of the applicants

Letters asking for a response were sent to these people by Planning Officers as they owned land or property adjacent to the site.

Eight residents of Darlington Road who lived very close to the site had signed a form stating that they had no objection to a dwelling being built to the west of Marden house.

Historical records suggested that Marden was the original farm house

Marden was not built as a farm house and had not been owned by a farmer for 24 years.

Marden House terminated the built environment of Barnard Castle

This was incorrect as there were a further 2 houses, a caravan site and a stone built farm building to the east of Marden along Darlington Road. One of these houses was the most recent to be built on Darlington Road.

He added that it should be noted that a gap of over 10 metres would still remain allowing views of the countryside beyond.

To conclude M Peat stated that he believed that a sensitively positioned, well built house in this residential area would add to the unique character of Darlington Road.

A Inch responded that the site was located outside the settlement limits of Barnard Castle, and so its development would not be in accordance with the adopted Teesdale District Local Plan. There was clearly a gap between the site and the more densely developed parts of Barnard Castle. It terminated the built environment and was the start of the countryside, despite there being a few buildings beyond the site.

In response to questions A Inch advised that policies in relation to new housing in Barnard Castle only favoured those sites that had previously been developed. This was an outline application and if approved details of access, layout etc would form part of reserved matters. He confirmed that the Highways Section would be consulted as part of this.

A Member commented that because of the other properties and caravan site in the location, he considered that as long as the development did not affect the amenity value of Roseberry, the application should be approved. A further Member considered that in his opinion, as there were properties either side of the proposed dwelling, it did not constitute development in the open countryside.

The local Member stated that whilst it was a greenfield site he considered that it represented infill development and the application should be approved, subject to the development being carried out sensitively.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the application for outline planning permission be approved on the grounds that, although recognised as a Greenfield site outside of the development limits of Barnard Castle, the proposed development, while departing from Policy H6 of the Teesdale District Local Plan, would infill a

gap between Roseberry and Marden House and would not therefore encroach harmfully into the open countryside. The scheme was considered acceptable in terms of highway safety, landscape impact and residential amenity.

**3b 6/2011/0208/DM - 67 Winston Road, Staindrop
Erection of Sun Room to Front**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

A Caines, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site. It was noted that a site visit had taken place that day.

J Copeland, applicant addressed the Committee and commenced by explaining that since the images displayed had been produced, neighbouring properties had been extended, one of which had doubled in size. Therefore he considered that his application for a sun room would not have any impact on the street scene.

At the time he had submitted the planning application, he had referred to the proposed development as a sun room but unfortunately his medical health was deteriorating and therefore the room would be of vital importance to him as a bedroom.

He was prepared to reduce projection from the existing elevation to 2.5m, would provide an escape in case of fire and install less glazing if required. However the suggestion that he be asked to consider a side extension was not feasible. A footpath would be required and this would reduce the size of the internal space, which would make it impossible for him to manoeuvre his wheelchair around.

A Member stated that whilst she sympathised with the applicant's personal circumstances, the extensions referred to were in character with the remaining properties in the street.

A further Member reiterated concerns in relation to the health of the applicant but added that if approved this development would set a precedent for other applications and would bring about a decline in the appearance of the village. He had witnessed this in his own ward and referred to Grange Villa which had been cited as an example of a village where the appearance of terraced houses had been spoilt by indiscriminate development.

With regard to the site visit, a Member commented that having viewed the property on site, the proportions of the extension were vast and he felt that it would be detrimental to the area. He suggested that other options should be discussed which would best suit the applicant's needs.

The local Member considered that the application should be approved as submitted to assist the needs of the applicant who had lived there for 50 years. In his opinion the proposals were not detrimental to the area.

RESOLVED that the application be refused for the reasons outlined in the Officer's report.

At this point Councillor Richardson left the meeting.

**3c The Batts, Wear Chare, Bishop Auckland
Three Proposed Detached Dwellings and Detached Garages**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

A Caines, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site.

Mrs Aspinall, an objector to the application addressed the Committee. She stated that a previous planning application for 12 dwellings on the site had been refused by Wear Valley District Council, which had also been refused on appeal. She understood that when the site was sold it had been subject to a covenant restricting the use of the land to a garden/allotment area.

With regard to a previous application to fell 33 trees which had been approved, she understood that this was to accommodate works to the sewer. There were also problems with the pumping station after heavy rain and the addition of three properties would exacerbate this.

The proposal for 3 large, 3 storey 5 bedroom houses was over development and was totally out of keeping with the area which was mainly made up of 2 bedroom terraced houses. As this was a conservation area the application should not be permitted.

