

## **PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2026**

Minutes of the meeting of the **PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE**, held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe, Newton Aycliffe on **MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2026 at 7.00pm.**

### **PRESENT**

Councillors: Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Richard Burchell, Arun M. Chandran, Chris Clement, Luke Ellis, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Brian Sowerby and John Woodward.

### **OFFICERS**

Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)  
Vikki Anderson (Corporate Assistant)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

One member of the public was in attendance.

#### **1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Richard Burchell, that Councillor John Woodward be appointed as Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2026-2027.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor John Woodward be appointed as Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2026-2027.

Councillor John Woodward took the Chair for the meeting.

#### **2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, seconded by Councillor Chris Clement, that Councillor Richard Burchell be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2026/27.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor Richard Burchell be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2026/27.

#### **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Collinson, Carl Robinson and Anne Woodward.

#### **4. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

No applications for dispensations had been received.

#### **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

## 7. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and it was

**RESOLVED** - that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Sub-Committee, held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 8. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Members considered the undermentioned planning applications:

### **Application a) DM/26/02460/PN56**

Thames House, Beveridge Way, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4SB – prior notification under Class MA of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for change of use of first and second floors from offices (Use Class E) to 24 no. apartments (Use Class C3).

The Corporate and Policy Officer summarised further details of the application, further explaining that this is not a standard planning application; certain applications are ‘permitted development’ with associated limitations and this is one of those instances, which the planning officer has clarified.

There had been discussion as to whether the application would be considered under schedule 1 or 2 of new planning legislation due to come into force on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Schedule 1 development is a mandatory officer delegation and Schedule 2 is a ‘gateway’ decision whereby it must be agreed by both the Chief Planning Officer and Chair of the Planning Committee to refer it to the Planning Committee.

It is believed that ‘prior notification’ applications such as this one would be a Schedule 1, mandatory officer delegated decision. Under a standard planning application, a development of this size would normally be a Schedule 2 decision. However, since the legislation was very new, there was still some uncertainty surrounding this and, due to the number of issues with the proposal, it was deemed wise to request that the application be considered by a County Council Planning Committee.

Councillor Tony Beddard queried an apparent inconsistency between the planners’ statement, which described the application as a Schedule 2 matter, and the proposed response, which referred to Schedule 1. He noted that the changes to planning legislation were not due to take effect until 31<sup>st</sup> October. From his research into prior approval applications, he understood that the proposed change of use from commercial to residential should fall within Schedule 2 under planning law.

He expressed concern about the lack of clarity surrounding both the current process and the changes due on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Given the level of public interest and the impact on the Town Council and town centre owners, he considered that there should be an opportunity to make representations and he welcomed the request to have this matter considered by a Planning Committee.

He also raised concerns about the absence of disability-related information and the apparent omission of a design and access process required for the proposed change of use. He considered this particularly important because the building dates from 1984 and was constructed under different regulations. The plans showed only a small lift serving the first and second floors. Although developers were not required to provide flats for specific disabilities, he highlighted practical matters such as wheelchair turning circles and the need for people with disabilities to be able to access appropriate areas and facilities. The layout appeared difficult, and the proposal did not identify any improvements to disabled access. He regarded the omission of accessibility measures as very disappointing and said that it reinforced the importance of securing representation before a committee and requested guidance on how the Town Council could challenge these issues.

Councillor Chris Clement highlighted the application as a high-density conversion and felt the application fails on exactly the points raised within this meeting. There is a lot of pressure on the infrastructure identified and he proposed to move forward with the Corporate and Policy Officer's draft response.

Councillor Arun M Chandran thanked the officers for their efforts on this, suggesting that in the past the Council had used planning consultants and whilst it may be too late for this application, he suggested officers could contact a planning consultant who may be aware of the legalities and procedures. He also suggested that the County Councillors be requested to make representations supporting the objections to this. Finally, he requested that the absence of any mention of electric vehicle charging points (EV) be included in the Town Council's response. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Tony Beddard.

The Corporate and Policy Officer agreed to include this in the response.

Councillor Arun M Chandran suggested that, if approved by Durham County Council, he would support an objection to the planning inspector, with support from a planning consultant where appropriate.

