

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **County Planning Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 3 May 2022 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor G Richardson (Chair)**

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

Councillors A Bell (Vice-Chair), D Boyes, J Higgins, C Hunt, P Jopling, C Marshall, C Martin, M McKeon, P Molloy, I Roberts, K Shaw and S Zair

### **1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Moist and A Simpson.

### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest. The Chair informed the Committee that the application at Agenda Item 5 (c) was within his Electoral Ward.

### **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 April were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

#### **a DM/21/03839/FPA - Land north of Delves Lane, Consett**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the erection of 288 dwellings with associated access, landscaping and infrastructure (revised description 28/02/22) on land north of Delves Lane, Consett (for copy see file of Minutes).

L Eden, Senior Planning Officer provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph, site

photographs, proposed site plan, proposed landscape strategy and proposed design approach.

The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that Northumbrian Water had recommended a conditional approach to securing a scheme of foul water and this condition had been omitted from the recommendations in the report.

Councillor A Stirling, local Member, addressed the Committee. Councillor Stirling thanked the Senior Planning Officer for the thorough report and for her assistance through the planning process.

Councillor Stirling queried whether the site should be considered for development. Policy 6 of the County Durham Plan stated that the development of unallocated sites must be appropriate in terms of scale, design, layout and location to the character, function, form and setting of the settlement.

Councillor Stirling referred to the scale of the proposed development which she did not consider was adequately addressed in the report. For context Councillor Stirling informed the Committee that Delves Lane Ward had three developments which were either started or were in planning and this did not include the Project Genesis plan. The three proposed or planned developments combined would add over 3,000 new residents to the village which was a population increase of 36.5% taking the population from 8,279 to 11,304. The combined plans would have a considerable impact on local amenities and this was not taken into consideration in the report.

This proposed development alone would increase the population of Delves Lane by 20% and Councillor Stirling questioned whether a 20% increase in population from a single development on three large farmers' fields was of an appropriate scale.

Most of the proposed properties were large four bedroomed family homes. Councillor Stirling had checked the submitted planning documents which included plans for each house style which illustrated the number of bedrooms per property and the number of residents per house style. From the applicants plans a figure of 1,659 new residents was reached which was the 20% population increase previously referred to. Although not all homes may be filled to capacity and the figures were for guidance only the houses were being built for a certain number of residents per house and would be sold on this basis.

Referring to scale, the amount of funding required by the NHS was based on 2.3 people per household, or 662 new patients. The smallest house on the development was a four person house with an average of 5.8 people across

all homes. This should result in the NHS receiving £348,600 and not the £139,104 proposed. Councillor Stirling wondered which other calculations may not be appropriate, for example traffic or education.

Of 1,659 new residents the number of school places quoted as being required was only 124 which was 7.5%. This was a family estate. The current demographic data of Delves Lane showed that school age children made up 22.8% of the population, not 7.5%. Councillor Stirling argued again that this calculation was inappropriate and the number of school children based on 22.8% would be closer to 378 school places required. While the local primary school had some capacity, but not three class sizes worth based on the 89 children mentioned in the report. There was no budget in this proposal allocated to the primary school. The Head Teacher of the school had said that although the school was not full in all year groups currently, based on the projected numbers the school would go well over school admission numbers. The school had limited access to funding and a higher number of pupils with Special Educational Needs. Increased pupil numbers would need more classrooms, the school had very limited Capital Funding and would need substantial support from the County Council for buildings and support with school funding.

Section 19 of the County Durham Plan regarding the type and mix of housing Councillor Stirling questioned the 10% affordable housing on site which were bungalows. Due to County Durham's ageing population there was a great need for bungalows, particularly smaller sized houses. The proposed bungalows on this development were all three-bed four-person households and were Dormer bungalows with an upstairs. These would become large family homes and the term bungalows had been used to make the development easier to go through the planning process.

Paragraph 97 of the report referred to an allocation of £57,600 to Delves Lane Community Centre, however the Persimmon scheme had allocated a substantial amount of money to the Community Centre already and Councillor Stirling asked how much funding was going to be allocated to one small building. This development extended Delves Lane boundary further from the village centre with no facilities proposed and new community assets should be built using funding properly allocated based on the correct number of new residents.

