

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 4th SEPTEMBER, 2018

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

Observer: Mrs G Bleasdale

Apologies: Councillors Mrs B E Allen.

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.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26th JUNE, 2018

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of these meetings, copies of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

3. PRESENTATION FROM COUNTY DURHAM HOUSING GROUP

This item will be deferred to a future meeting as Miss Dixon was unable to attend the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that a new meeting date be arranged.

4. DANGEROUS PROPERTIES IN SEAHAM

Mr Peter Coe, Development Manager, Durham County Council was invited to the meeting to discuss the dangerous properties in Seaham.

Mr Coe stated that he is aware of the dangerous buildings in Seaham and he is in attendance at this meeting to explain the process that DCC have to follow with privately owned derelict buildings and he fully understand the frustrations with these buildings. Mr Coe stated from a technical perspective DCC have to go through a process of negotiation in respect of the Town and Country Planning Act or through the Housing Act. Planning enforcement can also be used or equally there is conflicting legislation that means any owner of an individual property has Equal Opportunity Rights and so therefore DCC has to go through a negotiation process

before enforcement powers irrespective of the buildings in question. There are issues with the Golden Lion, the Lord Byron and the Duke as well as others around the Town. DCC have to try and find a negotiated position on any buildings. DCC are trying to regenerate the Town and look to see if buildings can be used as Hotels or petrol stations etc. There are a few critical buildings in the middle of the Town near the Golden Lion that DCC are trying to regenerate but they have to go through the Town and Country Planning Act. DCC have to be able to demonstrate that they have a fundable and deliverable scheme then they would not look to go through compulsory purchase. DCC are talking to the owners of the buildings as well as potential investors but this is a slow process and won't happen overnight. There has been a lot of effort into regenerating the Town and for example the Lord Byron public house that will be more of an enforcement issue as it is an isolated building and this would be a different legislative process. DCC are looking at powers that they can use through the Housing Act for derelict housing issues and that is around enforcing landlords using legal powers but this is not a fast process either.

Mr Coe stated that he has spoken to the MP about different issues across his constituency and have emphasised to him that DCC should be lobbying for better enforcement powers.

The position DCC are in at the moment is a position of negotiation with potential investors and developers as well as the owners to try and get land and property into a controlled environment that can be actually taken through the planning system and get something that works financially and can get a planning consent. That is the case for any site and that is the process that has to be followed.

Members were then invited to ask questions:

1. A Member stated that a lot of the buildings have been empty for a long time and they have been in negotiations for a long time. How long do DCC let this go on for?

Mr Coe stated that they cannot put a time on it. They have been looking at the sites for a long time and they have to clearly demonstrate the negotiation process. This is now being done formally where in the past it has been done informally. There has been difficulty engaging with some of the owners but DCC think the owners are now prepared to come to the table. It won't be straight forward from now on there will be a tipping point, the town is on the up. There aren't many investable areas in the County but Seaham is one. For the first time in 10-15 years Mr Coe stated he is more optimistic that he has been but the development process could still take another 10 years but he is hoping to get some things resolved within the next 2-3 years. DCC are talking to Sure Start, Byron Place, the owners of the Golden Lion and the Duke and the dialogue is good. They are also in discussions with the owners of the Co-op building and there is the potential to do something there. Things won't happen quickly but there are a lot of things going on behind the scenes.

2. A Member asked if Mr Coe could inform Members of the meetings being held?

Mr Coe stated there are monthly meetings being held and Councillor Shaw

will be informed of updates on any of the sites which he can feedback. These things don't happen overnight but you will be informed when they do.

3. A Member stated that there are 2 sites which are of major concern, the Noahs Ark and the Lord Byron. He read a document which stated these sites were safe and secure. They are not safe or secure. The fencing around the Lord Byron can be moved. Another problem is Bar Avenue, Deneside, there are children climbing on the roof they just need to slip or someone will be killed. The buildings have been derelict for years. The Member stated he understood there was a planning application for the Noahs Ark and the Lord Byron and requested the timescales for these.

Mr Coe stated that the Lord Byron has consent but would question whether it would be viable and it may become an enforcement issue.

The Member stated that the owners of a bingo hall at Southwick, Sunderland had been fined £800 and wondered why the derelict buildings in Seaham had not be taken down the same route?

Mr Coe stated that is the planning enforcement route that DCC are going through. Just because the owners put in a planning application in DCC can still start the process of enforcement. Mr Coe couldn't give timescales as it is a legal matter and will take time.

4. A Member stated she understood the legal routes but no one has mentioned the Harbour View Hotel. She had been informed that the building work would start in May but nothing has happened.

Mr Coe stated that the last time he spoke to the owners his understanding was that the works would start in February/March time. They have delayed as they have two sites, the other at the end of North Terrace and he may carry out the building works for both at the same time. He noted the owners are going through contractual issues at the present time.

A Member stated that she had been working closely with PCSO Hutton and the owner of the building. Residents meetings were taking place and when the Lord Byron has been left unsecure the residents in the area are informing them. Children just climb over the fences. The gas and electric were still live in the Lord Byron but this has since been capped off. The owner is waiting for a demolition date.

Mr Coe stated that the owners have a responsibility to ensure that the utilities are switched off and that the building is left secure. DCC can enforce on this.

A Member stated that the plans for the Harbour View stipulate how long they have to start building it's up to two years.

A Member thanked Mr Coe for attending the meeting and giving Members knowledge of the processes which are being followed.

