

Minutes of a Meeting of the **PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **THURSDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2019 at 6.00 p.m.**

PRESENT **Councillor Peter Bergg** (Chairman) and
Kathy Beetham, Arun M. Chandran, J. Clark, Mrs. M. Dalton, R. S. Fleming, George C. Gray, I. Gray, Mrs. S. Haigh, B. Hall, Dave Hardaker and Paul Symons

OFFICERS Chrissy Walton (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Sharna Stretch (Administrator)

39. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. Dorothy Bowman, B.A. Clare, M. Iveson and Ken Robson.

40. **MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

There were no applications for dispensations.

41. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

42. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no questions from members of the public.

43. **MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Paul Symons, seconded by Councillor I. Gray and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Sub Committee, held on 30th January 2019, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Members considered the undermentioned planning applications:

- (a) Outline planning application (all matters reserved) for an Industrial & Trade Park (Class B1(c)/B2/B8) with ancillary office space, Hotel (Class C1), Pub (Class 4) and roadside restaurant and retail units (Class A1/A3/A5) with petrol station (sui generis) and associated infrastructure including an electric power station, parking and landscaping. – Land to the North of Newton Park Services, Coatham Mundeville.

RESOLVED – that the following response be forwarded to Durham County Council:

No comments or objections.

- (b) Construction of two new timber bin stores (adjacent to No. 9 and 15) – Hawkshead Court, Hawkshead Place, Newton Aycliffe.

RESOLVED – that the following response be forwarded to Durham County Council:

No comments or objections.

- (c) Proposed New Factory Building – Sabre Factory, Grindon Way, Aycliffe Industrial Park, Newton Aycliffe.

RESOLVED – that the following response be forwarded to Durham County Council:

No comments or objections.

- (d) Prior notification for the erection of a single storey rear extension measuring 3.66 metres in length, 2.365 metres in height to eave level and 3.579 metres in overall height – 8 St. Oswalds Court, Newton Aycliffe.

RESOLVED – that the following response be forwarded to Durham County Council:

No comments or objections.

- (e) Proposed hybrid application for mixed-use development to provide full planning permission in Phase 1 for anaerobic digestion plant, research/visitor centre and glasshouses including new access to a highway and in Phase 2 outline planning permission for industrial floor space including access, turning and parking areas – Emerald Biogas, Preston Road, Aycliffe Business Park.

RESOLVED – that the following response be forwarded to Durham County Council:

No comments or objections.

45. **COUNTY DURHAM PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

A copy of the draft County Durham Plan Consultation had been received for members to consider with a view to making their responses. Officers had circulated the following proposed responses on the Plan for members to consider to be forwarded to Durham County Council:-

1. LAND AT OLD EQUESTRIAN SITE, WOODHAM

The Town Council would ask that you designate the site of the old Equestrian Centre, Woodham, Newton Aycliffe an 'Area of Separation'.

REASON:

The most recent application **DM/16/02709/OUT for the erection of up to 430 houses (all matters reserves except access) and landscaping and engineering works – Land adjoining Woodham Bridge, Cobblers Hall Road, Newton Aycliffe** resulted in a Planning Inquiry (May 2018) where the main basis of the argument to refuse was around Sedgefield Borough Planning Policy E4, Green Wedge and its relevance. This is

a saved policy which the developer and its agents argued was out of date and therefore carried no relevance and it is clear from the Inspectors comments that the policy only had limited weight there is no version of it taken forward in the Draft County Durham Plan.

The Planning Inspectors report states:-

9. Saved LP policy E4 is the only policy cited in the reasons for refusal. It seeks to normally refuse proposals for built development in a number of designated Green Wedges which provide the setting of towns and villages. The justification for the policy sets out that built development in Green Wedges will be resisted unless it is essential in connection with certain open uses; none of which are applicable to the appeal scheme.

10. Whilst saved policy E4 or some other version of it was not taken forward in the now paused preparation of the County Durham Plan (CDP) and does not feature in the NP, it remains an extant development plan policy and is therefore relevant to my decision. The planning SoCG and the appellant's oral evidence to the Inquiry confirm the policy's centrality to my determination of the appeal.

11. Although the Council has previously considered that saved policy E4 attracts limited weight, including in the Officers Report, that assessment was made on the basis of the 'wider definition' of policies for the supply of housing, i.e. preSuffolk Coastal. On a straightforward reading of the policy and having regard to the narrow definition of policies relevant to the supply of housing in Suffolk Coastal, whilst it may affect the operation of housing policies in much the same way as other commonly found countryside policies in other LPs, it can be distinguished from policies concerned with the supply of housing. I do not therefore consider that saved policy E4 is a 'relevant policy' for the supply of housing.

12. The NP was made in June 2017 and includes amongst other things, a number of policies that seek to ensure the appropriate provision of affordable housing, the continuation and enhancement of Green Corridors and that development respects landscape and townscape character. The NP includes a number of designations including Local Green Open Spaces, Green Corridors and the Aycliffe Village Areas of Separation (between Aycliffe village and Newton Aycliffe). The NP does not allocate sites for development. It is common ground between the parties that the NP does not bear on the principle of the proposed development.

With this in mind it is imperative that this land is designated as an 'Area of Separation' in the County Durham Plan in order to protect it from future development. An area of separation would reflect the Aycliffe Village Area of Separation already designated in the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Council recognises that Durham County Council would rather this parcel of land is allocated as part of a Neighbourhood Plan and is not considered a 'strategic' element of the County Durham Plan. However, as the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan is already adopted and not due for refresh until 2022 and as the County Durham Plan is due to be adopted in the Summer of 2020 this leaves a substantial period of time where a further planning application could be submitted and the land would have no protection.