With regard to the road, the approach from the town centre was narrow and 2 vehicles could not pass at the same time in some places. There was a very dangerous corner at 1 Wear Chare and the road was very busy in peak periods. The gap created by the proposed development site helped visibility.

To conclude she stated that she understood that if approval was granted the removal of the covenant would need to be considered but she believed that it should be honoured.

J Lavender, the applicant's agent addressed the Committee, stating that Planning Officers had undertaken a detailed examination of the application which had been submitted after extensive discussions and following the withdrawal of an earlier application.

The report demonstrated that consideration had been given to all relevant issues and Planning Officers were satisfied that the proposal would deliver high quality housing, preserve the character of a conservation area and that it represented a sustainable development.

The covenant on the land was not a material planning consideration.

An application had been refused 15 years ago but this was because of the number of units proposed. The design of the houses in the current proposal had been discussed in detail with Officers and their comments taken on board.

With regard to the reference to the sewer and the pumping station, he advised that Northumbrian Water had been consulted on the application and had offered no objections.

With regard to the comments about traffic, he acknowledged that the road was narrow in places but that this encouraged traffic to travel more slowly.

The applicant's statement referred to the development being 200m from the town centre. Bishop Auckland needed housing in and around the centre to support the sustainability of the town centre.

Therefore he concluded that the proposed development should be welcomed, particularly in view of its proximity to the town centre.

D Stewart, Highways Officer confirmed that the road was narrow but that the increased traffic generated by the development would be minimal. The road was a through road and Highways had no objections to the proposal.

A Member referred to the number of cars per property and asked if Highways views would have been any different if the application had been for a greater number of smaller houses as opposed to 3 large properties with double garages.

D Stewart responded that in terms of traffic generation the size and number of properties would make little difference. There would have been concerns if terraced houses had been proposed with no parking provision.

A Member spoke on behalf of the local Member and stated that the application should be refused because of the possible impact on the badger set and bats. The site had always been a place where people had picnics and walked, it was close to Auckland Park and she felt that it should be maintained as an amenity for recreation, being one of the few recreation areas in Bishop Auckland.

The Chair clarified that the report stated that the houses were situated well away from the badger set to ensure that there was no disturbance caused by the development.

A Member commented that he was concerned that this application was recommended for approval yet was in a conservation area. This was in contradiction to the earlier application considered in respect of Marden House.

A further Member concurred with this but felt that this application should be refused, as open space in a town centre was rare.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**

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

**3d 7/2011/0214/DM - Former Southerne Social Club, Hawkshead Place, Newton Aycliffe
Demolition of Former Social Club and the Construction of 60 Bed Nursing Home**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

A Inch, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site.

Members discussed the application and the Chair who was also a local Member stated that if the application was refused the site would be disposed of. This was a former social club and he noted that one response to the consultation had stated a preference for a well managed pub. He advised that a public house nearby had recently closed which demonstrated that there was no demand in the area for this type of establishment.

A further Member stated that a Gainford Carehome had opened in her area and she had been impressed by the quality of the facilities provided.

A local Member added that she had spoken to the residents affected who were all pleased with the proposals as Southerne Social Club was currently a blight in the neighbourhood.

In response to a question concerning parking facilities Members were assured that 19 spaces was sufficient to cater for staff and visitors. As a care home, car ownership of residents would be low.

RESOLVED:

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

**3e 7/2011/0245 - Aycliffe Young People's Centre, York Road, Copeland, Newton Aycliffe
Proposed Centre for Autism Comprising New Build School and New Build Residential Units Plus Conversion of Existing Building to Form Administration and Residential Short Break Accommodation**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

A Inch, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site.

In discussing the application the Chair stated that as with the previous application, if refused the site would be disposed of. He also made reference to the safety of pedestrians walking to the Centre who had to cross the A167.

D Stewart responded that there was a pedestrian refuge close to the junction access which meant that pedestrians crossed in 2 stages. There was also a controlled crossing facility at the nearby Central Avenue junction to the north. He considered that crossing provision was adequate and pedestrians were able to cross safely.

In response to a further question concerning the traffic lights at the top of Central Avenue, D Stewart stated that traffic was busy at peak periods but the development's traffic generation was modest in relative terms.

Members acknowledged the comments of the Highways Officer but asked for their concerns to be taken on board.

RESOLVED:

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

**3f 7/2011/0046/DM - Stiller Group, Ridgeway, Aycliffe Business Park
Erection of New Industrial Building to Replace Fire Damaged Unit**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

RESOLVED;

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