

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 10TH JANUARY, 2018

- Present: Councillor Mrs B E Allen, (Chair),
R Arthur, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell, Mrs K Brace,
S P Colborn, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster,
Mrs R M Gratton, G N Hepworth,
Mrs L Kennedy, D McKenna, K Shaw,
T Shepherd, R Whitehead, Miss L Willis.
- Observer: Mrs G Bleasdale.
- Apologies: Councillors D Cummings,
Mrs V Cummings, Mrs S Pratt, B Taylor,

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Councillor Mrs G Bleasdale declared an interest and took no further part in the voting thereon.

2. SPECIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED JUNCTION UPGRADE AT SEAHAM LODGE

The special meeting of the Planning and Environmental Committee was arranged to discuss the proposed upgrade to the junction at Seaham Lodge.

Mr John McGargill, Highways Manager from Durham County Council explained that the County Council's responsibility is to consider the proposal for a development that has been brought forward for housing in north Seaham. As part of the proposal there will be an increase in traffic generated which has to be accommodated on the road already in place. There are already capacity issues at Seaton Lane junction which impacts upon the A19.

A Member questioned the developments in north Seaham as there are none that Town Councillors are aware of. Mr McGargill clarified that the proposed developments are in Malvern Crescent and Burnhall Drive which will impact upon the increase of traffic at the junction.

A Member stated that the last time the junction was discussed Councillors were informed that the impact would come from the Cherry Knowle site because of the failure to complete the link road to Doxford Park. There was no mention of this

being due to the development of the Malvern Crescent site development. Mr McGargill stated that the Member is correct that there is a housing development at Cherry Knowle site which will send traffic onto this junction and therefore the junction must be able to accommodate that. However, if that development did not come forward in Sunderland and the development in Seaham did come forward then the junction still needs to be upgraded. Everyone knows that the junction experiences high demands on traffic which can extend up to the A19. There is significant concern from Durham Constabulary and Highways England about the safety of the A19.

Government predictions is that traffic will increase due to the ageing population nationally. There is enough concern that Durham County Council Highways can't leave this junction the way it is due to major safety and congestion problems. A scheme has to come forward to address the problems at this junction. The fact that development is coming forward at Malvern Crescent in Seaham and Cherry Knowle at Ryhope we can use that as an opportunity as a highways authority to improve the junction but not to use public funds to do so this will be paid for by the private developers.

Sunderland City Council approved the development at Cherry Knowle, Durham County Council did not make that decision. Durham County Council did ensure that the development had conditions attached to it which was that the junction at Seaham Lodge had to be improved via private sector funding.

A resident questioned the proposal for the link road to Doxford Park and why that wasn't developed. Mr McGargill stated that if the Cherry Knowle development did not go ahead and the development at Malvern does go ahead then the junction would still need to be improved.

Mr McGargill stated that Sunderland City Council have a development plan and within the plan is the Doxford Park link road which as two roads missing. This would relieve some of the pressure from the junction but Sunderland City Council has no control over the delivery of the link road and when it will be built and they don't know when it will come into fruition. The current plan states the timeframe of 5-10 years. The junction at Seaham Lodge cannot be left for 5 – 10 years. Mr McGargill stated that he had spoken to Sunderland City Council today and they informed him that they are preparing a capital bid for funding for the link road. They are hoping to secure that capital funding but they haven't got it as yet. They are also hoping to put in planning permission this summer to push forward the link road. Mr McGargill stated that the solution is for the developers to pay for the improvements which Durham County Council would have to pay for anyway if the developments did not go ahead.

A Member stated that a presentation was carried out in July 2016 by the developers around the new builds in Seaham. Councillors asked for assurances on the impact of through traffic, Doctors and Schools. The impact of the through traffic wasn't even mentioned by the developers and it wasn't brought to the Town Councils attention that the Seaton road would have to be brought into three lanes. The last time the representatives from Durham County Council and Kier were in attendance at the Town Hall they were told they were putting the cart before the horse and that if they completed the Doxford Park link road which they themselves said would relieve pressure that would alleviate the necessity to do the three lane road. If the

roads were not insitu before these developments why was planning permission granted for the new houses when planners knew Seaham could not cope with the extra traffic. The Town Council have had no assurances and were not informed of this when Kier first came to the Town Hall to explain their plans. The people of Seaton are now going to have to take on board what Sunderland City Council are doing and the new builds. At the last meeting Councillors were informed that from the Lodge Garage to the slip road at the A19 was going to be affected but now its subsequently heard there are more blocks going to be affected and all it will achieve is moving the bottleneck of traffic further up the road to the A19 and the three lanes will extend right up to the A19. Mr McGargill stated that the Member was suggesting that the scheme is a three lane road upto the A19 slip road. This is not the case and the bottleneck up to the A19 will not be the case. He stated that a model has been produced which takes in how much traffic there is and the times of the heavy traffic. The three lanes would make the traffic less.

