

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Planning Committee** held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Spennymoor on **Tuesday 6 June 2017 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor J Robinson (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Bell, J Clare, D Hicks, I Jewell, H Nicholson, G Richardson, A Shield, A Simpson, F Tinsley (Vice-Chairman) and M Wilkes

Prior to the commencement of business the Chairman offered condolences and support to those who had been affected by the recent act of terrorism in London.

The Chairman conveyed his thanks on behalf of the Committee to the former Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee who were no longer members of Durham County Council.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Kay, A Laing, P Taylor and S Wilson.

The Chairman reported that Councillor L Maddison had also submitted her apologies as she had been unable to attend the mandatory training session for Planning Committee Members. Committee Members A Simpson and M Wilkes were in attendance but took no part in voting on the planning applications under consideration as they had not yet received the mandatory training.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2017 were confirmed as a correct and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Councillor Clare entered the meeting during the consideration of item numbered 5(a) on the Agenda and took no part in the discussion or voting on the application.

5 Applications to be determined

a DM/16/04062/OUT - Land To The North Of Etherley Moor, Bishop Auckland, DL14 0JU

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for residential development for up to 150 units with all matters reserved except access on land to the north of Etherley Moor, Bishop Auckland (for copy see file of Minutes).

S Pilkington, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included a site location plan, site photographs, proposed layout and street scenes. Members of the Committee had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting.

Members were informed that since the report had been circulated two additional letters had been received from local residents. The matters raised in the letters had mostly been addressed in the report but the residents had expressed concern about the potential impact on broadband speed and capacity which was not a planning consideration. Further representations had been received from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) which reiterated their concerns outlined in the report and stated that the application should be considered against recent case law. Escomb primary school had written a letter in support of the proposals.

The applicant had offered voluntary contributions of £150,000 towards nursery provision in the area and £100,000 for the continued operation and maintenance of Escomb village hall. Members were informed that this could not be afforded any weight in the consideration of the application.

Councillor R Yorke, local Member addressed the Committee. The Councillor explained that he and local member Councillor C Wilson were in support of the application. The Members welcomed the reduction in the number of proposed dwellings to 150, the proposals for a landscape buffer and the pedestrian links to Escomb primary school. They also welcomed the Section 106 commitments and the additional 1.5 acres to be given to the school. There had been a number of objections to the proposed development but local Members had received numerous e-mails and telephone calls in support of the application, including from the school. The safety of children had been of concern but the developer had worked closely with the Planning Officers to resolve this.

Michael Hepburn addressed the Committee on behalf of the applicant. He explained that the applicant had worked with Planning Officers for a number of years to address the highway and landscape impacts of the development, and noted that there were no objections from statutory consultees. All the major political parties in Central Government recognised that the country was in housing crisis and that supply should be boosted; this development would contribute to this.

With regard to highway concerns the developer would fund upgrades to junctions Maude Terrace/Greenfields Road and Woodhouse Lane/Cockton Hill. Further

mitigation at Dilkes Street roundabout was also proposed. This scheme included physical improvements to Cockton Hill Road which had not been offered as part of the development proposal that had been refused to the south of the site, and these would have a positive impact on the road network.

The proposals would also enhance the facilities at Escomb Primary School with improved pedestrian links. Other benefits included a gift of 1.5 acres of land abutting the playing fields, and a contribution to the nursery.

During construction 30 direct jobs would be created and the developer had signed up to a local labour scheme. Spend would increase in the local area and an additional £197,000 a year would be received in Council Tax and New Homes Bonus.

Only 19 objections had been received which the developer had reviewed and had subsequently altered the proposals to address the issues of concern.

In response to questions from Councillors Richardson, Robinson and Jewell in connection with the 1.5 acres of land and the retention of the landscape buffer zone, the Members were informed that landscaping was a reserved matter which required approval from the Local Planning Authority, and should be in accordance with the indicative Landscape Parameter Plan.

Councillor Richardson expressed concern about the loss of agricultural land and the impact on the road network, referring to the application to the south of the site that had been refused by the Committee in February 2017 because of highway concerns at Cockton Hill Road.

