

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE (CENTRAL AND EAST)

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (Central and East)** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 9 June 2015 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor P Taylor (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Bell, G Bleasdale, P Conway, K Corrigan (substituting for Councillor B Moir), M Davinson, D Freeman, C Kay, A Laing, J Lethbridge and K Shaw

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Clark, S Iveson, B Moir and R Lumsdon.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor K Corrigan substituted for Councillor B Moir.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 12 May 2015 were confirmed as correct a record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

a DM/15/00702/LB – University Hospital of North Durham, North Road, Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding the demolition of Dryburn House, a Grade II listed building at University Hospital of North Durham, North Road, Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with a detailed presentation which included photographs of the site and a plan of the proposed layout. Members of the Committee had visited the site and were familiar with the location and setting. Members were advised that since the report had been published, more public

submissions had been received, as such there were now 9 letters of objection and 10 letters of support.

Councillor G Holland, local Member, addressed the Committee. He advised that the proposal to demolish Dryburn House contravened part 12 of the NPPF which restricted the demolition of heritage assets and also policies E16 and E23 if the saved Local Plan.

Councillor Holland believed that the County Durham Plan was also relevant, in particular Policy 44, which had survived the Planning Inspectorate examination. He quoted the opening statement of Policy 44 which related to the preservation of heritage assets.

Councillor Holland suggested that there had been a selective management of hospital services by the NHS Trust. He suggested that the increase of 30,000 patients at the University Hospital A & E department was a direct result of the closure of various other A& E departments across the county during recent years. He stated that the Trust must have anticipated the increase in such patients when the decision was taken to close similar facilities at other locations.

The substantial public benefit of the proposals was considered questionable by Councillor Holland, highlighting that the Trust had failed to consider public benefit when depriving them of A & E facilities in Bishop Auckland and Shotley Bridge.

In relation to Dryburn House, Councillor Holland suggested that rather than being demolished, it could be carefully dismantled and then rebuilt in a suitable location such as Beamish. He felt the S106 provision might achieve such relocation and in turn save a heritage asset. He therefore urged the Committee to retain the Georgian mansion at another site should it be minded to approve the application.

Mr J Hillary, Governor of the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, addressed the Committee to speak in support of the application.

Members were advised that there was an unprecedented year on year increase in demand for emergency services across the whole of the NHS. As such, the needs and wants of the people of Durham were not unique. It was now a fact that the existing emergency department at the University Hospital had outstripped its capacity and was currently treating around 60,000 patients each year, double the planned capacity of 30,000. Mr Hillary advised it was wholly unacceptable for ambulances to be left queuing to hand over patients, or worse still, ambulances having to divert to Gateshead or Hartlepool whilst en-route to Durham, because demand had outstripped capacity.

Members were advised that the Trust was seeking to provide an enhanced emergency medical facility in Durham and to do so, it was necessary to increase the footprint of the University Hospital site. Mr Hillary advised that the most suitable option was to expand the current emergency department by building outwards on the ground floor. Whilst other options had been considered, the Committee was advised that such options would have involved too many compromises that would impact on wider patient care at the hospital.

Mr Hillary stated that doing nothing was not an option. Whilst the architectural and historical merits of Dryburn House might be of significant importance, the health and wellbeing of the population of County Durham was arguably of greater importance. Furthermore the need to provide first class healthcare must outweigh the desire to retain a Grade II listed building.

Members were advised that the University Hospital was a vitally important emergency medical facility within the county, providing a service to half a million residents. Furthermore, it had strategic importance in delivery of Durham County Council's emergency contingency plans. Mr Hillary highlighted that there were tangible links between the proposal to expand the Emergency department and the Council's Sustainable Communities Strategy in terms of supporting and strengthening the agendas of being Altogether Healthier, Altogether Better for Children and Young People and Altogether Safer. The new emergency department had to be of the best design and contain the best facilities to give every patient the best possible care and the best opportunity for recovery.

Mr Hillary stated that he would not normally advocate the removal of historical buildings or to diminish the cultural heritage of the county but on balance, sustainable emergency medical facilities would meet the needs of the whole county population, were more important than retaining a listed building.

Mr B Hedley, applicant, addressed the Committee. Members were advised that discussions on the demolition proposals had been ongoing for over a year and Mr Hedley took the opportunity to thank Historic England and the Planning Authority for their cooperation.

The proposals to expand the emergency department would affect all residents of the county. Originally the department had capacity for 30,000 patients, however demand had now increased significantly to 60,000 per annum. It was believed that this was attributable to an ageing population and was a recurring issue nationwide.

At the University Hospital there had been a year on year increase in demand of 3%, rising to 4.5% for the current year. The same situation was also occurring elsewhere in the region.

As such, Mr Hedley advised of the need to reconfigure the whole front of house model at the hospital to accommodate the increase in demand. Redesign would be complex as emergency departments needed to be supported by a range of clinical adjacencies such as X-Ray departments and Intensive Care Units. It was therefore not possible to just develop an A & E department anywhere, the design had to be carefully planned.

