

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Planning Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 6 February 2024 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor G Richardson (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Atkinson, A Bell (Vice-Chair), D Boyes, M Currah, J Elmer, J Higgins, P Jopling, C Martin, A Savory, A Simpson and S Zair.

Also Present:

Councillor G Hutchinson.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Shaw and Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Declarations of Interest

In relation to items no 5a) and 5b) the following non-prejudicial declarations of interest were received;

- Councillor C Martin as local member for North Lodge
- Councillor J Atkinson as a member of Stockton and Darlington Railway

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5a DM/23/01932/FPA - Land to the West of Drum Industrial Estate, Drum Road, Chester-le-Street, Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer with regards to the Erection of B8 Logistics Warehouse with ancillary B2/E(g(iii)) Industrial and E(g(i)) Offices, with associated access, parking, landscape and infrastructure works at Land to the West of Drum Industrial Estate, Drum Road, Chester-le-Street (for copy see file of minutes).

L Ollivere, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation which included a site location plan, aerial photographs, site photographs and a proposed site layout plan.

Councillor Boyes queried improvements to the entrance of the site and whether this would mitigate the issues which had been raised by objectors. The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that the application contained a proposal to re-instate an existing vehicular access in the north east corner of the site for cars. HGV access into the site would be via an existing bell mouth in the south east corner which was to be upgraded and access into the Industrial Estate was via an existing access road. In response to comments raised by objectors regarding traffic, the Senior Planning Officer advised that the amount that would be generated by the application was less than what had been previously approved, especially during peak times. It was not considered that any additional highway improvements were needed, other than what had been proposed.

Councillor Elmer confirmed that the site had been left for such a long period of time allowing it to revegetate and became ecologically valuable. Whilst some effort had been made to compensate, he questioned the likelihood of reaching biodiversity net gain. He referred to the comments from Active Travel England which identified no links to the cycle network and queried the inclusion of a travel plan. The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that a travel plan was included as a condition and with regards to the ecological impact, there was a biodiversity net loss which was regrettable, however net gain would not be mandatory until 12 February 2024. Due to the size of the building the site was constrained and therefore a number of other sites had been considered to attempt to mitigate the harm but this option was not feasible.

Councillor Martin spoke in support of the application. He welcomed the provision of jobs in the area and he was satisfied that section 106 contributions would be allocated to the Chester-le-Street area. He referred to the ownership of unadopted footpaths on this industrial estate restricting potential for travel improvements. Residents were concerned about traffic and Councillor Martin was working with Highways Officer's to mitigate, however he acknowledged that this was outside of the planning remit.

Councillor Jopling supported the application. Whilst she had concerns relating to the impact on biodiversity, this was an industrial area and a considerable number of jobs would be created to the benefit local people.

Councillor B Bell supported the application which would provide jobs and improved travel links. In response to a query regarding the requested donation for public transport, the Senior Planning Officer advised that such transport support would be required for five years.

Councillor Bell moved the recommendation for approval, seconded by Councillor Atkinson.

Councillor Elmer commented that that whilst he did not oppose the application, it was possible to have both economic and wildlife benefits.

Resolved

That the application be APPROVED subject to the conditions outlined in the report and;

- a s106 legal agreement to secure the contribution of £120,000 to ensure the implementation and management of the off-site compensation measures on land in the ownership of the Council, and;
- a S39 agreement to secure a 30-year Habitat Management Plan for the biodiversity mitigation on site. and subject to the following conditions:

5b DM/23/02905/FPA Plot 3B Merchant Park, Millennium Way, Aycliffe Business Park, DL5 6UG

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding erection of industrial buildings including ancillary office space together with associated works at Plot 3B Merchant Park Millennium Way Aycliffe Business Park DL5 6UG (for copy see file of minutes).

L Morina, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included a site location plan, aerial photographs, site photographs and a proposed site location plan.

Councillor Atkinson moved the recommendation on the basis that there were no objections from consultees or members of the public and there were economic benefits in the form of jobs in the local area.

Councillor Elmer had no objections, although he suggested that applications with significant amounts of roof space had opportunities for solar generation,

even if it was not used to power the building and hoped the planning team would be proactive in advising. He was familiar with the area having surveyed it before and it was extremely valuable for wildlife. It was positive to see that the Applicant had worked with Hitachi to consider ecology at a larger scale.

Councillor Bell seconded the recommendation.

Resolved

hat the application be **APPROVED**, subject to a Section 39 Agreement to secure the long term management, maintenance and monitoring of the biodiversity land in accordance with a Biodiversity Management and Monitoring Plan (BMMP) and the conditions outlined in the report.