

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE (NORTH)

At a Meeting of the **Area Planning Committee (North)** held in the County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 26 September 2019 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor I Jewell (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Bainbridge, A Bell, D Boyes, A Hopgood, O Milburn, C Martin, T Tucker and M Wilson (substitute for S Wilson)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Wilson, L Boyd, J Higgins, C Kay, J Robinson, A Shield, J Shuttleworth and K Thompson

2 Substitute Members

Councillor M Wilson substituted for Councillor S Wilson.

3 Minutes of the Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2019 were confirmed as correct record by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest submitted.

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

a DM/19/02097/FPA - Land at Lavender Gardens and Uphill Drive, Sacriston

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application to build nineteen 2-bedroomed, 3-person bungalow dwellings at Lavender Gardens and Uphill Drive, Sacriston (for copy see file of minutes).

S France, Senior Planning Officer provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph, site photographs and proposed development layout.

The Chair thanked the Senior Planning Officer for his presentation.

Miss O'Shea of Karbon Homes addressed the Committee in support of the application.

Miss O'Shea noted that Karbon Homes was a profit for a purpose Landlord that owned/ managed almost 30,000 properties across the North East of England and Yorkshire. They invested in improving their properties and communities by building new homes and delivering services which provided sustainable outcomes. Karbon Homes wanted to invest more than £8 million in the village of Sacriston with various developments in the pipeline.

The bungalows would be spacious and to a high modern standard with plenty of parking. The garages in the area would be demolished as they were in a dilapidated state of disrepair.

A public meeting had been held at the Fulforth Centre in Sacriston in July 2019 where Karbon Homes presented the scheme to the Parish, County Councillors along with residents. This highlighted the plans for the development along with getting an understanding of local housing needs including the shortage of high-quality family homes and bungalows for older residents.

Miss O'Shea stated that Karbon Homes were on the final stages of building twenty-four 2-3 bedrooled family homes in the village of Sacriston and were also in the process of developing a further 25 new family homes on the former sheltered accommodation site. They had 98 new homes programmed in the pipeline over the next 18 months. Properties were available to rent via the Key Options website.

The Chair thanked Miss O'Shea and asked the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor T Tucker asked where in relation to the development the nearest amenity space was and what this comprised of. The Senior Planning Officer showed on the aerial photograph that there was a small mown grassed amenity space with no facilities a short distance away from the development.

Councillor A Bell noted his disappointment at the loss of the open spaced area. He hoped this was not a sign of things to come with more open spaces being lost that would be detrimental to children being able to play outside.

He was surprised there were only two objections to the application and commended Karbon on building bungalows for elderly people.

Councillor D Bell requested clarity on what activities the land had been used for in the past. The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that the area had been informal mown grassed land used by children to play football and the like. He also noted that Durham County Council were given money in lieu of on-site provision of open space. The calculation for the money was complex but precise and considered an open space assessment looking at what land had been displaced, what the land had been used for and the needs of new residents.

Councillor D Bell asked what the money the Council received would be used for. The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that the money was held by the Council as a grant that people and the Parish Council could apply for to fund projects in their area.

Councillor A Hopgood requested information about the availability of public transport and amenities. She was concerned that the incline of the area would prove difficult to negotiate for elderly people. The Senior Planning Officer replied that there were bus services available on the main road to the North or in the village centre where there was a small supermarket.

Councillor A Hopgood expressed concerned about the ground level of the bungalows. She did not want a repeat of the incident in Pelton where the ground levels were raised leaving the living rooms of the bungalows that were built overlooking the bedrooms of the houses below. The Senior Planning Officer replied that if the application was approved an extra condition could be added regarding floor levels. Councillor A Hopgood moved approval of the application with the additional condition.

Councillor A Bell requested that the spending of the s106 funding remain in the area. The Senior Planning Officer noted that it could be made a requirement of the legal agreement that the money would remain for use in the Electoral Division of Sacriston.

The Chair informed the Committee that Councillor A Hopgood had moved approval of the application subject to clarification on ground levels, that financial contributions be used within the Electoral Division and a contamination verification report be carried out, and this was **seconded** by Councillor D Bell.

Upon a vote taken it was unanimously;

Resolved

That the application be **APPROVED** for the reasons outlined in the report with addition of Conditions relating to contaminated land, ground levels and s106 monies be spent in the Electoral Division.

b DM/19/01992/FPA - The Crest, Beamishburn Road, Beamish, Stanley

The Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the report relating to the above-mentioned planning application (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chair thanked the Principal Planning Officer for the presentation of her report.

Mr A Kennedy, local resident of Beamishburn Road addressed the Committee in objection to the application. Mr Kennedy thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and informed the Committee that he had concerns about the proposed development.

His main concern was regarding highway safety. Access to the new properties would be through the existing entrance to Beamishburn Road which was opposite a pub.