J McGargill, Highway Development Manager responded that in respect of the refused application the developer had not offered any mitigation at Cockton Hill Road and traffic would disperse to Tindale Crescent, causing increased delays. However the improvement scheme proposed for the site north of Etherley Moor included lane widening and a 'mover system' at Cockton Hill Road which should improve traffic flow, and delays should be no worse than experienced at present. There would be some redistribution of traffic heading to Tindale Crescent and the developer had offered improvements here and at the Dilkes Street roundabout to alleviate this.

Councillor Richardson was of the view that the increase in traffic would add to the bottleneck at Tindale Crescent; traffic was already nose to tail in the location, particularly at weekends.

Councillor Nicholson commented that applications of this nature on the edge of settlements were often contentious but having considered the report and the proposed road network improvements was in support of the application and **moved** approval.

Councillor Tinsley stated that he was satisfied with the explanation of the Highway Development Manager regarding the proposed road network improvements which would have less impact on Tindale Crescent than the application which had been

refused. In terms of connectivity he felt that the potential to create pedestrian links to the school was of real benefit. This was a relatively flat site and there would be no significant landscape impacts. The buffer zone would ensure that the distinct separation between the two settlements of Escomb and Bishop Auckland would be retained.

Following questions from the Member, the Committee was informed that the Public Rights of Way which extended up the eastern boundary and to the north of the site would be re-surfaced and links from the development to the Rights of Way would be agreed at the reserved matters stage. There were bus stops located next to the development with proposals to create 150m of footway.

Councillor Tinsley **seconded** the motion to approve the application.

Councillor Bell, having listened to the advice from the Highway Development Manager and the views of local members, expressed his support to the application.

Councillor Shield expressed concern that because no weight could be given to the housing trajectory in the withdrawn County Durham Plan applications had to be considered in the context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development which in his view was an 'open door option'. Until the County Durham Plan was in place he suggested that weight should be given to Saved Local Plan Policies.

In response A Inch, Strategic Team Leader stated that paragraph 14 of the NPPF established a presumption in favour of sustainable development and was applied in this case as the Council could not demonstrate a five year housing supply, as explained in the report. C Cuskin, Planning and Development Solicitor added that as the Council was unable to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land, the weight that could be afforded to Local Plan Policies relating to the supply of housing was reduced.

Councillor Wilkes asked if the footpath crossing the 1.5 acres of land adjacent to the school would be ensured by condition. The Member was informed that the land would be gifted to the Council/Education Authority, and therefore a condition had not been included. However if a planning application was submitted for change of use in future, it was hoped that connectivity to the school could be ensured.

Councillor Wilkes referred to the existence of a footpath along Hallimond Road and asked if it would be upgraded if the application was granted. The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that there was a narrow footpath along Hallimond Road, however it was considered more appropriate to secure pedestrian links through the development.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the conditions contained in the report and to the completion of a Section 106 Legal Agreement to secure the following planning obligations:-

- 10% Affordable Housing Units
- £370,520 for offsite highway mitigation works
- £417,603 education contribution
- £198,900 for offsite sporting and recreation provision

Voluntary contributions

- £150,000 nursery provision in the area
- £100,000 for the continued operation and maintenance of Escomb Village Hall
- Provision of a targeted recruitment and training/local labour scheme.

b DM/16/03395/OUT - Land East Of Wigdan Walls Road, Woodhouses

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an outline application for up to 320 residential units with all matters reserved except access on land east of Wigdan Walls Road, Woodhouses (for copy see file of Minutes).

S Pilkington, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included a site location plan, site photographs, proposed layout and street scenes. Members of the Committee had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting.

Members were informed that since the report had been circulated an additional letter of objection had been received from a local resident and the matters raised had been addressed in the report. A further letter had also been received from CPRE which reiterated their concerns outlined in the report and stated that the application should be considered against recent case law.

The Senior Planning Officer referred Members to Paragraph 83 in the report and the reference to Policy ENV3 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan, and informed the Committee that although it was correct to consider the policy, the site did not lie within the Area of Landscape Value. Therefore the proposals did not conflict with Policy ENV3 and should be omitted from the Officer's conclusion at paragraph 142 in the report.