Councillor Stirling urged the Committee to review the s106 contributions and to insist they were increased to avoid the collapse of local services in the village. Furthermore, Councillor Stirling hoped that the Committee would listen to the views of local residents who opposed the development and seriously consider whether a 20% uplift in a villages population met Policy 6 of the County Durham Plan in terms of scale.

Councillor M Walton, local Member, addressed the Committee. Councillor Walton thanked the Senior Planning Officer for the detailed report.

Councillor Walton informed the Committee that residents had submitted hundreds of objections to this development which the Committee would have already had sight of. However, they had also asked their local Members to represent their views to the Planning Committee and Councillor Walton put to the Committee some of the many reasons this development should not be approved.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment effectively ruled out this area for development and concluded that the land was identified as Amber which was unsuitable for building. The applicant stated that the site fell within Policy 6 of the County Durham Plan. However, residents stated that it was not in a built-up area and was not within Consett. It was poorly related to the existing settlement and was partially contained by the road.

The first paragraph stated that proposals for new development would be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the landscape or to important features or views. This development would cause huge changes to the current landscape. The area was a natural habitat for the wildlife which would disappear once the groundworks commenced on this development. It was hard to understand how the applicant believed they could move the animals from their natural habitat to other areas without any impact. The wildlife in these fields had lived undisturbed and would not understand that they were no longer allowed to freely roam in the area that had been home for years. There were well established trees and hedgerows all of which would experience levels of disturbance or permanent removal should this development be permitted.

The Planning Committee was urged to assess the serious and adverse impact this development would have on the countryside and current residential amenity. The adverse effect of noise, disturbance, overlooking and loss of privacy. It would have a huge visual impact on the landscape, changing the village forever. These fields were agricultural land and had been arable farming and grazing lands for over 50 years.

Residents' health and welfare must be a consideration. There were numerous residents' who worked unsociable shift patterns who would be directly impacted by the noise, drilling and additional traffic, which would result in ill health and sleep deprivation.

The planning report acknowledged that the current infrastructure of this area could not cope with this level of development and highlighted numerous works to be completed to accommodate the traffic, GP facilities, dentists and schools which were all oversubscribed. Derwentside Primary Care Network covered 12 GP surgeries, which was more than any other in County Durham. It had a population of over 94,000, the recommended population for this was between

30,000 – 50,000. Proposals to support the lack of facilities was that the developer would provide a contribution to medical services of £139,000, which equated to one GP for a year, after which time more pressure would be placed on the already overstretched NHS services as more residents had to revert to A & E for medical support.

A planning application to build up to 30 houses was recently refused for a developer located in Fishburn. The Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) objected. The CPRE objection was related to the encroachment into countryside. It was of particular interest that Council officers involved in the Fishburn planning application felt that the scheme could lead to ecological harm and significant incursion into an attractive and prominent landscape and that it conflicted with policies. There were huge similarities to the present application. This development would destroy an area of natural beauty, the gateway to the Northwest Durham countryside.

The area had been subjected to a huge amount of development resulting in Permission, Gleeson, Miller, and Amethyst all having housing developments in the planning system resulting in a significant number of new houses all adding to an already congested road system. Only five weeks ago Councillor Walton had asked the Committee to refuse to allow one of the developers to remove a condition to improve road safety. Residents were concerned that builders said anything to get approval then just got the conditions removed one by one and this was becoming hard to argue against when the very same concerns got raised with every development applied for but then there was no requirement from the Council to ensure these concerns were properly addressed and conditions upheld.

These were just a few of the reasons residents questioned why it would even be considered to build on these fields. As mentioned, the Committee would have had sight of all of other reasons this development should not go ahead. These points had not changed and would not change now or in the future. Councillor Walton implored the Committee to please listen to local residents and refuse this application.

Susan Huntsman, local resident addressed the Committee to object to the application. She had lived in the area for nearly 30 years and wanted the Committee to know the strength of feeling within the community.

This application had united the community as one voice in opposition to the plans of the applicant. Residents hoped the Committee had the chance to read the hundreds of letters and emails from residents that were uploaded to the Planning portal that encompassed the strength of feeling and legitimate objections to this proposal.