There were also safety concerns as the road had a bend and slight incline. It would increase the number of cars including agricultural vehicles in the area compromising both the safety of pedestrians and motorists. The danger was enhanced as there were no pathways in some parts of the road.

The re-submitted application still proposed an unsympathetic, overbearing design that dominated the skyline. The roof line was the same height as the original application even though the second floor of the property had been removed. The planting of trees to replace those that would be removed would take up to 20 years to screen the properties. Mr Kennedy expressed concern that the planting may not be undertaken as planting had failed in parts of the adjacent estate and no planning enforcement had taken place.

The development would increase the number of homes in the street from four to six. Long term the applicant could sell the homes leaving his legacy behind spoiling the rural aesthetics of the area. Mr Kennedy re-iterated that he also voiced the strong opposition of other residents to this application.

The Principal Planning Officer presented to the Committee photographs of the area that showed the extension of the South Causey Inn. It was noted

that the development would be visible as it would be in an elevated position, but this would not be any more visible than the existing properties. The landscaping condition would be monitored by Officers and the Compliance Officer to ensure that all the conditions were met. The motives of the applicant could not be considered in the decision making process.

The Principal DM Engineer informed the Committee that it was unlikely that the new development would increase traffic along Beamishburn Road. Following a survey, the volume of traffic was 700 vehicles per day which was light traffic. Although there was no footpath, pedestrians and cyclists had used this road safely with no accidents being recorded. There were slow road markings to encourage the reduction in speed. There was adequate visibility from the domestic access that was outside of the bend in the road. There were no issues from Highways Officers regarding access to or from the site.

The Chair thanked Mr Kennedy and asked the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor O Milburn expressed concern about when the traffic survey was carried out as she was familiar with the road and felt it was a very busy and fast road contrary to the results of the survey.

The Principal DM Engineer informed the Committee that the traffic survey took place in 2008. The results of this survey had been used as it was felt that the volume of traffic would not have changed in that time span. Highways Officers felt there were no safety concerns as horses, pedestrians and cyclists used this road regularly. Another survey could be instigated but this would not change the views from Highways Officers.

Councillor T Tucker was concerned that the bat risk assessment was outdated having been done in 2018. The Principal Planning Officer informed the Committee that the bat survey was valid for another year. Councillor T Tucker was concerned with the lack of footpaths in the vicinity and asked whether a condition could be placed on the application to install one.

The Principal DM Engineer informed the Committee that the Council had investigated the feasibility of installing a footpath but there was no space. There was a footpath near to Blue Bell pub carpark giving no reason for pedestrians not to use it as they already walked in the road with no risk.

Councillor A Hopgood was surprised that the Committee was being asked to decide an application which used an out of date traffic survey. She stated that there had been an increase in traffic as this road was used by visitors to Beamish Museum and Beamish Hall.

Councillor O Milburn re-iterated that the Black Horse Pub had become a major wedding venue along with car garages in the area that would have caused an increase in the volume of cars on the road.

Councillor A Bell suggested that a new traffic survey could be carried out to determine the number of vehicles that used the road. Councillor D Boyes shared the concerns around the outdated traffic survey. He was also concerned about the difference in views from the Landscape Officer and Tree Officer.

The Solicitor explained to the Committee that the application should be deliberated as it stood as it was unreasonable to raise concerns that were not presented at the previous meeting.

Councillor A Hopgood stated that Committee members had not been made aware of how old the survey had been at the previous meeting. The Principal DM Engineer considered that although the information appeared to be out of date the results were still relevant. There were no reported accidents and no evidence to suggest the area would be unsafe.

Councillor T Tucker expressed concern at the discrepancies between the Tree Officer and Landscape Officer. The Principal Planning Officer informed the Committee that the Tree Officer would consider the health, quality and longevity of individual trees including their protection via Tree protection orders (TPO). The Landscape Officer would consider the trees and planting overall and their visible impact on the landscape. There were no TPO's on the trees within the development and could be removed at any time should the applicant choose.

Councillor A Bell proposed that the application be deferred until further clarity was gained regarding the views of the tree and landscape officers and an updated traffic survey was carried out. Councillor I Jewell seconded the proposal.

Upon a vote it was unanimously;

Resolved

That the application be **DEFERRED** pending an updated speed survey and further clarification from the specialists regarding the trees.

6 Appeal Update

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer, Fiona Clarke which provided details of a recent appeal.

An appeal was submitted against the refusal under delegated powers for an application for the erection of two stables with tack rooms with forecourt, dolomite gravel parking area, creation of new vehicular access and closure and re-instatement of existing access and change of use of land to equestrian purpose at Ebchester Hill, Ebchester. This would be dealt with under the written representation procedure and Members would be updated on the decision at a future meeting.

Resolved

That the report was noted.