J McGargill, Highway Development Manager addressed the highway concerns as outlined in the report. As with all developments of this type, the developer was required to submit a Transport Assessment which took into account existing and proposed developments in the area. Mitigation was proposed to the Tindale Crescent, Dilkes Street/A688 roundabout and the Watling Road/A688 roundabout where significant delays would be expected. 84% of traffic would travel to the Tindale Crescent junction and the applicant would be required to offer mitigation if the application on land north of Etherley Moor did not come forward. Highways Officers were satisfied that there would be no impact on Cockton Hill Road as the traffic would be diluted as it travelled through the network.

Councillor Yorke, local Member addressed the Committee. The Councillor stated that he also spoke on behalf of local Member Councillor C Wilson against the application. The proposals would have an adverse impact on the operations at Wigden Hall Farm. Local Members already received complaints about odour and noise, and whilst this had been addressed in the report they believed that an increase in the number of residents would generate more. In addition it may impact on the farmer's business in future. The Wigdan Walls Road was inadequate for the increase in traffic. Objectors had also alluded to congestion at the Four Lane Ends area, yet this had not been addressed in the report. The proposals would also cause further traffic problems at Escomb primary school.

Local members were aware of other potential applications in the area, and with the approval of the development on the site north of Etherley Moor, questioned the adequacy of the proposed highway improvements and the Traffic Assessment. There was significant strain on the road network travelling east to west and he believed that new housing development should be located to the east of Bishop Auckland where the town's employment was located. There was the potential for over-development in the west.

He appreciated that the Committee could only give consideration to the application before them but local Members had to take into account how an individual development would impact on the area as a whole in future.

The site to the north of Etherley Moor was more easily integrated into the environment; Wigdan Walls Road was more remote, with no bus links and in terms of ecological impacts the proposals would have an adverse effect on badgers and ground nesting birds.

In response to the local Members' concerns about the Traffic Assessment, the Highway Development Manager advised that industry standard methodology had been used and the Highways Authority was satisfied with the predicted trip rates. Census data provided information about travel movements in peak times; 84% of traffic would head east, with the remainder travelling west, and very few journeys would be made on Wigdan Walls Road itself. With 33 trips west in peak times the Highways Authority was satisfied that the consultant who had undertaken the assessment had identified the appropriate mitigation in the correct locations.

Mr Kemp of Wigdan Walls Farm addressed the Committee against the application. As a breeder of pedigree cattle Mr Kemp explained that farming procedures produced odours which would be carried over the site of the proposed development. During winter noise and odours were produced as the cattle were housed indoors. His cattle were an award-winning Hereford breed and people visited the farm because of the importance of the herd. Mr Kemp was concerned about the impact on his business as he wished to erect another livestock building next to the underground slurry store. The cattle were doing very well and he could not change his farming practices. The land was not suitable for arable farming and his only alternative would be to breed pigs.

In addition Mr Kemp advised that the main farm buildings were accessed from a blind bend and an increase in traffic would exacerbate the dangers already experienced.

Mr Craggs, local resident addressed the Committee against the application. He resided on the boundary of the site and was concerned about the potential development of an additional 500 houses to the area and the impact this would have on the road network which was becoming a 'racetrack'. In the last 18 months he had observed traffic speeding in excess of 50mph along Wigdan Walls Road. Queuing traffic was also a problem in the locality. In conclusion Mr Craggs stated that the development site had produced a crop every year and there were alternative brownfield sites which could be developed.

Mr J Wyatt, the applicant's agent stated that he fully supported the report which presented a balanced view of the proposals. Whilst Officers were in agreement that the proposals constituted sustainable development, this site formed part of a wider masterplan for the area.

The applicant had engaged with the Local Planning Authority both in the pre-application process and since submission, and was satisfied that the proposals represented sustainable development in the context of paragraph 14 of the NPPF. Subject to the mitigation measures agreed with the Highways Authority, there would be no adverse impact on the highway network.

It had been determined that any landscape or visual impact would be minimal and the applicant would continue to work with Planning Officers during the reserved matters stage to ensure that a rural feel to the development was created.

The applicant had sought to address residents' concerns and there had been no odour or noise issues identified by Environmental Health.

In terms of economic and other benefits 720 direct and indirect jobs would be created, a contribution of £892,331 would be made towards primary education and £352,500 to secondary education across the whole catchment area. The proposed development would generate around £36.4m in direct capital receipt from Council Tax and New Homes Bonus.