In addition to the issues already highlighted by the local Members, residents wished to make the following points. The proposals for access routes to Greenways via College View and Meadow View were of a major concern. The routes were unjustified and unnecessary. The residents did not want the access routes which would encroach onto the security of the Greenways estate. The proposed entry into College View would be through a very small cul-de-sac which was not wide enough to turn a car and had been managed by the local residents since the estate was built in 1963. To facilitate the access would require cutting through hedgerows and disturbing a mature oak tree, impacting on wildlife and creating a rat-run for use and anti-social behaviour.

The proposed access through the existing field between College View and Greenways leading onto Meadow View would require breaking through boundaries onto land which the council did not own. This would be unlawful and would require further investigation and consultation prior to any decision being made regarding the applicant adopting privately owned land.

The proposed bus stop on Meadow View and Ladywell Road posed major health and safety issues in their positioning. It was virtually impossible to navigate the estate with the current levels of traffic without adding further congestion through buses stopping. The estate roads were never designed to accommodate buses. Go Ahead Northern had confirmed the bus could be re-routed to the new estate which would require one bus stop to be added to the plan to accommodate access to public transport.

Despite numerous meetings with planning officers residents felt their objections had been ignored. The Planning Committee was being asked to give serious consideration when assessing this application as decisions made today would have a lasting effect on residents and change the village for ever.

Thomas Flannery addressed the Committee to object to the application. Mr Flannery referred to the proposed site of the development and referred to climate change with the site being on a flood plain. The area was subject to historic extensive mining and people were unaware of the stability of the land such that the Coal Authority had issued a directive to the developer that they needed to put a provision in place to stop damage to the current Greenways properties. Mr Flannery believed that going ahead with the development could be a criminal offence, given a warning that it could damage properties.

The road was not fit for purpose for a development of this size with only one entrance/exit for a 300-bed estate. This would cause congestion, general confusion, and access problems including for emergency vehicles. No consideration had been given to road design and traffic flows. Traffic from the development would flood onto a minor B road which Mr Flannery considered was not planned but was sheer danger. Mr Flannery travelled the road every day

and he considered it to be dangerous. He asked how traffic volumes had been quantified using data which was out of date and he considered to be useless.

The proposed development was being considered without any consideration to public safety and public health. There was no provision for services, the schools were overrun, the medical practices were overrun and the application proposed to add 600 people who would be seeking these services instantly.

Mr Stephen Litherland addressed the Committee in support of the application.

The applicant had worked with planning officers throughout the planning process to arrive at the scheme before the Committee for consideration. The proposals had been examined by the Council's Design Review Panel three times and each time the applicant had taken on board the constructive feedback from the Panel and had made changes to the scheme, in particular removing 11 units from the site to ensure there was a buffer between the residents of Greenways and the proposed development.

There were no outstanding objections from any of the statutory consultees. It was acknowledged there were a substantial number of objections from members of the public but the applicant had worked hard to ensure every material planning consideration had been addressed.

Referring to Policy, there was provision in the County Durham Plan for sites such as this to come forward under Policy 6. The applicant had worked hard with planners to ensure they met all the criteria set out in Policy 6 and this was confirmed in the report to Committee.

There were significant benefits from the development including 10% affordable housing, approximately 5.4 hectares of open space, a net gain in biodiversity of 11.99% in habitats and 107.73% in hedgerows, £833,694 in financial contributions and supporting 900 people through direct and indirect employment.

The application was well-balanced in planning terms and overall would be a positive addition to the area and Mr Litherland asked the Committee to approve the application.

Councillor Jopling referred to mention in the report of a restrictive covenant and sought clarity on this. N Carter, Planning and Development Solicitor replied he was unaware of the detail of any restrictive covenant but this was not a material planning consideration for the Committee.

Councillor C Marshall asked what the total estimated investment would be to the economy arising from the development. Mr Litherland replied that the total financial contribution from the development would be £833,694 split between secondary education, the NHS, community centres and a contribution to the

Lanchester Valley Railway Path. Other indirect benefits were jobs and tax benefits through tax revenues. It was calculated the development would generate £3.4m in general tax revenues and an annual Council Tax revenue of £325,284.

