

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber - Council Offices, Spennymoor on **Thursday 19 January 2012 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor M Dixon (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Tomlinson (Vice-Chairman), D Boyes, M Campbell, K Davidson, E Paylor, G Richardson, J Shuttleworth, R Todd, J Wilkinson, M Wilkes (substitute for A Hopgood) and J Blakey (substitute for M Williams)

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Burn, P Gittins, A Hopgood, P Taylor and M Williams

Also Present:

A Inch – Principal Planning Officer
A Caines – Principal Planning Officer
C Guskin – Legal Officer
D Stewart – Principal Highways Officer

1 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no declarations of interest received.

2 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 December 2011

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2011 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

3 Applications to be determined

3a 7/2011/0488/DM - Old Park Hall Farm, Byers Green, Spennymoor New Farm Workers Cottage

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application a copy of which had been circulated.

A Inch, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site. A site visit had been held that day and Members were familiar with the location and setting.

Members were advised that since the report had been submitted a further letter had been received from Spennymoor Town Council confirming that they had no objections to the proposal.

Councillor K Thompson, local Member spoke in support of the application. He stated that the applicants' farm was sustainable and environmentally friendly and had expanded to over 500 acres in size. The additional dwelling was essential for the operation of their business, ensuring that a farm worker was on site full time. He considered that Planning Officers had misjudged the applicants' needs, and that the application was in accordance with PPS7.

With regard to representations submitted in relation to the application, he referred to the additional correspondence received from Spennymoor Town Council which had also offered its support to the application. In addition he noted that a letter of support had been submitted from the village school but that Officers had considered that it did not address pertinent issues. The applicants were actively involved in the community, arranging activities such as school visits to the farm and he felt that this should be taken into account in reaching a decision.

He continued that the report referred to the omission of a landscaping scheme and advised that he had received an e-mail from the applicant stating that a landscape plan had been submitted and completed following the erection of the barn, and that there would be further landscaping, including hedgerow planting, if this application was approved.

Councillor B Ord, local Member also offered his support to the application. 600 houses had been built near to the farm that were also situated in the open countryside. The proposed dwelling would provide security for equipment and stock and it was essential to have a worker on site who would be on call in any emergencies. If approved the proposal would also help support the local economy through the employment of local builders.

Mr Edmenson addressed the Committee against the application. He was concerned that the proposed dwelling would constitute a serious interruption to the open countryside. There was alternative accommodation available for purchase and rent locally, and there were other buildings suitable for conversion on the site which would resolve the applicants' security concerns more effectively. There was also a bungalow on the farm which was rented out on a commercial basis.

Mr Taylor, the applicants' agent stated that the dwelling was for Mr and Mrs Gilson's son who had started work on the farm 10 years ago, and that there was clearly a functional need for the additional dwelling. The farm had expanded substantially in order to remain competitive and at least 2 farm workers were required for a farm of this size. The existing farmhouse was Grade II listed and therefore conversion of that building was not an option. The proposed dwelling was considered acceptable in design terms and would ensure the farm's future financial viability and security.

Mrs Gilson stated that the farm would be unable to expand and remain competitive without her son living on site. 2 people were required on the farm 24 hours a day to

look after the stock. With regard to the rented bungalow referred to by Mr Edmenson, this property did not belong to the farm and was part of Auckland Estate.

In responding to the comments made the Principal Planning Officer referred to the further correspondence from Spennymoor Town Council. The letter did not specify their support, but stated that the Town Council had been asked to write on behalf of the local Members who had expressed their support to the proposals. The Officer again highlighted the existence of other accommodation in the local area, and that if the dwelling were to be allowed, there would still not be two persons on the same part of the site for supervision purposes.

In deliberating the application Members were advised that the key issue for consideration was whether or not there was a functional need for the dwelling which would be located in open countryside and situated a considerable distance from the existing farmhouse.

Some Members were of the view that the application constituted development in the open countryside and to erect a further dwelling in this location appeared to be in conflict with the farm's principles of operating in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. In addition there was alternative housing available nearby within the existing local housing market which would not place onerous demands on the applicants' son in terms of travelling to the site.

Other Members of the Committee considered that for a farm of this size it would be unacceptable to expect the son, as a key farm worker, to live off-site. Farm theft was an issue and it was essential that key workers were on-site to respond to emergencies. However it was suggested that if the application was approved a condition be included to ensure that the dwelling was for occupation by agricultural workers only.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**

That

- (i) the application be conditionally approved
- (ii) Officers be authorised to formulate appropriate conditions in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee; such conditions to include the following:-

'The occupation of the dwelling house hereby approved shall be limited to a person solely or mainly employed, or last employed at Old Park Hall Farm in agriculture (as defined by Section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a widow or widower of such a person, and to any resident dependents.'

The reason for conditional approval was expressed to be that there was adequate justification in terms of identified functional need, in accordance with PPS7.

**3b 3/2011/0234 - Bowlees Farm, Durham Road, Wolsingham
Formation of Fishing Pond and New Access Track**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

A Caines, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site. He advised that the wording of condition 5 regarding the height of vegetation was to be amended.

RESOLVED

That the application be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report and to condition 5 being amended to read as follows:-

'Prior to the fishing lake hereby approved being brought into use, vegetation upon all parts of the northern A689 highway verge, for a distance of 160m east of the A689 farm junction shall be reduced to a height of no greater than one metre above the level of the adjacent A689 carriageway and shall be maintained at a height of no greater than 1m above the level of the adjacent A690 carriageway during the period in which the development hereby approved is in use.'

**3c 3/2010/0333 - Westgate Filling Station, Westgate
Re-submission of 3/2009/0459 – 2 no. two bedroom apartments and 2
no. two – three bedroom duplexes**

Consideration was given to the report submitted in relation to the above application, a copy of which had been circulated.

A Caines, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site.

Councillor Shuttleworth stated that local residents were not against the principle of development on the site but considered that the proposed building was out of character with other properties in Westgate. In addition 6 car parking spaces were not enough for the number of units proposed. He asked that Members visit the site before making a decision.

In deliberating the application Members discussed density of the site, the provision of an on-site recreation area and surface water drainage. Members also discussed the merits of visiting the site but concluded that a decision could be made on the photographs and information provided by the Officer as part of his presentation.

In response to Members comments the Principal Planning Officer stated that other than the dormer windows which were small in scale and did not dominate the roof area, the design of the building was typical of other dwellings in the vicinity. The scale of the development was considered reasonable, and made good use of the site. He advised that surface water drainage would not be an issue as the majority of the site was currently hardstanding and the proposal included a grassed area to the front and side of the development. With regard to recreation the development

was on the edge of Westgate and would benefit from easy access to the open countryside.

In relation to parking provision the Principal Highways Officer stated that the development proposed 1.5 spaces per dwelling. This was in accordance with Council guidelines and was therefore deemed to be acceptable in highway terms.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**

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

4 Appeal Update

PLANNING REF: 7/2011/0304/DM

**Site at Green Valley Stables, Salters Lane, Trimdon
Proposed mobile home to provide on-site facilities**

The Inspector had dismissed the appeal.