

**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE (CENTRAL AND EAST DURHAM)**

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (Central and East Durham)** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 11 September 2012 at 1.00 pm**

**Present:**

**Councillor P Taylor (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors P Taylor (Vice-Chair), J Bailey, J Blakey, G Bleasdale, J Brown, D Freeman, S Iveson, A Laing and J Moran

**Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Walker, P Charlton and R Liddle and C Walker

**Also Present:**

Councillor Eunice Huntington and Councillor Robin Todd

**1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Applications to be determined by the Area Planning Committee (Central & East Durham)**

The Chairman informed the Committee that the order of the Agenda items had been amended, and that the Murton West Moor Farm application would be the first item to be considered.

**3a PL/5/2012/0221 - Murton West Moor Farm Cottage, South Hetton. DH6 2UW**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings into 4 no. dwellings with associated

alterations and parking and the demolition of an agricultural building at Murton West Moor Farm Cottage, South Hetton (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site. Members had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting.

Councillor E Huntington, local Member, informed the Committee that she had no objection to the conversion of the agricultural buildings into 4 dwellings, but did have concerns regarding highways issues. A scout hut at the end of the access road to the site, which was used by both young and elderly people, had no footpath to it. The proposed passing place provided little advantage because it only provided approximately 30 metres visibility up the access road, and Councillor Huntington suggested that a passing place further up the road, towards the development would be more appropriate. Councillor Huntington suggested that a condition be attached to the permission that a speed hump be placed across the access road at the scout hut to increase pedestrian safety for users of the hut.

Councillor Todd, local Member, agreed with Councillor Huntington, that there was no objection to the development, all issues were around highways matters.

The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that highways safety had been discussed during the site visit to the area, including the addition of a speed hump to increase pedestrian safety for the users of the scout hut. Advice received from highways was that the proposed location of the passing place was the most advantageous and that it would be ensured that the passing place was as small as was needed. The Principal DM Engineer (Highways) added that while he would support the provision of a speed hump, the provision of a passing place further up the road, nearer to the development would do little to alleviate a potential point of conflict with existing garages in the area.

Councillors Blakey, Bleasdale, and Moran all supported the installation of a speed hump being included as a condition of any permission granted.

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the recommendations in the report and the addition of a condition regarding the installation of a speed hump.

**3b 4/12/00281/FPA - 81-88 Whinney Hill, Durham. DH1 3BQ**

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding the change of use of No. 81 from existing B1 office and Nos. 82-88 from C3 dwellinghouses to D1 non-residential institution to provide drug and alcohol treatment centre together with associated erection of an entrance canopy and fire escape canopy on the front elevation and landscaping works at 81-88 Whinney Hill, Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site. Members had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting.

Mr Alan Hayton addressed the Committee on behalf of Whinney Hill Community Group and gave a presentation to the Committee. The Group was opposed to the application which it felt was not appropriate for the residential area. Approval of the application would lead to parking problems in an area of Durham City where parking was already at a premium. Clients using the centre would soon realise difficulties associated with using public transport to get to it and would resort to private transport, which would exacerbate the parking problem. Approval of the application would lead to an increased fear of crime in the area.

The Principal Planning Officer responded that the issues raised were covered in the report to Committee which had previously been circulated. The proposed centre was within walking distance of major transport hubs, and parking in the area was controlled.

Mr Mark Harrison, Durham Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Team, addressed the Committee in support of the application. External changes to the properties would be minimal. Noise and disturbance would be limited as attendees would attend the centre on a voluntary basis and by appointment only, the centre was not open access. Most attendees to the centre would travel on public transport and by foot, and some additional car parking had been agreed with the Governor of Durham Prison. There were 8 such facilities across County Durham, all in similar residential areas, none of which had caused problems in the areas.

Mr Tim Allen, Governor of Durham Prison spoke in favour of the application. The centre would be a valuable resource in assisting the seamless transfer from custody into the community, and attendees to the centre were motivated to attend and break the cycle of addiction to drugs and alcohol. The centre would be operated by qualified, accredited professionals.

Councillor J Brown informed the Committee that a similar drug and alcohol treatment centre had operated in a residential area in her Ward, which had no loitering, anti social behaviour or littering problems. When the centre moved accommodation, residents requested that it remain.