Councillor Molloy asked whether figures for the demand for housing from the current population of the village were known.

Mr Litherland replied that the developer was confident that the homes would sell otherwise they would not have brought the planning application forward adding that the current housing market was quite strong. Councillor Stirling replied that while some local people had expressed an interest in purchasing a property, the consensus was that local people were against the application and many local people would not be able to afford the houses.

Councillor Jopling referred to paragraph 67 where the Council's Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) rated the site as being unsuitable and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) wanted the application refused. The development would be an encroachment into the countryside and Councillor Jopling could not see how this would improve the green infrastructure. Councillor Jopling asked what type of heating was proposed for the properties and whether a wildlife survey had been carried out.

The Senior Planning Officer replied that the land had been considered within the SHLAA and had an unsuitable Amber classification. The SHLAA was a very high level assessment and when planning applications came forward they were accompanied by detailed reports and surveys which allowed officers to have a better understanding of the site and its impacts which may then justify a different recommendation and approach to the high level SHLAA assessment.

It was acknowledged that the development was an encroachment into the countryside but it was well contained by the settlement.

In terms of heating the Senior Planning Officer believed the developer proposed to install gas boilers but this had not been fully detailed. There was a condition proposed which sought to secure a scheme of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction measures and building regulation changes would also have an impact. Electric vehicle charging points and bike storage had also been secured. Councillor Jopling asked why no solar panels were proposed and informed the Committee she was unable to support the application because it was an encroachment into the countryside and on the grounds that the proposed houses were not being built for the future.

Councillor Hunt was concerned about the sustainable aspect of the proposed development and also about traffic issues with only one access onto the estate. P Harrison, Highway Development Manager replied that even with the additional traffic from the proposed development the road would be well within its capacity.

Councillor Boyes considered that the application hinged on Policy 6, whether it was a permitted development, whether it coalesced, highways issues and ecological issues. Looking at the applicant's statement Councillor Byes considered on balance there would be an improvement to the ecology and biodiversity, there would be improvements to the Railway Path and a community centre contribution. With reference to highways there were to be mitigation works on the Delves Lane roundabout, Gloucester Road mini roundabout, Leadgate roundabout, the Stockley T junction and the application had nearly 900 jobs attached to it. It would generate £3.5m into the local economy and on balance Councillor Boyes was happy to support the application.

Councillor McKeon had questions about whether the s106 contribution was adequate for education provision and whether there were enough affordable homes being proposed for the development.

Councillor Marshall informed the Committee that planning applications needed to be determined following the National Planning Policy Framework and the County Durham Plan which had recently gone through an independent inspection. It was dangerous for a Planning Committee to try to re-write Planning Policy and put the Council in a difficult position when trying to defend decisions the Committee makes. If any Members wished to rewrite or amend Planning Policy this should be put forward to the Cabinet and any amendment could only be done if it was in line with Government policy.

This application needed to be considered on its merits and Councillor Marshall was pleased the applicant had cooperated with the developer of another site in the area and that the officers had taken a strategic approach to the two developments. Referring to the s106 contributions these would be based on calculations using facts, figures and need provided and would be based on what was agreed in the County Durham Plan.

Councillor Marshall agreed with Councillor Boyes and seconded approval of the application.

The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that the s106 contributions were assessed on a case by case basis using set formulas which were based on planning law requirements and County Durham Plan policies. The School Places Manager had commented that there were sufficient places at primary school level but not at secondary school level and this was the reason the s106 contribution was for secondary education. The s106 contribution funded infrastructure not revenue and was to mitigate the impact of the development. The site was within a low viability area where there was a requirement for only 10% affordable housing. All relevant wildlife surveys had been undertaken.

Councillor Higgins informed the Committee that he had listened to all points put forward in the meeting and would be supporting approval of the application.

Councillor A Bell asked whether the site had been put forward in the County Durham Plan. The Senior Planning Officer considered that the site would have been put forward for the County Durham Plan. It was considered the application met the criteria under Policy 6.