Councillor Tony Beddard raised a point of clarification – if it is a permitted development, the Council wouldn't have the ability to comment.

The Corporate and Policy Officer confirmed this was believed to be correct, which was why all objections or concerns are raised at this stage and forwarded to the planning officer. Whether it would subsequently require a further application with additional detail is unclear, as it is a permitted development.

Councillor Richard Burchell clarified even as a permitted development, there would still be legal requirements that the developer would need to meet, such as building regulations.

Councillor Phil Hawkins asked if the application was to go through, was there any idea of timescales to complete the conversion, considering the level of disruption.

The Corporate and Policy Officer confirmed that there are no proposed timescales at this stage, and it would be subject to further information, such as a management plan if it were to go ahead.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Tony Beddard and;

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The following response be submitted to the planning authority:

*'At a meeting of the Town Council's Planning Sub-Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2026, members considered this planning application and agreed the objections and comments as noted:*

- Due to the size and nature of the proposed development, Great Aycliffe Town Council requests that this application be considered by a Planning Committee, as it is believed it may fall outside of the definitions of cases eligible for officer delegated decisions under new planning legislation.*

*Although the need for new housing is acknowledged, the Town Council has several concerns regarding the suitability of the proposed development:*

- Insufficient consideration has been given to parking. Bewick Crescent car park is already heavily used, being the main free car park in proximity to the Town Centre, used by visitors to the doctor's surgery and the adjacent church. In recent years, it has been closed for several days a year to host a funfair on the site. It is also possible that parking charges may apply to this car park in the future. Nearby streets already suffer from considerable parking congestion. Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan (GANP) Policy H3 specifies that new residential developments should provide one off-road parking space for a 1-bed flat, and two spaces for a 2-bed flat.*
  - There was no mention of electric vehicle charging points being available to residents.*
  - Vehicular access and parking for visitors, deliveries and emergencies will also be impacted by access and parking limitations.*
  - There is no mention of affordable housing in the proposal. GANP H8 specifies that proposals for more than 11 dwellings will be required to provide an element of affordable housing, where this is viable.*
  - Noise from Blakes public house and the casino located within the shopping arcade will have a significant adverse effect on those apartments in the vicinity of these premises. The pub is very popular and even the second-floor apartments will be affected by the noise of music and people leaving the pub, particularly late in the evening. Pub users also gather outside to talk and smoke. In addition, the town clock is in very close proximity to the apartments, chiming every 15 minutes.*
  - The first-floor apartment windows on the inner side of the development may experience reduced natural light due to the shadow cast by the roof of the shopping centre.*
  - Insufficient information is given regarding the planned storage and collection of waste and recycling from the domestic premises. There are large bins used by the commercial premises on the ground floor, but these would probably not be suitable or appropriate for use by the domestic premises.*
  - No provision appears to have been made for accessible homes or accessibility arrangements for visitors.*
- ii) Officers be given permission to seek advice from a planning consultant if required.
- iii) Newton Aycliffe County Councillors be made aware of the application and requested to support the objections to this application.

**Application b)      DM/26/02495**

Newton Aycliffe Library Leisure and Community Service Centre, Greenwell Road, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4EH – Hub entrance sign.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Tony Beddard and;

**RESOLVED** – that the following response be submitted to the planning authority:

*‘The Town Council considered this application at a meeting of the Planning Sub-Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2026. There were no objections or comments.’*

**9. DELEGATED DECISIONS**

Members received a report of delegated decisions from Durham County Council Planning Department for information.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be received.

**10. CHANGES TO DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEES**

The Corporate and Policy Officer updated members on forthcoming national changes due to come into force from 31<sup>st</sup> October to Durham County Council’s Planning Committees, as required by the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.

The existing County Planning Committee, three Area Planning Committees and Highways Committee will be replaced by a single Planning & Highways Committee, reducing from 70 members to 11. Many more planning applications will be delegated to officers rather than committees.

This will also mean the Town Council’s ability to request applications be considered by a planning committee will be reduced.

The Corporate and Policy Officer and Corporate Assistant will be attending a Durham County Council webinar on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2026 to receive further information on the impact the change will have on parish and town councils.

**RESOLVED** – that the information be received.

**CHAIRMAN**