In conclusion Mr Wyatt stated that the development would deliver 34 affordable homes, offered off-site highway mitigation, and a biodiversity mitigation scheme. The scheme constituted sustainable development, and had demonstrated that there were no adverse impacts that would outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

Councillor Tinsley stated that over 2,000 properties were proposed for Bishop Auckland in the masterplan which would represent a 10% increase in the population. He felt that the approach to considering applications on an individual basis was detrimental to creating a well-thought out integrated plan for the area. Members had been told that the masterplan should not carry significant weight and considered it unreasonable that the applicant could rely on that.

The Member outlined his concerns to the proposals. In terms of connectivity there was only one access point for vehicles and no bus route. There was limited connectivity to the east which mostly edged gardens, and to the north was a site which may or may not come forward. In comparison to the Escomb site this scheme was less connected and less sustainable.

In terms of landscape impact Councillor Tinsley referred to the report and the comments of the Landscape Officers that the effect on the character of the local landscape would be of medium-high magnitude towards the end of the development phase falling to a medium magnitude over time.

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF stated that where development plans were absent, silent or relevant policies were out-of-date, permission must be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Councillor Tinsley felt that the landscape and connectivity issues he had referred to demonstrably outweighed the benefits. The scheme on land to the north of Etherley Moor differed in its physical integration in the environment. He considered that the outcome of the County Durham Plan and new methodology from the Government with regard to housing supply should be awaited which may determine that the scale of development proposed in Bishop Auckland was not necessary.

Councillor Shield referred to Part 4 of the NPPF, promoting sustainable transport. The report stated that the transport system needed to be balanced and sustainable transport solutions maximised; this site did not have a bus route. In terms of NPPF Part 11, the local members and Mr Kemp had made the point that development of the existing business may be put at risk from unacceptable levels of air and noise pollution. Councillor Shield **moved** refusal of the application.

Councillor Bell noted that Mr Craggs had advised that there had been a crop in this field for many years which was of concern as he believed that there would be a demand for arable land in future. He also considered that there was an over-saturation of development in the area and **seconded** the motion to refuse the application.

Councillor Clare having heard the arguments against acceptance of the application felt that it would be very difficult to argue against building on a site that was identified in the SHLAA which informed the County Durham Plan. In terms of noise and odour it was annoying that people moved next to farms and then immediately complained and he could see that happening at this site, however the report clearly stated that the proposed mitigation was acceptable, similarly for the ecological matters raised.

With regard to the concerns about the impact on the highway network, the mitigation proposed was based on clear statistical information to the satisfaction of Highways Officers, and it would be difficult to argue against. However Councillor Clare sought assurance that the access to the site was safe, given the bend in the road, and asked if there were plans to widen the road to accommodate vehicles turning right into the development. He was also concerned about the potential adverse impact on the farm business, given Mr Kemp's comments that the

proposed development would preclude him from building the barn he needed to expand his business.

In response to Councillor Clare, D Stewart, Principal DM Engineer explained that vehicle speeds along this road were such that the visibility splay would meet minimum guidance and traffic analysis showed that a protected right turn was not warranted at this location.

In response to comments made about proximity to bus services Members were referred to the report which gave details of the proximity of bus stops, and the existing bus route along Rockingham Drive. A new pedestrian footway which would link to that route was proposed.

Councillor Richardson was concerned at the potential loss of agricultural land and noted the concerns of the farmer about the risk to his business; he understood that anyone within 400m of a proposed new building would be notified. The Member was also concerned about the impact on the highway network and could not support the application.

Councillor Nicholson, having listened to the representations made, was minded to agree with the objectors to the application. He agreed that there was a need for new houses in the area but could not support the proposals.

In response to a question from Councillor Tinsley about odour assessment the Senior Planning Officer confirmed that the assessment was based on existing activities at the farm and did not take into account the potential for increased activity, however levels were well below the threshold of what would be considered to have a severe impact. Councillor Tinsley was concerned that the scheme could prevent further development of the farm if the activities had a negative impact on local residents in terms of noise and odour.

Councillor Jewell expressed concern about the scale of the development and the piecemeal way schemes were determined. He also felt that there would be a reliance on travel by car, yet the Committee had heard about the condition of the road and speeding traffic, and that the site access was close to a bend. Problems would be worse at peak times as residents left the estate.