Councillor Shaw informed the Committee there was a need to understand the significant outstanding need for housing in County Durham and the need for more social housing and affordable homes. There were over 9,000 people on the waiting list for social housing and of these 3,500 specifically to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled. These needs were diverse and profound and included the need for 2, 3 and 4 bed housing. This development dovetailed into the strategic housing plan. On balance Councillor Shaw informed the meeting he was minded to approve the application.

Upon a vote being taken it was

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved subject to the completion of a S106 Legal Agreement to secure the following:

- The requirement to enter into a S.39 Agreement to secure the long term management and maintenance, including a monitoring strategy of the biodiversity land;
- £225,070 towards improving offsite open space and recreational provision within Delves Lane Electoral Division;
- £57,600 towards improvements to the Sustrans National Cycle Network Route No. 14 (NCN14), also known as the Lanchester Valley Railway Path, within the vicinity of the development;
- £57,600 towards improving the facilities and services at Delves Lane Community Centre;
- £139,104 to increase GP surgery capacity;
- £579,390 towards secondary education provision;
- provision of 10% affordable housing units on site equating to 29 units for affordable home ownership

And the conditions contained in the report as well as a condition relating to foul water.

**b DM/21/01520/FPA - Land to the rear of The Old Chapel, Colliery Road, Bearpark, DH7 7AU**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 148 two, three and four bedroom two-storey dwellings with associated works on land

to the rear of The Old Chapel, Colliery Road, Bearpark (for copy see file of Minutes).

A Inch, Strategic Team Leader provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph of the site, site photographs, proposed site layout and typical elevations.

Councillor M Wilson local Member addressed the Committee. If approved, the development would be the first major build in the village for over 30 years. Whilst the development was welcomed there were concerns regarding the visibility when turning right off Colliery Road, with extra cars exiting from Colliery Road increasing the chance of an accident taking place. The moving of the site lines and extra signage would certainly help this. The proposed traffic calming measures along Colliery Road were welcomed as this road had caused concern for a number of years. While there had been objections on the development itself the major concern was the increase of traffic on Colliery Road. However, having spoken to officers Councillor Wilson considered all the issues raised about traffic had been addressed. Another concern raised was that access to the development would be through the Bishop Meadows Estate, but this option had now been deleted from the application and was not therefore relevant.

Councillor Wilson considered that the development would benefit the village and may also help retain the first-time buyers who would otherwise need to leave the village in search of affordable property.

Mr Dodds of Gleeson addressed the Committee. The applicant had worked closely with planning officers and consultees on the application which had resulted in no objections from the consultees. The application scored well at the design review stage especially in terms of the elevations and would bring benefits and much needed development to Bearpark.

There were plans to work closely with the adjacent primary school and the Committee was asked to support the officer recommendation for approval.

Councillor C Martin referred to the former employment land which was included as part of the site which was currently vacant and asked whether it was genuine vacant employment land. The Strategic Team Leader replied that he understood it was an estate which had been declining for a number of years and a number of tenants had then moved on. It did not provide modern employment land that was necessarily fit for purpose in terms of the types of buildings and facilities on site.

Councillor Martin agreed that Bearpark was in need of additional new housing and extra regeneration and **moved** that the application be approved.

Councillor A Bell agreed with Councillor Martin and **seconded** approval of the application.

Councillor Boyes informed the Committee he was supportive of the application adding that development was needed for communities to be sustainable.

Councillor Higgins considered the application would be an improvement for Bearpark and welcomed the proposed traffic calming measures at the primary school, the contribution to the primary school and improvements to the park. Councillor Higgins supported the application.

Mr Wiltshire addressed the Committee to express concerns of two local residents. The development would bring no new jobs or shops to the village and concerns had been expressed about the highway access onto Auton Stile from Colliery Road which was an already dangerous junction. The health impact of construction traffic passing the local primary school needed to be considered. There were 1,249 houses already for sale within a 5 mile radius of Bearpark and the demand for this development was questioned. There was a belief that planning for the development had already been approved because the affordable housing would boost the Council housing stock.

The Strategic Team Leader replied that a range of off-site highways works were proposed and a Construction Management Plan would minimise the impacts of construction traffic. The site was allocated to meet housing needs and new housing would bring new residents to support existing businesses.

