

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Spennymoor on **Thursday 15 December 2016 at 2.00 pm**

### **Present:**

**Councillor H Nicholson (Chairman)**

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

Councillors M Dixon (Vice-Chairman), D Bell, J Clare, K Davidson, E Huntington, I Jewell, S Morrison, A Patterson, G Richardson, L Taylor, C Wilson and S Zair

#### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received by Councillors B Armstrong, D Boyes and C Kay.

#### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor I Jewell substituted for Councillor D Boyes.

#### **3 Declarations of Interest (if any)**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **5 Applications to be determined**

The Chairman amended the order of business so that item 5. b) on the Agenda could be considered and determined first.

##### **a DM/16/03101/OUT - Land Opposite High View Country House, Low Road, Kirk Merrington**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an outline application for the erection of up to 46 dwellings with associated infrastructure.

The Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included plans and photographs of the site.

The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that in addition to the 77 letter of objection referred to in the report, a 69 signature petition had also been submitted and

omitted from the report. In addition, objections were received from the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Governors of Kirk Merrington Primary School. There had been 26 letters of support for the proposal.

Mr Jennings, local resident, objected to the proposal. The site was an agricultural field and the development would increase and urbanise the village. The report had thoroughly referenced the NPPF and he referred to the Frameworks core principles; to protect the Green Belt land, preserve heritage aspects and support thriving rural communities. Mr Jennings referred to mitigation to reduce the impact of the development and predicted that newly planted trees would take years to mature and take effect. The land should remain to provide a distinction between Kirk Merrington and Middlestone Village and Mr Jennings fully supported the recommendations outlined in the report. He urged Members to refuse the item for a third time.

Mr Blackett, local resident, objected to the proposal. Middlestone Village was a settlement of 27 houses surrounded by open landscape. He referenced the County Durham Landscape Strategy 2008, of which the key objectives with regards to development were to enhance and restore the landscape. The land was greenfield and situated at the entrance to Middlestone, however it was on the outside of the settlement boundary. This was an infill development which would double the number of houses in the village and result in a radical change which was not in keeping with the area. There was a narrow lane which connected the village to Kirk Merrington which was used by pedestrians, cyclists and horses – additional traffic could be more dangerous and result in an increased number of accidents.

Mr Little, local resident, confirmed that there was more than adequate housing in the area and referred to Beckwith Close which had not yet been completed by the developer. He considered that there were problems with the resale of properties in Beckwith Close and that some purchasers had been unable to sell properties and relocate. He referred to the majority of the letters in support of the application which were not from local people and considered the recommendation in the report as the correct one.

Mr Willis was the applicants agent and addressed the Committee in support of the application. There had been a number of significant changes since previous applications which addressed the concerns of the Council and fundamentally changed the development. Restrictions would be placed on building heights and there was the addition of a parameter plan in which heavy trees would be provided in the first planting season, providing maximum visual benefit and reducing the impact of the existing abrupt edge of the village on the landscape. He referred to the inclusion of 6 bungalows and omission of the retail food store, confirming that there had also been a reduction in the number of dwellings, although still meeting the affordable housing contribution. He referred to a delay with regards to the White Paper which when published would include significant commitment to new housing in order to maintain the housing supply required by the government.

In addition, the development would deliver the correct mix of housing in a sustainable location. The area was connected to the village by two good footpaths

and the location was serviced by regular bus services between Spennymoor and Ferryhill, as well as walking and cycling routes.

Finally, Mr Willis reiterated that there had been significant alterations to the previous scheme and the development was a significant contribution to the five-year housing supply relied on by the Government. There would be a significant benefit to the landscaping and the development would fit into the current layout of the village.

With regards to reference to the White Paper, the Chairman confirmed that this was not for consideration by the Committee and that the NPPF and Sedgefield Local Plan were the policies for consideration with regards to this application.

With regards to the statement made by the Agent, the Senior Planning Officer referred to the report and confirmed that the County Durham Plan was under review and had to be discounted. She concluded that any benefits of the development were outweighed by disadvantages and the development was considered unsuitable.

Councillor Dixon referred to the conflicting information given by the Agent and confirmed that he accepted the information in the report and felt that the location was unsustainable and would have an adverse visual impact on the area. In addition, this application had not fundamentally changed since the previous application was declined, however based on the information submitted alone, he proposed the recommendation for the refusal of the application.

Councillor Davidson saw no significant planning grounds to approve the application and agreed that the development would have an adverse visual impact. He seconded the recommendation to refuse the application.

Councillor Patterson referred to the lack of school places within the village and the similarities to the previous application.

Councillor Clare confirmed that reference had been made to the previous application and although there were similarities, each application was considered on its own merits and he considered that no weight should be given to the previous application with regards to the decision making process.

**Resolved:**

That the application be refused as per the recommendation outlined in the report.

In response to a general query from Councillor Davidson regarding the resubmission of planning applications, the Planning and Development Solicitor confirmed that there were powers available to the Planning Authority for them to decline to determine a repeat application in certain circumstances. However these powers would only be used in rare circumstances, such as the applicant having made no attempt to address previous issues raised.

**b      DM/16/02668/FPA - Brown Jug, Evenwood Gate**

Consideration was given to the report of the report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding the erection of 13 dwellings at Brown Jug, Evenwood Gate.

The Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included plans and photographs of the site.

Councillor Richardson was pleased to see an application to develop the site and moved the recommendation to approve as outlined in the report.

Councillor Wilson was also pleased that the application would redevelop the area as since the demolition of the Brown Jug Inn, the area had become an eyesore.

Councillor Dixon welcomed the development and seconded the recommendation to approve.

Councillor Clare commented that the off street parking requirement of two cars per dwelling was not sufficient and he was disappointed that the Planning Authority were not asking for more.

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved as per the recommendation outlined in the report.