The Planning Inspectors report includes an explanation of the Green Wedge Policy which is as follows:-

Green Wedge

28. The justification for saved policy E4 explains that the role of Green Wedges is to maintain the distinction between the countryside and built-up areas, prevent the coalescence of adjacent places and provide a rural setting to development. It goes on to say that they also provide a link between the countryside and built-up areas and can be a valuable recreation and wildlife resource.

29. *I see no overall conflict between these objectives and those set out in paragraphs 7 and 17 of the Framework. It was put to me that saved policy E4 was borne out of the extent of development envisaged in a LP with a time horizon only to 2006 and does not reflect the more flexible Framework approach to development outside settlements. In my view, the policy still performs a valuable role in safeguarding the attractive countryside setting of this part of Woodham and Newton Aycliffe and preventing the coalescence of these settlements. I therefore give it very significant weight.*

30. *The proposal provides for a green corridor along the Burn that would range between about 94m and 155m in width. The appellant contends that this would maintain the separation between Woodham and Newton Aycliffe and would thus perform the role of a Green Wedge.*

31. *In purely functional terms, it would maintain the physical separation between Woodham and the proposed development. However, it would not be of sufficient width to prevent the experience of travelling across and through that space being influenced to varying extents by built development on both sides. It would therefore be perceived more as a broad but linear green space running through a built-up area rather than maintaining the semblance of a much more expansive rural landscape interjecting between settlements.*

Although the land is considered by some to have little landscape value, it is considered locally important and any development would have a detrimental impact. In addition, it does provide a wildlife corridor from/to the open countryside and the Burn which runs through the centre of town. It is considered that the site is a valued landscape for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 109 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment).

Designating the site as an 'An Area of Separation' further supports the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan which was developed through extensive public consultation and engagement where the residents constantly placed protecting the green and open space as a major element of the neighbourhood plan.

Durham County Council have proven a sufficient supply of housing without taking this site into consideration.

The Town Council believe that a previous application for development to the north of the site, which was subsequently developed (Stag Lane/Cheltenham Way area), had a Section 106 agreement that stated the remaining land should not be developed and continued to be for public use.

2. HOUSING SITE H23 – Avenue School Playing Fields

The Town Council would like to stress the importance of Policy GANP AV1, Enhanced Bungalow Provision, Land adjacent Woodham Community College and Policy GANP AV2, Garden Provision, land adjacent Woodham Community College. Any development proposals that come forward for site H23 must take into account these neighbourhood plan policies.

REASON:

The Parish of Great Aycliffe has a higher than average ageing population as part of the consultation and engagement process for the neighbourhood plan more bungalows was a constant request when residents were asked about housing provision.

Policy GANP AV2 was developed to allow for a minimum 10% bungalow provision on the site and take into account a larger footprint is required for bungalow. This would help with potential viability and cost demands from developers.

These policies allow more flexibility at this with the aim of increasing the numbers of bungalows within the Parish which are near to key facilities. Every effort has been made within the GANP to carefully balance the needs of the residents with the demands of developers.

Also having, for example, 3 bungalows instead of 4 or 5 dwelling houses will assist with traffic flows in a very tight and restricted access site.

3. HOUSING SITE H21, LOW COPELAW

As part of the previous County Durham Plan submission there was a supplementary planning document for the Low Copelaw site the Town Council would welcome the opportunity to work with DCC Planners to improve this document taking into account the requirements of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Council feel supplementary planning document dated October 2013 did not reflect the character of the Town and should be updated as soon as possible with a view to achieving a more sympathetic document.

MINI GREEN BELTS / WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

As part of previous consultations, the Town Council have consistently requested a number of areas within Newton Aycliffe to be shown as mini green belt or wildlife corridors. As stated previously the Town Council recognises that it would be preferable to have these designated at a neighbourhood plan level and not at a strategic level through the County Durham Plan. However, a number of these areas had been removed from the neighbourhood plan and since then a number of proposals have come forward, granted not in the areas in question, but on undesignated green areas for developments. This has given rise for concern that if an areas is not designated it is fair game for developers to bring proposals forward.

4. ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

The County Durham Plan Policy 15, Addressing Housing Need shows the Parish of Great Aycliffe as a Medium Value Area which allocates a 15% of housing units to be affordable. The Parish still has high levels of deprivation and the Town Council are concerned that relatively new housing at Woodham and newer developments within the Parish are in fact hiding a higher need for affordable homes for its residents and would request that the Parish of Great Aycliffe is re-designated as High Value Area with 20% provision of affordable homes.

REASON:

With the largest business park in County Durham within walking distance affordable homes are essential to create a local work force who do not have to rely on public transport to be able to work. The aim of the NPPF and any other planning policy is to create sustainable communities that thrive. Newton Aycliffe is a prime area for sustainable communities with access to leisure, transport and social environments within a very small area.

With a higher than average ageing population encouraging young families into the parish to live and work will help maintain a health balanced community that can support local businesses and communities.

Also, the Members would request that should you not allocate the Old Equestrian Site as Area of Separation that assurances are given that this site would not be developed.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:-

- (i) That the suggested responses be approved subject to being reviewed by the Environment Committee.
- (ii) That Members of the Environment Committee be asked to consider the proposed responses from the Planning Sub-Committee and make any additional responses which would be forwarded to Durham County Council.

46. **D.C.C. LAND RESPONSE**

Members received a reply from D.C.C. in response to their comments made regarding a planning application for the land at the junction of Durham Way South and Durham Way Aycliffe Business Park.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

CHAIRMAN