The Planning and Development Solicitor reported that the application had not been approved and was brought to Committee for a decision to be made.

Upon a vote being taken it was

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved subject to the completion of a Section 106 Obligation to secure the following:

- £219,398 towards open space and recreation in the Electoral Division
- £441,090 towards additional school places at Bearpark Primary School
- £71,484 toward healthcare provision at the Dunelm Medical Practice
- £64,766 toward offsite Biodiversity net gains
- Appropriate on-site affordable housing (19 units – 15 discount market sale units and 4 as an affordable rent product)

and the conditions contained in the report.

Councillor D Boyes left the meeting.

**c DM/21/02606/RM - Land to the north of Darlington Road, Barnard Castle, DL12 8QG**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application to provide the details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 97 dwellings pursuant to outline planning permission DM/20/03070/OUT (amended description) on land to the north of Darlington Road, Barnard Castle (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chair reminded the Committee that the development already had outline planning permission approved and this application provided details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of the development.

A Inch, Strategic Team Leader provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph of the site, site photographs, proposed site layout and typical elevations.

Councillor Alan Coulthard, Barnard Castle Town Council addressed the Committee. Councillor Coulthard informed the Committee that the Planning Committee at the Town Council had not been involved in this application and reminded the Committee that the outline approval had been granted during Covid and had been considered via Teams so the full impact of the objections were not put as forcefully as they would have been otherwise. The number of objections was 250 plus and not the 34 as stated. Both residents and the Marwood Parish Council were objecting as well as the Town Council. Barnard Castle was a jewel in the area from a tourism point of view and had seen substantial developments over recent years and this development would result in the loss of agricultural land.

The developer was trying to avoid installing substantial drainage on the development by installing a soakaway and SUDS but this as an area which had no natural requirement for a pond and Councillor Coulthard failed to understand why the development would have a stagnant area of water at the bottom of it.

There were objections from the Town Council, objections from the Parish Council, objections from residents and objections to the detail of the proposal.

The Chair reminded Councillor Coulthard that the development had already been granted outline planning permission.

Councillor Pauline Glaster of Marwood Parish Council addressed the Committee. Councillor Glaster asked the Committee to consider the Parish Council's strong objections to the development that would have a considerable effect on Barnard Castle and its people. The historic market town which attracted levels of tourism all year round as well as a transport route to Teesdale and the North Pennines meant the current road network and infrastructure was constantly compromised with excess traffic, especially along Darlington Road, the A67 and the busy neighbouring area of the A688. Teesdale School, the recently opened Lidl development, the Hub and Bede Road access/exit point all converged on the roundabout at the local service station where there was already frequent queuing at pivotal points throughout the day. The issue of safety was a high priority as Darlington Road was a 30 m.p.h. zone, however this speed was rarely adhered to and was constantly under surveillance from both the police and local speed awareness groups as this was a main traffic route for local schools with very limited safety crossing points. The approach was on a bend with poor visibility which put pedestrians at risk, especially the young and the elderly. Signage and speed restrictions needed to be more prevalent.

This development would result in more pedestrians including families with young children walking alongside a very busy main road and a small central island which did not provide adequate space for a family with a push chair to feel safe when crossing.

Recent new developments had put pressure on local amenities and facilities such as schools, doctors and dental surgeries. This development would add to these issues and people would need to travel further afield to find alternatives which would increase traffic on the roads.

The proposed development was on arable land which was invaluable to local wildlife for natural habitat and had been considerably affected by the construction of Castle Vale development.

This application proposed a walkway for local residents but did not provide recreation seating area to socialise or small play area for children. The past two years had shown the importance to mental health of socialising, as well as fresh air and exercise.

New developments must provide sustainable and affordable homes for young local people at affordable prices to enable them to live where they work.

Privacy at the boundary of the development was requested from neighbouring residents of Castle Vale but appears to have been disregarded.

