

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday 23 June 2020 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor J Clare (Chair)**

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

Councillors J Atkinson (Vice-Chair), D Bell, J Blakey, L Brown, G Huntington, I Jewell, J Maitland, S Quinn, G Richardson, J Shuttleworth, F Tinsley and S Zair

#### **1 Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

#### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

#### **5 DM/20/00398/FPA - Sedgefield Community College, Hawthorn Road, Sedgefield**

The Committee considered a report of the Planning Officer regarding an application for a two storey extension to form a teacher training hub for the school and visiting university students, extension to 2 car parking areas and associated works (for copy see file of minutes).

The Planning Officer provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photographs and photographs of the site.

The Planning Officer reported that there had been an objection from Sedgefield Town Council with regards to traffic and highway implications and one letter of representation from a local resident with concerns regarding an increase in vehicles and fumes causing health implications.

The Highway Development Manager informed the Committee of issues regarding parking within the site, travel demand that the parking would create and the school travel plan which could potentially be undermined by providing extra parking. There are 90 full and part time staff that work at the school plus 50 teacher training students that travel to the school via Hawthorn Road, students arrive via Butterwick Road. AAP statistics suggest that 78% of people living in the AAP area own at least one car and if every member of staff travelled to the school by car there would be a demand for 109 parking spaces. There are approximately 100 spaces currently and the application would provide an additional 50 spaces to meet future demand. A travel plan condition was requested to encourage various initiatives such as car sharing.

Referring to additional travel demand, the Highways Development Manager advised that this could potentially add an additional 39 trips to the school via Hawthorn Road. There were 3 different routes leading to Hawthorn Road and if taken evenly could be an additional 13 trips per route which was not an unacceptable level of additional travel demand.

The Chair advised that Sedgefield Town Council and the objectors written representation would be taken into account. He advised that local member Councillor J Robinson gave his apologies as he declared an interest as Chair of the School Governing Body.

Mr A Proctor, Associate Director of ADP Architecture addressed the Committee on behalf of the applicant. He advised that Sedgefield Community College had recently become part of the Laidlaw Schools Trust which have been clients of ADP Architects for over 8 years. He referred to his first scheme developed with the trust which was the Leeds University undergraduate library and was a RIBA award winning sustainable building. The Trust demand a high standard for their facilities and had engaged ADP in March 2019. The key drivers for the project were classroom space, attracting fresh new student teachers and to retain highly skilled people in the North East region.

He added that the architecture design was very modest, timeless and similar to university standards. The facility will provide flexible and dynamic state of the art spaces. The overall aim was to provide an opportunity to inspire students to go onto university and for student teachers to start a career at one of the many trust facilities in the North East.

Mr Proctor advised that school students would use the facility 4 days out of 5 to relieve timetable pressures and the 5<sup>th</sup> day would accommodate Durham University students. It was noted that the school were not looking to increase staff or student numbers, they were wanting more adequate space for the school. The main goal was to provide students with a safe and secure space of high quality to give students the best experience, however Mr Proctor stressed there was a tight programme with a strict financial timeline. The Trust had advised that funding would have to be reallocated to other deserving schools if the project was not given the go ahead this year and completed by September 2021.

Mr Proctor informed the Committee that the application includes parking for 100 spaces, 50 of which would be built initially. Every effort was made to choose locations that would not visually impact local residence. The additional university students would not cause further congestion on Hawthorn and Butterwick Road at peak times as arriving/leaving times would not coincide with the primary school adjacent, and the additional parking would alleviate current issues with roadside parking along Hawthorn Road.

Responding to a request for clarification from Councillor Tinsley, Mr Proctor confirmed there would be no increase in pupils attending the school, and clarified he was referring to the increase of an additional 50 Durham University teacher training student that would visit the facility once a week throughout the academic year.

Councillor Maitland queried the arriving/leaving times of the additional student teachers. Mr Proctor explained that timings would depend on subjects being studied and students would attend the school at different times much like university facilities.

Councillor Jewell asked for more information in relation to the school travel plan and what would be included in the plan. The Highway Development Manager explained that the schools current travel plan was significantly outdated. The updated travel plan would be of national standard and include different initiatives to promote walking, cycling, public transport, car share facility and would look at safe cycle storage facilities. Mr Proctor added that discussions were currently taken place with the school with regards to car sharing, electric car parking and better placed cycle storage facilities.

Councillor Tinsley queried the distance from the school to the closest bus stop that had a regular public transport route. The Highway Development Manager advised that the closest bus stop from Butterwick Road was 90 meters from the school and 500 meters from Hawthorn Road.

Councillor Quinn welcomed the development and the incentive to retain and attain quality teaching staff in the local area.

Councillor Atkinson noted concerns regarding traffic issues and accepted comments from the Highways Development Manager. He felt there was no furore locally and **moved** the recommendation to approve the application.

Councillor Tinsley added that the application was a modest scheme with modern contemporary design. He highlighted that the Town Councils concerns were in relation to the existing school and not generated by the new proposals. There were no highway objections and the application was in accordance with the neighbourhood plan and the NPPF with no impact on residential amenity. Councillor Tinsley **seconded** the recommendation to approve the application.

**Resolved:**

That the application be **APPROVED**, subject to the conditions outlined in the report.