

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber, Crook on **Thursday 12 December 2013 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor M Dixon (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors D Bell, J Clare, K Davidson, J Gray, S Morrison, H Nicholson, G Richardson, L Taylor, R Todd, C Wilson and S Zair

Also Present:

Councillor A Patterson
J Byers – Area Team Leader (South and West)
A Caines – Principal Planning Officer
D Stewart – Highways Officer
C Cuskin – Legal Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Buckham and D Boyes.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor J Gray substituting for Councillor J Buckham.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2013 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Dixon declared an interest in planning application numbered 7/2013/0409/DM – Thurlow Grange, Thurlow Road, Sedgfield as he was on the Board of Livin, the applicant.

Nominations were sought for a Member of the Committee to chair the meeting during consideration of the application.

Resolved:

That Councillor Todd be elected to chair the meeting for planning application numbered 7/2013/0409/DM Thurlow Grange, Thurlow Road, Sedgfield.

5 Applications to be determined

5a 3/2013/0372 - Bondisle Playing Field, Bondisle Way, Stanhope

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding an application for improvements to field access and 33 days use of the field for parking (part retrospective) (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 that day and were familiar with the location and setting.

In presenting the report the Officer informed Members that the event was being monitored closely by the Police and the Safety Advisory Group to ensure that any unforeseen issues were dealt with. Police Officers had advised that the event was running smoothly with only one incident where there had been a build-up of traffic on the estate road which had been quickly resolved. There had been no complaints received from residents of Bondisle Way since the start of the event and feedback from visitors had been positive.

The parking area was covered with a temporary matting which would be removed at the end of January 2014 with the land restored.

Councillor Shuttleworth addressed the Committee as local Member. He was concerned with the disregard that had been shown towards the residents of Bondisle Way; they had not been consulted or asked for their views. Employees of the Railway started work as early as 7.30am on Saturdays and Sundays during the event. He was also concerned that the correct procedure for submitting a planning application had not been followed.

Mr Clement O'Donovan, the Chairman of Stanhope Town Football Club addressed the Committee. The Club was concerned at the lack of consultation by Weardale Railway, particularly following the problems that had occurred the previous year.

After an initial lack of response from the Council the Club had entered into dialogue with Culture and Sport to seek assurances from the Railway regarding protection of the football pitch and also about indemnifying the Club against any damages or other liability arising from the normal use of the pitch. These assurances had not been received.

He had heard that the event may run for a further 3 years yet the Railway had not learnt from its mistakes from 2012. Had the Railway taken the time to talk to residents and if assurances had been received regarding the football field, he believed that everyone would have been happy with the arrangements.

Mr Fairburn, General Manager of Weardale Railway commenced by explaining that the Railway was a not for profit organisation and a lot of money had been invested in establishing the Railway. He apologised to residents as it was clear from the comments made that there had not been enough consultation.

The success of the event in 2012 had exceeded expectations and he believed that appropriate steps had been put in place to improve parking and access for this year. Whilst there had been some minor issues he believed that disruption was being kept to a minimum.

C Cuskin, Legal Officer advised Members that whilst the points made by Councillor Shuttleworth and Mr O'Donovan about the planning process may be valid they were not material planning considerations to which any weight could be afforded.

D Stewart, Highways Officer stated that the Highways Authority was aware that there may be some delays, however this was a temporary event and physical improvements had been made following the problems experienced in 2012 which were deemed to be acceptable. Although residents may experience some inconvenience this was not sufficient reason to justify refusal of the application.

Councillor Davidson stated that as a not for profit organisation this event could only help to secure the Railway's future. This was not about the planning application process but hinged on the economic prospects of both the Railway and the village.

The Chairman made the point that tourism was important in County Durham and more visitors should be encouraged to visit the area. The event was of economic benefit, was being monitored closely by the Police, and Culture and Sport were satisfied that there were provisions in place to protect the football pitch, the people using it and members of the public.

These comments were endorsed by Councillor Nicholson who added that the event would showcase Weardale at its best and would help local businesses. If the applicant had consulted residents earlier in the process concerns would have been allayed.

Resolved:

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

5b 6/2013/0165/DM - Land rear of 40 Front Street, Staindrop

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding an application for the erection of a detached dwelling on land to the rear of 40 Front Street, Staindrop (for copy see file of Minutes).

In discussing the report the Chairman was of the view that the concerns raised by the Parish Council had been addressed in the report. The Parish Council had stated that the cumulative effect of vehicles could not be compared to the traffic associated with the former public house as the traffic occurred during licensing hours, not school hours. However it was likely that vehicle movements at the pub would occur at any time during licensing hours, including lunchtimes.

The Highways Officer advised that the Highways Authority had no objections to the proposals. There was already traffic from the school and he agreed with the Chairman that the public house could have generated a significant number of

vehicle movements both day and night. Notwithstanding that there was consent for 5 dwellings in the public house and additional traffic generated at school times, the addition of 1 dwelling would not impact on the highway to such an extent to justify refusal of the application.

Councillor Richardson appreciated the concerns expressed by the Parish Council and advised that he could not support the application. This was a very narrow lane with a school in the vicinity. There were additional developments proposed in the location which would increase vehicle movements further. Whilst he acknowledged that the land was privately owned, it was currently being used as a car park by local residents.

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report. At this point the Chairman retired from the meeting and Councillor Todd took the Chair.

5c 7/2013/0409/DM - Thurlow Grange, Thurlow Road, Sedgefield

The Committee considered a report of the Area Team Leader (South and West) regarding an application for the demolition of Thurlow Grange and the construction of 21 no. dwellings (for copy see file of Minutes).

In presenting the report the Area Team Leader advised of a proposed addition to the recommendation to include the provision of 4 affordable housing units within the Section 106 Obligation. Although all 21 homes by the social housing provider would technically be affordable this would ensure that the minimum requirement for the site was met in perpetuity.

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report and to the completion of a Section 106 Obligation to secure the payment of a commuted sum in lieu of adequate on site open space provision and for the provision of 4 affordable houses in perpetuity.

Councillor Dixon returned to the meeting.

5d 7/2013/0447/DM - Geestamp Plant 1, Groat Road, Aycliffe Business Park, Newton Aycliffe

The Committee considered a report of the Area Team Leader (South and West) regarding an application for the re-development of existing industrial site to include part demolition and rebuilding of existing buildings, erection of extension to existing office and associated works (for copy see file of Minutes).

J Byers, Area Team Leader (South and West) gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site.

The Chairman and Councillors Clare and Gray welcomed the development which was essential for the economic wellbeing of both Newton Aycliffe and the County.

Resolved:

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