Mr Hedley advised that a range of alternative options had been considered, however none had proven viable. Indeed the option to retain only the current facilities would have an adverse effect on ambulance flows and would compromise patient care. As such, it was felt that the public benefit far outweighed any harm to the heritage of the county.

Councillor P Conway referred to a recent application which was considered by the County Planning Committee where the argument had been made that the public benefit of the application significantly outweighed any material considerations.

Regrettably, Councillor Conway advised that he did believe that was the case with the present application and as such supported the proposals. He believed the statement within the NPPF that there should be substantial public benefit to consider removal of a heritage asset, to be very important. The public benefit did outweigh the demolition of Dryburn House, however he wished for the notion of the S106 to be explored before demolition was commenced and in conjunction with conditions 3 and 4.

While the building dated from 1824 and was of some architectural significance, Councillor Conway did not feel it had an overwhelming importance in terms of fabric and design. He also highlighted that the setting in which it had originally been built, no longer existed.

Councillor A Bell echoed the comments of Councillor Conway, stating that at the site visit earlier that day, the building had looked lost and out of character in the grounds of the University Hospital. It was also clear that an extension of the emergency department was necessary. Councillor Bell queried whether the suggestion from Councillor Holland to relocate Dryburn House, was a viable option, as he would support such an option if it were possible.

Councillor C Kay advised that he was completely opposed to the application. Looking at it in a wider context, Councillor Kay advised that the extension to Dryburn Hospital had been developed in the 1990's. In relation to the 60,000 patients now using the emergency department per year, Councillor Kay stated that it was wholly attributable to the closure of such facilities elsewhere in the region. In that regard, he felt the Trust had managed the situation very poorly and that there had been a calculated shift of services to Durham city.

He moved refusal of the application, stating that both saved Local Plan Policy E23 and the NPPF were contravened by the proposals.

Councillor Kay stated that the proposals were a waste of public money, especially when there were perfectly suitable facilities elsewhere in the county.

Councillor Bleasdale felt that she had to support the officer recommendations to approve the application. While noting the architectural merits of the building, she had witnessed the build-up of traffic and ambulances outside of the emergency department on the site visit earlier that day.

Councillor Lethbridge advised that he had been involved with the petition to save the accident and emergency department at Bishop Auckland General Hospital some years earlier. Despite travelling to Downing Street to deliver the petition, it had failed and subsequently the facilities did close down. At the time the message had been that the centralisation of emergency department facilities would provide a better service across the county, however it was clear that was not the case as demand

now outweighed capacity at Durham. It was questionable as to whether this shift had ever been anticipated.

Nevertheless Councillor Lethbridge noted that Dryburn House had become dilapidated and was no longer fit for purpose. The setting it was now within was nothing like it had originally been. He therefore reluctantly felt compelled to concur with officer recommendations and as such moved that the application be approved.

Councillor D Freeman acknowledged the need to increase the accident and emergency capacity at the University Hospital, however believed that the situation had been engineered by the NHS Trust who had taken the decision to close facilities elsewhere. He felt that the public benefit element would actually be best served by the Trust giving consideration to re-opening the accident and emergency facilities at Bishop Auckland.

He therefore did not accept that the demolition of Dryburn House, he believed there was a public benefit in retaining the building and urging the Trust to reconsider its options. Councillor Freeman as such seconded the motion to refuse the application.

In response to a query from Councillor M Davinson, Mr B Hedley advised that because of the heavy supporting infrastructure which was required to support an accident and emergency facility, such as 24 hour specialist services, it was not viable to provide such a service from a smaller hospital. He further advised that the situation had in no way been engineered.

The Solicitor took the opportunity to draw Members' attention to S106 arrangements and highlighted that no works would commence until planning permission was in place for a replacement accident and emergency department, with full details of the programme of works to be delivered.

Members were advised that in relation to the suggestion that Dryburn House be relocated to another site, such an obligation would need to be proven to be reasonable and necessary.

The Area Team Leader advised that while the proposal to relocate Dryburn House was not being insisted on and was not considered necessary or reasonable, it could be discussed further with the applicant.

Mr B Hedley advised that the Trust had previously had tentative discussions with Beamish Museum and there was no real interest in Dryburn House.

The Chairman informed the Committee that a vote would be taken on Councillor Kay's motion to refuse the application, as seconded by Councillor Freeman.

Upon a vote being taken refusal of the application was defeated.

The Chairman informed the Committee that a further vote would be taken on Councillor Lethbridge's motion to approve the application, as seconded by Councillor Bleasdale.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved: “That the application be approved subject to the conditions detailed within the report”.

b DM/14/03100/FPA – 40A Front Street, Framwellgate Moor, County Durham, DH1 5EE

The application had been withdrawn.