Councillor Bailey understood the views of the residents and asked how many of the other centres across County Durham were in residential areas. He also asked whether such a facility would not operate better from Community Centres. Mr Harrison responded that all other centres were in close proximity to residential areas, and that clinical sessions were already provided in a number of community settings.

Councillor Freeman informed the Committee of his concern that a drug and alcohol treatment centre was being moved from a non-residential area in Durham City to a residential area. The Police Architectural Liaison Officer had expressed the view that such a treatment centre would not normally be located in a residential area.

The centre would lead to an increased fear of crime in the Whinney Hill area and he moved that the application be rejected. This was seconded by Councillor Bailey.

Councillor Moran moved that the application be approved, this was seconded by Councillor Bleasdale.

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the recommendations in the report.

**3c PL/5/2012/0266 - Tweddle Farm, Fillpoke Lane, Blackhall. TS27 4BT**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding the provision of a new vehicular access, new replacement visitors centre, car parking and change to existing outbuilding, replacement admissions facility and gift shop at Tweddle Farm, Fillpoke Lane, Blackhall (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site. Members had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting.

Mr Blackwood, local resident, objected to the application. He presented a history of problems which had been encountered and previous breaches of planning conditions. The approach road was signed as being unsuitable for wide vehicles, but could have up to 20 coaches a day travelling along it.

Mr Scorer, the applicant, addressed the Committee. He informed the Committee that the facility was established in 2004 and was a well established visitor attraction. The proposed car park move would increase the number of parking spaces available and would vastly improve vehicle movements. The new car park and entrance would enhance both highway safety and the safety of pedestrian movement from the car park to the admissions area.

The Senior Planning Officer informed the Committee that he was aware of some previous planning breaches at this site, however, these had never reached a level where enforcement action needed to be taken.

The Principal DM Engineer (Highways) informed the Committee that there had been no previous reports of concerns regarding the access road to the site, adding that passing places had previously been created along the road to improve access. There were no objections to the application on highways issues. The signs at the end of the road were of an advisory nature.

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the recommendations in the report.

**3d 4/12/00149/FPA - 107A High Street, Carville, Durham. DH1 1BQ**

The Chairman informed the Committee that this application was being deferred to allow further investigation of issues raised by objectors.

**3e 4/12/00451/CAC and 4/12/00450/FPA - Bracken Cottage, Bank Foot, Shincliffe, Durham**

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding the demolition of an existing hotel and dwelling and erection of two detached dwelling houses at Bracken Cottage, Bank Foot, Shincliffe (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site.

Mr John Taylor, supporter of the application, addressed the Committee. The site, which was approximately 2 acres in size, had been developed over a period of some 20 years and presented a somewhat piecemeal development. The proposed development would present a more controlled approach to the site and would be set back from the road which would open up views. The hotel on the site was currently empty and had been marketed for a considerable length of time without any interest.

Councillor Blakey, local Member, supported the application. There had been no interest shown in the hotel despite it being marketed for a considerable length of time, and the proposed development would suit the site well.

Councillor Freeman expressed his objection to the application. A similar application had been rejected in 2006, and he was not convinced that much had changed since that date. Although not viable as a hotel, this was insufficient reason to build two houses on the site.

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved, subject to the conditions as outlined on the report.

**3f PL/5/2012/0161 - 15 West Lane, Hawthorn. SR7 8SB**

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding a loft conversion involving increased roof height, dormer windows and two storey rear extension at 15 West Lane, Hawthorn (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site. Members had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting. A representation had been received from Councillor D Boyes, local Member, objecting to the application on the grounds that it did not fit in with the existing street scene.

Mr B Robinson, applicant, addressed the Committee. The intention was to construct the dwelling to retain as many of the original features as possible,

including the bay windows and arched vestibule to the front. An original application was withdrawn because it was considered to be overbearing, and a second application submitted whereby the footprint of the rear extension had been increased up to the boundary of the neighbouring property. The dormer windows would result in the property having a cottage style appearance and the roof of the property would be one of many different roof styles in the street.

**Resolved:**

That the application be approved, subject to the conditions detailed in the recommendations in the report.