

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in the Council Chamber, Crook on **Thursday 20 March 2014 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor M Dixon (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors D Bell, J Clare, K Davidson, O Gunn (substitute for A Patterson), E Huntington, S Morrison, H Nicholson, G Richardson, L Taylor, R Todd, S Zair and A Turner (substitute for C Wilson)

Also Present:

Councillor John Shuttleworth

A Caines (Principal Planning Officer), C Cuskin (Solicitor - Planning & Development), J Mcgargill (Highway Development Manager) and S Pilkington (Senior Planning Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Buckham, A Patterson and C Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor O Gunn substituted for Councillor A Patterson and Councillor A Turner substituted for Councillor C Wilson.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Applications to be determined

5a 3/2013/0347 - Ireshope Plains, Ireshopeburn, Bishop Auckland

Consideration was given to the report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding an application for the erection of a single wind turbine and associated infrastructure (for copy see file of minutes).

A Caines, Principal Planning Officer, gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site from a number of vantage points. Members

had visited the site and a number of other locations from which the proposed turbine would be visible and were familiar with the setting.

Councillor J Shuttleworth, one of the Divisional Members, addressed the Committee noting that 10 letters in support of the proposal had been received, that the proposed turbine was not a permanent structure and that the relay station and mast nearby were a similar height to the proposed turbine. He explained that the ANOB designation was very restrictive in what was a working valley. Councillor Shuttleworth indicated that he supported this scheme to provide renewable energy to the farm and requested the Committee approve the application.

Mr J Ridgeon, the Applicant's agent, then addressed the Committee commenting that the impact of the turbine on the area had been a prime consideration and that a landscape assessment had been undertaken, which showed that only limited areas would be affected and that there would be no cumulative impact. Any impact, however, had to be balanced against the benefits of reducing greenhouse gases and supporting the business, in addition to which the turbine could be conditioned for a set period of 25 years after which it would be removed.

Mr J Carrick, the Applicant, stated that his family had worked the farm since 1820 and the business employed 7 people. The biggest cost faced by the business was energy and the turbine would make the business more sustainable into the future. No local letters of objection had been received, the proposal satisfied 17 points in the ANOB guidance and planning officers had previously been supportive.

While the Parish Council, ANOB and planning officers had referred to setting a precedent, each application had to be judged on its own merits. The turbine would be owned and operated by the business and viewed in the context of the existing mast. Mr Carrick therefore requested the Committee approve the application.

Councillor Richardson commented that he could understand the impact of the turbine on views, but it was important to bear in mind that the Applicant was seeking to improve the sustainability of this local business. Councillor Morrison echoed this view, noting that 10 letters of support had been received in respect of the previous application.

The Chairman advised that the Committee had to balance the impact of the turbine on the ANOB against the renewable energy it would generate. He noted that there were no existing turbines in the valley and, if approved, this application could make it more difficult to resist future applications.

Councillor Clare commented that while generally supportive of this type of application, the character of the whole area had to be considered including the tourism and ANOB aspects. He felt that the proposed turbine would dominate the area and be highly visible from both sides of the valley. There was a substantial difference between a static mast and a moving turbine which would draw attention. He therefore could not support this application.

In response to a suggestion of reducing the size of the proposed turbine, Mr Carrick, the Applicant, commented that the proposed turbine would only meet 50%

of the energy need of the business and that ANOB guidance was specifically against multiple turbines, hence the need for a single turbine of this size.

Many Members supported Councillor Clare's sentiments, noting that the area was a precious landscape and were of the view that it should be protected; others, however, noted that the location was a working valley and suggested that weight should be given to the environmental benefits and the need to support local jobs and businesses.

Resolved: That the application be **REFUSED** for the reasons outlined in the report.

5b 3/2014/0008 - Land East of Fairfield Cottages, Stanhope

Members were advised that additional information had been submitted in respect of this application. To allow officers to assess the detail, the application had been withdrawn from the agenda for the meeting.

5c 3/2013/0407 - Land off (east) South Church Road, Bishop Auckland

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for residential development (outline, up to 28 dwellings) on land off South Church Road, Bishop Auckland (for copy see file of minutes).

S Pilkington, Senior Planning Officer, gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site.

In response to questions from Members in relation to the access to the site and the volume of traffic on South Church Road, the Highway Development Manager advised South Church Road had capacity for 30,000 per day with only 10,000 using the road at present. The road had no accident record and he was content with the proposed arrangements from a highways perspective.

Resolved: That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the conditions as set out in the report and the completion of a satisfactory S106 obligation to secure the provision of three affordable housing units on site.

6 Vice-Chairman

The Chairman advised that Councillor J Buckham had resigned as Vice-Chairman of the Committee. Members expressed their thanks and best wishes to Councillor Buckham.