Following a question from Councillor Wilkes about the proposed pedestrian access into Calder Close, the Senior Planning Officer explained that the land was owned by three parties with a small section in the ownership of Durham County Council which could facilitate the link.

Prior to a vote being taken, the Planning and Development Solicitor clarified the reasons for refusal with Councillor Shield and Councillor Bell.

Upon a vote being taken it was **Resolved:**

That the application be refused for the following reason:-

The adverse impacts of the development in terms of its landscape harm, poor connectivity, loss of agricultural land and the potential impact on future operations of neighbouring farming businesses would, in the context of Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework, significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development, and would conflict with policies GD1, ENV1, and H3 and of the Wear Valley District Local Plan and parts 4, 7, 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

c CMA/6/54 - Land To West Of Lane Head Farm Lanehead Lane Hutton Magna Richmond DL11 7HF

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the erection of 2 buildings, 1 storage lagoon, provision of weighbridge and change of use of existing slurry store to blending plant and laboratory/office to create fertiliser for agricultural use with associated access and hardstanding on land to the west of Lane Head Farm, Lanehead Lane, Hutton Magna (for copy see file of Minutes).

C Shields, Senior Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included a site location plan, site photographs and proposed layout. Members of the Committee had visited the site the previous day and were familiar with the location and setting.

Claire Bradley of Kirkwells Planning addressed the Committee on behalf of Hutton Magna, Ovington, Dalton and Barningham Parish Councils. Mrs Bradley wholeheartedly agreed with the Planning Officer's recommendation; the planning application had been submitted in 2012 and it had been five long years for residents and Parish Councils. Policy W2 of County Durham Waste Local Plan required the demonstration of need for a development, and excessive provision should not be permitted. 70,000 tonnes of waste from Durham, Cumbria and Teeside would be stored at the site for end use as a fertiliser. There was no established need and importing waste that was not to be used until after treatment conflicted with Policy W2 of the Plan.

There would be 60 HGV movements every day creating adverse noise and further noise would be produced from on-site generators. This cumulative noise would be emitted 24 hours a day all year, resulting in significant impact on residential amenity.

In terms of odour the Environment Agency had said that the waste had the potential to be extremely odorous and the existing store had generated many complaints in the past. It was acknowledged that at certain times odours were created but the blending of waste would create a nuisance over and above this level.

The proposals if approved would also impact on tourism. The proposed development was in a remote location and did not constitute sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF.

Councillor J Rowlandson, local Member addressed the Committee stating that as had been said 70,000 tonnes of material would be transported and stored at the

site. WLP Policy W38 stated that proposals for the recovery of waste materials would be permitted provided they could be satisfactorily located at existing waste transfer stations, on land identified for general industrial use, in sustainable locations. This site was a considerable distance from any digester capable of taking the material. This was too large a project for where it was sited. The Member noted the comments of Ecology Officers as outlined in paragraphs 102-104 in the report and stated that this was a low-lying area where water pumps were required to maintain it as farmland. He asked Members to agree the Officer's recommendation for refusal of the application.

Mr R Laidler, local resident addressed the Committee against the application. From a personal perspective he explained that this was a beautiful area with wide expansive views which gave a sense of space and freedom. Mr Laidler was a photographer whose main interest was the area in which he lived and two photographs were displayed for Members consideration which had been taken two days previously; the first from Lanehead Lane looking north west over the application site and the second showing the existing concrete structure which was now unused. There had been a serious leakage in 2015, following which activity was ceased.

The proposals would create a new industrial site in this lovely area when there was no shortage of existing industrial sites in the wider region. If approved this scheme would set a dangerous precedent and it would be difficult to resist any other proposals to expand the business further. This location was a priceless heritage asset that should be protected against unacceptable development, and preserved as a jewel in the County.

David Marjoram of ELG Planning addressed the Committee as the applicant's agent. He explained that the proposals would provide a specialist facility utilising established anaerobic digester plants in the area at Southbank, Middlesbrough.

He believed that up to date guidance and the Government's AD Strategy and Action Plan which was published after County Durham Waste Local Plan acknowledged the key role of the renewable and low carbon energy sector. Reduced weight should therefore be placed on Policy W2. The proposed facility would handle 70,000 tonnes of material per annum, the majority of which would be in the form of farm crops, sourced from their extensive landholdings in the local area, agricultural matter related to the location and an element of food waste from elsewhere, but most material would be sourced close to home so it was argued that the site was in a suitable location. There was no facility of this type in the north east and material would otherwise be directed to landfill.