A Member stated that the Town Council have made lots of representations in the past about the cars which go all the way back to the A19 on car boot days and there has been no response from the Highways. The Police and Durham County Council have said that this is ok. There was no representations made when the planning applications went in for Malvern Crescent or Burnhall Drive sites from the Highways Authority. It has been at the request of Sunderland City Council where they may or may not have a link road built between 5-10 years. Do you think this is going to happen because I don't think so.

A resident stated that he lives at Seaton Lodge and he can reverse turn on his drive. Everyone from his house upwards is going to be forced to reverse onto a dual carriageway on a 30mph road. What does the County Council say about the residents safety risk. It is encouraging people to reverse onto a dual carriageway when now they have off-street parking and are able to join the traffic in a safe manner. The County Council are suggesting to take away the off-street parking and encourage or force the residents to reverse onto a dual carriageway which is not safe. If there is an incident is Durham County Council going to be libel. Mr McGargill stated that there is no dual carriageway going to be built. The County Council acknowledge that for some residents the situation will be more difficult than it is at present as they have a parking layby in front of their houses. There are lots of residential units that sit alongside traffic signals on busy roads where there is no road safety issues.

A resident stated that the proposal is not the answer. There has been 3000 houses built in Seaham in the last 10-15 years which could equate to 6000 cars. There is another proposal for Parkside for another 160 houses, then more houses at Malvern and Burnhall Drive. This is going to put pressure on the Mill Inn and Seaham Lodge. A link road needs to be looked at to move it away from the houses. We are not here for Sunderland they aren't bothered about Seaham. A link road needs to be made between Seaton and Ryhope linking up between Cherry Knowle and linking the Northbound and Southbound of the A19. It isn't a big job. It can go through the trading estate so the wagons don't have to come through the lodge junction they would be able to slip onto the southbound traffic. Someone needs to look at the whole picture instead of looking at one area.

A resident questioned whether in Mr McGargill's expert opinion that routing traffic past a primary school and a park is the best solution.

Mr McGargill stated that every community in County Durham would like to be bypassed. Funding to do this is significant and it would also have to be part of the Durham Local Plan. Residents would need to lobby local Councillors to get this on the Local Plan. A Member stated that Mr McGargill was passing the buck again. Mr McGargill stated that he was not passing the buck and found the Members comment insulting as he was here tonight in his own time to pass on his views and took exception to the Members comment.

A resident stated that Mr McGargill had stated that when they are planning something they look ahead years in advance. Then surely all of the work in north Seaham was taken into account when the Dalton Park turn off was upgraded at a large cost. Mr McGargill stated that the Highways look at where people are travelling to. Not everyone will be travelling south from the Malvern Crescent area to Dalton Park.

A resident stated that residents who have to cross two lanes to get to their homes will cause a blockage at the traffic lights. Mr McGargill added that this may well happen in peak hour traffic.

A resident questioned how she is expected to cross the road safely on Leechmere Crescent if she wants to get the bus or take her grandchild out for a walk. She stated that she will have to hope that a car is going to stop over a box junction.

A resident asked about HGV vehicles coming down Seaton Lane going to Asda at Grangetown none of this will be stopped.

A resident stated that a slip road heading north is not affecting Seaham and Durham County Council should apply for a grant. Seaham Lodge is saturated and has been for years. There are no pedestrian crossings and HGV's shouldn't be coming down a lane.

A resident questioned what the timings on the traffic lights will be.

Mr McGargill stated that he acknowledged and accepted that the scheme is to increase the capacity of through traffic and he can understand the concerns about pedestrian crossings. It takes time away from the junction getting traffic through if pedestrian crossings are introduced.

A resident questioned what the priority is pedestrians or highways. Mr McGargill stated that the priority always has to be the pedestrians. There have been 4 accidents at the junction in the last five years none of which involved pedestrians. Mr McGargill stated that HGV's coming from the south of Sunderland when the link road is brought forward by Sunderland City Council this will be alleviated but he couldn't say for certain that this would happen.

Durham County Council model traffic signals on the busiest route would get the longest green light time.

A Member stated that he couldn't see how Seaham Town Council could support this proposed upgrade and this was seconded by another Member. Members then decided to vote on whether the junction should be supported or not.

Members voted: 16 against supporting the proposed junction upgrade. 0 Members voted for supporting the application. Members therefore agreed that a formal letter would be sent to Durham County Council objecting to the proposed junction upgrade.

Councillor Geraldine Bleasdale, Durham County Councillor for Seaham stated that people of Seaham know that Seaton Lane is the busiest road in Seaham. County Councillors Sue Morrison and Geraldine Bleasdale have watched the school when the school day is over and watched the Lollipop lady who stops the traffic to allow children to cross which then builds up traffic. The carboot sale on a Sunday is also a bad time for builds up of traffic. How will people get in and out of their drives it should be illegal and traffic will build up with people trying to get in and out of their drives. Residents in Cutting Street have complained about the street becoming a rat run for drivers trying to avoid the traffic lights. Councillor Bleasdale stated that the planning application came through quietly without herself or Councillor Morrison knowing about it but both will still be able to speak at the meeting but they will not be able to vote. She wanted to make all residents aware of the planning meeting at Durham County Council and that they should all attend if possible.

The business of the meeting came to a conclusion and Seaham Town Council will be making a formal objection.