5. **PLANNING CONSULTATION – BURNHALL DRIVE AND MALVERN CRESCENT AND STATION ROAD**

County Councillor Kevin Shaw, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing stated that he had met with a Strategic Officer and proceeded to read out the briefing notes:

- Housing growth, particularly in Sunderland is putting extra pressure on Seaton Lane and traffic light junction that is already carrying more traffic than it can cope with.
- Sunderland were successful in their expression of interest for HIF funding to complete the road link from Ryhope to Doxford Park. This will help to ease pressure on Seaton Lane, but funding is subject to production of a full business case, and full construction could be a few years off.
- Changes to Seaton Lane junction which is not popular with local residents. Whilst it may be possible to cater for additional traffic from new housing, this does not address the existing traffic issues.
- The longer term solution is to improve access for south Sunderland to/from the A19 by reconfiguring the A19 junction. The A19 comes under the responsibility of Highways England (so we cannot dictate solutions or timescales) and their national policy is against adding additional slip roads to the trunk road network. However, we are in dialogue with Highways England looking at alternative proposals.
- HGV ban on Seaton Lane would severely impact on the viability of Seaham Grange Industrial Estate, as without the A19 junction improvements, the businesses have no suitable alternative access. Restrictions on Byron's Walk and Byron Terrace are being looked at.
- However, we are planning to undertake further traffic surveys in collaboration with Tyne & Wear colleagues to look at wider traffic movements in and around Seaham.
- In the meantime we have suspended all decisions, planning applications etc.
- A meeting is planned with Terry Collins and Grahame Morris MP on 28th September.

Members were pleased that all applications had been suspended and a traffic survey for the whole of Seaham was being carried out. A further Member stated that it was good news that the application was suspended but asked if it could be looked at to have a pedestrian crossing installed at the junction so people can cross the road in safety.

The Chair read out a letter from Grahame Morris MP who has a meeting arranged with the Chief Executive. Mr Morris does not support the third lane.

The Chair also read out a note from County Councillor Miss Sue Morrison which stated she continued to support the residents group, and remains fundamentally opposed to any plans which include three lanes of traffic at the Seaton Lane

junction with Stockton Road and it would be helpful if the Town Council were to confirm their objection to the revised proposals.

The Chair stated that as of today residents and Councillors are being listened to and a longer term solution is being looked at.

Mr Coe stated that he had been involved in the housing scheme on Station Road and the complication was the south of Sunderland sites. When the traffic model was carried out there were concerns raised about the future capacity of the junction. The housing in south of Sunderland and in Seaham, the traffic needs to be right.

RECOMMENDED that a further letter of objection should be still sent from Seaham Town Council.

Mr Coe left the meeting.

6. **PLANNING ISSUES**

a) **Monthly List**

RECOMMENDED the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5542 to 5553 as circulated be noted.

7. **TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

a) **Neighbourhood Services – Highways**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

b) **Temporary Road Closure Notice**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the temporary road closure at Lord Byron's Walk on Saturday 8th September, 2018.

c) **Proposed Stopping up of Highway at Oxford Close**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

8. **DOG FOULING ON SEAHAM BEACHES**

RECOMMENDED that this item be deferred to the next Planning and Environmental Committee meeting so Members could discuss this matter in more depth.

9. **DENESIDE ROAD AND PATHWAYS**

A Member stated that they had been approached by several residents in the area with regards to the state of the roads and paths in the cottages area of Deneside. He noted there are a lot of elderly people who live in this area and all it will take is another bad winter and the roads and paths will be lifted even worse. He noted he has never seen the estate look so bad and is beginning to look like a rural Romanian or Bulgarian Village. He was aware that Deneside was on a

programme of works from DCC but wondered if there was any way of making this a higher priority given the nature of the estate and the people who live there.

A Member rejected totally any similarity to a Romanian housing estate and felt it was shocking for a Member to say that. A Member stated he lived there and the comment wasn't shocking at all.

A Member stated that roads have been done in that area. A Member stated the only road that has been done was at the back of the Avenue and Laurel Avenue. The Member stated he has raised at a previous meeting that drop kerbs for people with disabilities are on the programme of works and questioned why the Member didn't speak to him directly about his concerns over the roads and pathways. The Member stated he brought it to this meeting as it needed to be highlighted as there are old and disabled people living in that area and he had been asked to raise this issue and he has.

A Member stated that DCC have spent a lot of money repairing the paths but the problem with the estate is that the streets are quite narrow and people park on the paths and the buses are mounting the paths also which is making them sink. It was noted that there is a programme of works and the paths are the priority. Pot holes are measured by Highways and then prioritised.

It was noted that there is a channel to go through and Members should go to their County Councillors first. Not all items need to be raised at this meeting.

A Member noted that Westlea estate is very similar as the roads are narrow and there is nowhere else to park except on the paths.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

10. LAND DISPOSAL CONSULTATION – SEAHAM RAILWAY STATION

Members met over the summer months to discuss this matter. A Member stated that Network Rail stated that they had bought the land as an investment and the Member noted that the people of Seaham come first before Network Rails investment.

RECOMMENDED that Seaham Town Council continues to object to this proposal.

11. SEAHAM HALL LODGES PLANNING APPLICATION

A Member stated that she had been present at the County Council Planning meeting and had informed Members of the history of the church and the area around it. Only one Councillor agreed with her so the application was passed. The MP had objected along with the owners of the Lodge house. The Diocese did not object.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

12. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL WOODLAND ESTATE MANAGEMENT PLANS

RECOMMENDED that approval be given for the management of woodland by Durham County Council at Dawdon Dene and Seaham Dene.

13. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED that the Acting Town Clerk contacts the Sunderland Echo to update them on the Seaham Lodge Road Campaign and that the planning applications have been suspended until further surveys are carried out.