Relevant Technical Officers considered that there was no impact upon amenity and therefore the key consideration was the principle of development. The site was a logical location for such a facility and was supported by up to date guidance. Jobs would be created and the material would be returned to the farm as an odourless fertiliser.

The Senior Planning Officer pointed out that the Government's AD Strategy and Action Plan was not referred to in the report as it did not contain any planning

guidance and the facility proposed was not an anaerobic digester. Policy W2 of County Durham Waste Local Plan was therefore relevant.

Councillor Richardson stated that he could not support the application. The proposals would cause violent odour for surrounding areas. The applicant's agent had referred to material which would otherwise be directed to landfill, however he was aware of a plant in Newton Aycliffe where food waste was taken.

Given that it was clear from the Officer's report that the proposals were non-compliant with planning policies, Councillor Shield felt that there was no option but to refuse the application. He was aware of a local anaerobic digester which caused complaints about odour from the transport of feedstock on a regular basis. Councillor Shield **moved** refusal of the application.

Councillor Bell noted the significant objections to the application, including from all Parish Councils in the area and considered that these should be taken into account. Councillor Bell **seconded** the motion to refuse the application.

Councillor Clare sought clarification of the suggestion by the Agent that the County's Waste Local Plan had limited weight. The Senior Planning Officer explained that paragraph 14 of the NPPF established a presumption in favour of sustainable development where relevant policies were out of date, silent or absent. The Waste Local Plan, adopted in 2005, was considered to be broadly consistent with the NPPF and the relevant policies applicable to this application were not out of date. Therefore paragraph 14 did not apply in respect of this application.

Councillor Tinsley stated that in accordance with Policy W2 there was no established need for the development and that there were more sustainable locations for the operation. Whilst the Environment Agency had not raised any significant objections an incident had occurred, and the Environment Agency had noted that the site was in a vulnerable location. The Councillor concurred with the comments of the local resident Mr Laidler that the area was a beautiful part of the County, and tourism and economy were key strands running throughout the NPPF.

Upon a vote being taken it was **Resolved:**

That the application be refused for the reasons contained in the report.

d DM/16/04067/OUT - Land To The North Of Mount Oswald, South Road, Durham, DH1 3TQ.

The Chairman informed the Committee that local Members had advised that they had not had sufficient time to consider the report.

Resolved:

That the application be deferred.

Councillor H Nicholson left the meeting.

e DM/16/03448/FPA - East Durham Garden Centre, Easington, Peterlee

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the extension and refurbishment of the existing garden centre and car park at East Durham Garden Centre, Easington (for copy see file of Minutes).

S Eldridge, Central and East Team Leader gave a detailed presentation on the application which included a site location plan, site photographs and proposed layout.

Phillipa Stubbs, the applicant stated that BGS were a family-owned and run company that had been trading for 27 years, with 10 garden centres across the country. All members of the family took an active role in the running of the business.

The company had purchased East Durham Garden Centre in 2016 which they believed had scope to be a flagship destination garden centre. The biggest centre the company owned was in Scunthorpe with a turnover of £10m and which employed 300 staff at peak times. This application was expected to bring 200-300 jobs into the local area. She believed that their proven experience and success could make East Durham an £8m centre which would benefit the local area.

The garden centre would have a café, using local produce, and she expected visitor numbers to the area to increase which would benefit the local economy.

Councillor Tinsley welcomed the proposals which would bring diversification into the rural economy and would be an important contribution to Durham's economy, although he was unsure that it would generate 200-300 jobs. Councillor Tinsley **moved** approval of the application.

Councillor Clare concurred with the views of Councillor Tinsley stating that he was delighted to see a business wishing to expand and grow which was important in economic terms. Councillor Clare **seconded** the motion to approve the application.

Councillor Wilkes also queried the number of jobs the applicant claimed would be created and the impact on parking capacity for visitors as a result, however he welcomed the proposals for the centre.

These views were also supported by Councillors Richardson and Bell, and Councillor Richardson remarked that whilst he had reservations about job numbers he advised that the additional jobs that would be created would be welcomed.

Resolved:

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