

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 25 April 2019 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Bainbridge, D Bell, M Clarke, C Martin, O Milburn, J Robinson, A Simpson, T Tucker, S Wilson (Vice-Chairman) and S Zair

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Boyd, A Hopgood, I Jewell and A Shield.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor M Clarke substituting for Councillor I Jewell and Councillor A Simpson substituting for Councillor A Hopgood.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 March 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

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

a DM/18/03865/FPA - Hedley House, 282 Park Road, South Moor, DH9 7ED

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the Change of Use of 12 self-contained flats (Use Class C3), within two three storey buildings, into a hostel (Use Class C2) incorporating 11 self-contained flats, and 1 office/crash pad facility for 16 to 21-year olds (for copy see file of Minutes).

S France, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included a location plan, aerial photograph and site photographs. Members of the Committee had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting. In addition, a visit to a facility operated by the applicant in Birtley was also visited, to further allow Members to view the service in operation.

The Senior Planning Officer noted that despite several concerns being raised regarding crime and fear of crime, it was noted that whilst this was a material planning consideration, it must be supported by evidence to allow any weight to be placed upon it. He further reported that the service had proposed a robust management plan and this was critical to the success of the service going forward. Mitigating measures including 24 hour staffing, CCTV and a secure door system were all included within the conditions of the plan.

He also reported that a late complaint had been received from a neighbour with a disabled child who raised concerns regarding the proximity to her property however, it was considered that the relationship between the two properties was appropriate for this type of use.

Councillor M Davinson, local member addressed the committee and advised that despite his support for the charity and the work it did in changing lives, he did sympathise with some of the objectors and their concerns raised. He noted many of the nearby residents were elderly and saw the potential problems that the residential development could bring as a big problem in their lives. He further noted that South Moor did heavily rely upon police and council resources due to ongoing issues and he had concerns that the development could further exacerbate these issues and put further strain on these services. He did however, appreciate that many of the concerns related to fear of crime and there was no evidence presented to substantiate these claims. In conclusion, he asked whether details could be provided as to how local residents could become involved in the steering group, should the application be approved.

The Chair noted that the objectors registered to speak were not in attendance.

Mr Dominic Waugh, Applicants Agent addressed the committee to speak in support of the application. Mr Waugh advised that Changing Lives was a national registered charity who sought to help vulnerable families who needed low to medium support, especially those leaving the Looked After system and those requiring additional support in achieving a sustainable transition into adulthood.

He noted that the service excluded those requiring high level support such as those with a history of violence, previous arson or sex offences, in active addiction of drugs or alcohol or had had previous evictions for anti-social behaviour, such as dealing substances, threats to harm or violence.

He further went on to detail the various ways in which Changing Lives provided support by encouraging healthy lifestyles and positive relationships by offering support through; health, training, emotional wellbeing, identity, finances and independent living.

It was noted that the applicant had demonstrated a clear commitment to community engagement and noted that concerns raised had been mitigated against by way of installation of CCTV, 24-hour staffing and continued public involvement through a steering group.

The Chair then welcomed Donna Calverley, Changing Lives to the meeting who went on to provide a summary of the format and focus of the Steering Group, noting that aside from public representation, local Councillors were also invited to attend and provide input.

Councillor Martin noted that many of the concerns related to potential crime and fear of crime, however there had been no evidence submitted to substantiate this. He further noted that there had been no unfavourable comments received from the police. He did however note that the facilities success hinged upon the management plan and whilst he acknowledged a similar facility within his area and some of the problems which had been faced there he added that he was minded to approve the application.

Councillor Milburn in referring to the site visit undertaken the previous day noted that the facility at Birtley appeared to be run extremely well and young people were found to be complying well and with positivity. She noted that this facility was also within a built-up area and there had been no complaints received from residents of neighbouring properties. With that she also noted her support for the application.

Councillor Tucker further expressed her views on the facility at Birtley, noting that following the site visit, she too was extremely impressed with the service offered and the strong code of conduct by which those using the service lived. She felt that the benefits that the facility brought to young people far outweighed concerns.

Councillor Bainbridge asked how long residents remained at the facility before they were discharged. It was noted that each case was different, however all residents would remain at the facility until staff were confident that they could live independently.

Councillor Clarke noted that whilst he acknowledged local comments, the agreed mitigation offered reassurance. With that also noted his support for the application.

Councillor Tucker **MOVED** that the application be approved subject to the conditions listed in the report. Councillor Milburn **SECONDED** the motion.

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the conditions contained within the report.