

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 23 June 2022 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor G Richardson (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, V Andrews, J Atkinson, D Oliver, S Quinn, I Roberts, M Stead, S Zair and P Jopling (substitute for D Brown)

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Savory, D Brown, J Cairns and L Maddison.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor P Jopling was present as substitute for Councillor D Brown.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Quinn declared an interest in item no. 5c) as local member, she was in support of the application and would speak on the item and leave the Council Chamber for the debate and deliberations.

Councillor Jopling declared an interest in item no. 5b) and confirmed that she would speak on the item as local Member and withdraw from the Council Chamber during the debate and deliberations.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair changed the order of business and item 5c) was considered first.

5 DM/22/00717/FPA - Land West of Locomotion the NRM at Shildon, Dale Road Industrial Estate, Shildon

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer which provided details of an application for the construction of new collection building for Locomotion with associated access and landscaping at Land West of Locomotion the NRM at Shildon, Dale Road Industrial Estate, Shildon (for copy see file of minutes).

M O'Sullivan, Senior Planning Officer, provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph and photographs of the site.

Ms S Price confirmed that the building was opened in 2004 and built on the foundation of the Timothy Hackworth Museum, it had gone from strength to strength, welcoming 200,000 visitors a year prior to COVID-19. The new building would enable the Museum to house the largest collection in the world and give the opportunity to draw visitors and use modern methods of learning and engagement.

The NRM would host the national centenary of the flying Scotsman and 200th anniversary of Stockton and Darlington railway and this proposal supported County Durham Tourism, generated income in the local area and there would be new opportunities for volunteering.

The new building would sit on the unattractive former Ashfield site, which acted as a magnet for antisocial behaviour. A landscape design team had been appointed which had ensured that all of the statutory consultees deemed the proposal to be acceptable.

Finally Ms Price confirmed that if the Committee endorsed the recommendation, work would be able to commence in November 2022 and would be completed in October 2023.

Councillor Quinn, Local Member endorsed the comments from Ms Price and confirmed that the site was a blight on the landscape which had suffered with antisocial behaviour problems and unauthorised encampments over the previous nine years.

Councillor Quinn was looking forward to celebrations for 200th anniversary and confirmed that the 150th anniversary had put Shildon on the map. She was very keen for the proposals to go ahead and gave full support for the Museum.

The Chair confirmed that various consultants were in attendance to answer questions from Members.

Councillor Atkinson confirmed that this was a thorough application which included benefits from jobs, tourism and income, reduce antisocial behaviour and remove the blight on the landscape, with no objections. He knew the place well, supported the recommendation and moved approval for the reasons outlined in the report.

Councillor Jopling had visited the Museum and it was a benefit to the local area, whilst the proposal would enhance the County Durham Tourism offer and she was pleased to second the motion to approve.

Resolved

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

6 DM/21/00855/FPA - Land To The North Of Peases West Sports Centre, Crook

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer which provided details of an application for Proposed 29 no. Affordable dwellings/apartments including 2 no. Community Workshops, associated parking, landscaping and open space at Land To The North Of Peases West Sports Centre, Crook (for copy see file of minutes).

G Spurgeon, Senior Planning Officer, provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph and photographs of the site.

Councillor Jopling queried the ownership status of the land and the Senior Planning Officer advised that the Leisure Centre owned the majority, but some of the area at the east of the site was owned by the Council.

Councillor Jopling confirmed that although in her opinion, the Council should support affordable housing, the site was situated on a bus route that provided a two hourly service. She did not think that the location was suitable and there would be a significant loss of open space.

Noting the lack of attendance from the applicant and members of the public, Councillor Atkinson confirmed that it would be difficult to go against the Officers' recommendation and moved the proposal to refuse the application for the reasons outlined in the report.

Councillor Adam seconded the motion, commenting on the lack of interest shown by the applicant and the lack of detail included in the application. There were no details attached to the proposal and part of the land was

owned by the Council with no indication as to whether the land was prepared for sale.

The Senior Planning Officer advised that all findings had been communicated to the applicant, however no further information had been received and the applicant requested the application be determined based on the information submitted.

Councillor Quinn confirmed that applications for affordable housing were supported where able and she liked the design of the houses, however she was unable to support schemes with little information and wondered whether there would be drainage issues in the area.

Councillor Jones advised that there were elements that could be improved such as the lack of bus service however he agreed that Members could not go against the recommendation.

Resolved

That the application be REFUSED for the reasons outlined in the report.

7 DM/21/00891/OUT - Peases West Sports Centre, Crook

Councillor Jopling left the meeting for the deliberation of this item and did not return.

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer which provided details of an application for Proposed 29 no. Affordable dwellings/apartments including 2 no. Community Workshops, associated parking, landscaping and open space at Land to the North of Peases West Sports Centre, Crook (for copy see file of minutes).

G Spurgeon, Senior Planning Officer, provided a detailed presentation of the application which included a site location plan, aerial photograph and photographs of the site.

Councillor Atkinson noted that considerable detail which had been received on the need for further provision but queried the conclusion regarding the requirement for a swimming facility.

The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that Sport England had consulted Swim England and identified the issue regarding demand in Crook however the recommendation for refusal did not include any reference to the pool although information regarding viability would be needed in order for the Planning Authority to support the application.

Due to the lack of information from the applicant Councillor Atkinson moved refusal of the proposal for the reasons outlined in the report.

Councillor Adam confirmed that he would not reject the application on the basis of the swimming facility however the reasons to reject the 3G pitch were clear. With regards to swimming and leisure facilities, it was important to encourage exercise however swimming pools were expensive to run. Due to the insufficient detail in relation to sustainability he was minded to refuse, but he was reluctant as there was a real benefit in terms of the health and well being of the community.

C Cuskin, Senior Lawyer Regulatory and Enforcement, advised that the Committee could not lawfully approve the application as there was insufficient information regarding ecology and whether the development would have an impact on protected species.

Councillor Quinn queried whether the application could be split as there were some elements that could be supported if the areas of concern were removed.

The Senior Lawyer Regulatory & Enforcement advised that the Committee could not significantly alter the application however it could not be lawfully approved due to the lack of ecology

Councillor Andrews could not see any benefit in replacing grass with artificial grass and could not support the application.

Councillor Stead noted the comprehensive assessment done by Sport England and the effect of creating additional pitches on businesses that were already operating. The applicant had not demonstrated a need for this proposal he could not find any reasons to support it.

Councillor Zair advised that Crook once had a swimming pool which had been demolished around fifteen years ago. Despite local people being desperate for another, this application had come forward without any detailed analysis.

The Chair agreed that the swimming pool had been a great loss to the area.

Resolution

That the application be REFUSED for the reasons outlined in the report.