The Chair informed the Committee that two letters of support had been received and these were read out by the Clerk as follows:

**Paula Shepherd**

*I support this planning application – and ask you to do the same.*

*As a mother and resident of Barnard Castle, I would like my children to have the opportunity to be able to live in Barnard Castle. Currently local children usually have to move out of the town to buy or rent their first home.*

*New affordable homes are needed so that Barnard Castle does not just become a retirement town. It needs to be a vibrant town with young families and people. Members will recall Startforth Primary School closed largely because of a lack of children caused by a lack of homes nearby that families could afford to buy or rent.*

*This project will create nearly 100 jobs during the construction phase, and on-going work for local trades people – including plumbers; electricians; landscapers; gardeners etc. I have a number of friends who have businesses in the town and know how much they have struggled throughout the last year. It seems nonsensical to me to turn away such private investment at this crucial time.*

*I am sorry I cannot be there in person to make these points but unfortunately, I am at work. I would be very grateful if you could take them into account and vote in favour of this application.*

**Anne Henderson**

*I am a resident of Barnard Castle.*

*I support this application. I have lived in Barnard Castle all of my life and married a local boy and had two daughters.*

*Both of my daughters came home after university to work locally and were able to each buy their first home, a two bedroomed affordable house on Castle Vale which was built in the field adjacent to this planning application. There were many who didn't want the houses built there but now the development is established it has proven to be a success. The same people who complained I've seen walking their dogs around the lovely outdoor areas.*

*I have seen over the years many new building developments. Each time plans have been put in there is always a human cry from people trying to resist change. Usually from outsiders that have moved to Barnard Castle or residents who have a nice home and don't care about others.*

*Banks Group have listened to our community and they have planned smaller homes, accessible homes, family homes and bungalows in a beautiful setting. I would like to see priority given to local people and the homes be at a fair price.*

*As the chief officer of a charity for older people and disabled people I can confirm there are not enough bungalows in Barnard Castle for residents needing an accessible home.*

*This development will bring jobs to our community, will enable our young people to stay in Barnard castle and for older people to downsize from a house to a bungalow.*

*Both my husband, myself and one of my daughters and her partner would love to purchase a new home on this development.*

*100 happy families will be the outcome of one field being developed.*

*I hope you will pass this application today.*

Mr C Martin addressed the Committee in support of the application. The applicant, Stonebridge Homes were an established Yorkshire based house builder with a reputation for providing high quality homes. These proposals represented their first scheme in County Durham and were keen to maintain and further emphasise their approach to bring forward development which was attractive, sustainable and created a sense of place.

The principal of the development had already been established and this application related to details regarding layout, scale, appearance and landscape only. In providing these details the proposals were a high quality attractive development which provided a wide variety of family homes including bungalows and affordable homes in a selection of high quality materials which complemented the local vernacular of Barnard Castle. The homes were sustainable and included electric vehicle charging points, some properties would include photovoltaics and there were open spaces which would result in biodiversity net gain and encourage new habitat. The open space was a multi-functional amenity with footpaths, seating areas, dog bins, bird and bat boxes and a community lending library. Jobs would be provided during the construction period and local trades people would be sought and local materials sourced from a nearby quarry.

The applicant met with Barnard Castle Town Council in September 2021 to present the scheme to them and followed this up with emails answering their queries.

Councillor Martin referred to an email sent to Members regarding screening on the proposed development in particular three properties on the site and asked for clarification on this. Mr Martin replied that privacy screening could be provided if this was required.

Councillor Martin suggested that a condition be included for the developers to work with local residents regarding screening at the location referred to.

The Strategic Team Leader informed the Committee that Town and Parish Councils were notified via the weekly planning lists which were circulated.

Councillor McKeon asked whether any traffic calming was planned for the road. Mr Martin replied that the Outline Planning Permission was subject to a s106 agreement which included a traffic scheme on the A67 to the east of the site which may include traffic signs, road markings, bollards and boundary signs and a £5,000 contribution towards funding this scheme. Bus stops were also to be provided to enhance sustainable transport.

The Planning and Development Solicitor informed the Committee that if it was minded to approve the application subject to the condition referred to by Councillor Martin there would need to be some re-writing of the conditions and therefore a need for delegated authority to the Strategic Planning Team to amend the conditions.

**Moved** by Councillor Martin, **Seconded** by Councillor A Bell and

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved and delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Planning Team to amend the conditions as set out.