

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 23 March 2023 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor G Richardson (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors A Savory (Vice-Chair), E Adam, J Cairns, N Jones, D Oliver, S Quinn, M Stead, S Zair and J Howey (substitute for D Brown)

The Chair informed the Committee that item 5b had been removed from the agenda.

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor V Andrews, Councillor J Atkinson, Councillor D Brown and Councillor M McKeon.

### **2 Substitutes**

Councillor J Howey was present as substitute for Councillor D Brown.

### **3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by The Chair.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor S Zair declared an interest in item 5a and opted to address the Committee as a Local Member in support of the application and would leave the room for the debate and determination.

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

**a DM/23/00032/FPA - Stack, 9A Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7EP**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer, George Spurgeon which provided details on an application for the Demolition of building and structures and the erection of a mixed-use building comprising uses within Use Class E 'Commercial Business and Service' and Sui Generis 'Drinking Establishments and Venues for Live Music Performances and Events' with ancillary facilities, provision of a roof-top terrace with external seating and associated facilities (for copy see file of minutes).

The Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation of the application which included a location plan and photographs of the site. He noted that the application was recommended for approval, subject to the conditions as set out in the report.

Councillor S Quinn and Councillor M Stead entered the meeting at 09.35 am and Councillor N Jones entered the Meeting at 09.40 am. The Legal Officer, Laura Ackermann, asked the Committee Members if they felt able to take part in the vote, all three Members agreed that they could.

Amelia Robson, Agent for the Applicant, addressed the Committee noting the application had been recommended for approval subject to a number of conditions. This had followed comprehensive assessment by Officers, and all other statutory technical consultees. The Committee were informed throughout both the pre-application and application process, that the applicant had worked in partnership with the Council and responded positively to concerns raised during consideration of the application. She added the site was located within Bishop Auckland town centre and the half-demolished building currently detracted from the visual amenity of the area adding the cleared part of the site had stood vacant for over a decade. The Committee were informed that the Applicant intended to bring back to life this vacant site by providing a multi-functional space. The space would allow for local businesses to operate from the premises by providing small to medium size locations. The agent advised that STACK provided units which allowed start-up local businesses to operate from and had been the catalyst for businesses to start small and continue to grow. The STACK operation was highly popular as it allowed for a huge amount of choice for consumers and this was seen through the success of other STACK operations within the region. Members attention was drawn to the Officers report, noting the Site was specifically identified within the Bishop Auckland Regeneration Town Centre Masterplan as a key opportunity to regenerate the area. Visit County Durham recognised visitors drawn to Bishop Auckland's would need places to eat, drink and need evening entertainment. The proposal would significantly assist in the aims of the Masterplan and in attracting people to Bishop Auckland. Informing Members, the proposal would ensure the vitality

and viability of the town centre, by providing significant public benefits such as the development of a gap site that presented poorly onto the main street in the town centre through the formation of a new visitor destination. The development would improve the appearance of Newgate Street, create 75 new jobs and assist in reducing the high levels of vacancy. This proposal was part of the wider regeneration efforts for Bishop Auckland and was a complementary investment to the Council's ongoing investment in the town centre. It was noted the Applicant had explored noise mitigation from the outset of the application and had worked with Officers to reach suitable opening hours and opening hours for the external terrace to ensure that STACK continued to operate as a responsible neighbour. The proposal included acoustic mitigation to ensure that there were no adverse amenity issues, with officers having assessed the technical information submitted with the application and concluded that the proposal was acceptable in terms of noise matters. She described the proposal as an exciting addition to Bishop Auckland which would revitalise a currently redundant site. The Applicant had addressed all technical matters and provided a policy compliant scheme which brought significant benefits to the local community and wider area.

Councillor E Adam noted that the presentation had highlighted an extra objection.

The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that no comment had been received regarding noise disruption to the Housing Association building next door. With regards to the second objection which had been received after the reports had been published which was of a similar issue, the Senior Planning Officer noted he had spoken to the objector on the phone and explained the discussions that had taken place.

Councillor E Adam raised concerns over access to the rear of the site, how it would be monitored, and footfall for residential properties

The Agent informed Members there was no access to the rear, it was an emergency exit and would only be used for deliveries, which would be monitored by staff. The rear exit would be restricted by conditions as laid out in the report. The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that condition 13 in the report restricted the timings of deliveries.

Councillor D Oliver noted he was aware of the site and welcomed the application but raised concerns over the uncertainty around the design and asked if Officers were confident with conditions in place.

The Senior Planning Officer noted the design layout would be as shown on the plan in the presentation and that the 3D model was just to give Members an idea of how it would look, with the steel work and glazed front.

Councillor S Zair addressed the Committee as the Local Member and noted the site had been an eye sore for long enough, and the application was looking to bring a derelict site back to use adding that the application would improve the area visually whilst promoting growth through jobs and supporting local businesses. Councillor Zair noted he did have concerns over the noise issues but from the report and presentation these seemed to have been addressed and quoted the National Planning Policy which stated that any sustainable application should go ahead immediately.

Councillor S Zair left the Meeting at 09.55 am and took no further part in the meeting.

Members agreed that the application would be a welcome addition to the area being an improvement to the site, bringing in regeneration, boosting the economy, bringing jobs and would be a welcome attraction in the area.

Councillor S Quinn moved the application to be approved, this was seconded by Councillor M Stead.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That application DM/23/00032/FPA be **approved** subject to conditions listed in the report.

**b DM/21/00749/FPA - Meadow Farm Caravan Park Ramshaw Lane Ramshaw Bishop Auckland DL14 0NB**

This item was withdrawn.