

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 28TH NOVEMBER, 2017

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

Observer: Mrs G Bleasdale

Apologies: Councillors Mrs B E Allen, E Bell,
Mrs S Pratt.

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. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31st OCTOBER, 2017

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. PRESENTATIONS

Junction Upgrade

Mr John McGargill, Durham County Council and Mr Lee Foxon, Kier Living were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Foxon stated that an application was submitted in August for 460 units and are aiming for a decision in February. The main issue is the junction at the Lodge.

A member of the public stated that residents have been badly informed about the proposal which has been distributed via word of mouth amongst the residents which was quite alarming for the residents who live there considering the changes that are

going to be made. There is going to be a spend of £40m or more on developments in the area and the planning has got a short timescale to come up with any solutions. It's an alarming plan for people who live in the area as it is planned to take away some of the pathway so pedestrians will be nearer the traffic and some residents in Leechmere Crescent will be unable to get out of their houses if this plan goes ahead. The resident stated that every time there is a change it is always to this junction as it is an extremely busy junction and before anything is agreed consideration should be given to the pedestrians, people with pushchairs and disability scooters who will be restricted to get across the road in any direction and there are also 200-300 schoolchildren who pass that corner at the junction. The member of the public stated he was also alarmed at the County Council along with Kier would suggest a scheme which doesn't have any traffic calming measures and asked how can they increase the amount of traffic and make it travel faster without considering the pedestrians. He also asked if the County Council had a Road Traffic Safety Department as he is totally opposed to the scheme and other residents feel exactly the same. The main proposal from Kier is talking about traffic calming measures and this appears to be the opposite of that and lives will be put at risk for no apparent reason. If £40m is to be spent why can a road somewhere else not be built.

Mr McGargill from Durham County Council stated that he would explain the background behind the proposed scheme. In June 2017, Sunderland City Council approved 500 residential units at Cherry Knowle, South Ryhope. Traffic generated from the development will impact upon the junction at Seaham Lodge. The junction suffers from significant congestion at present. The congestion at present can back up onto the A19 slip roads and the Highways Agency are concerned about the safety of the A19 slip roads. Any housing development that is to take place in the Seaham our South Sunderland area then there will have to be an upgrade of the junction to ensure traffic is getting through the junction and is not backing up to the A19. When Sunderland City Council took the decision to approve the 500 houses some of which would impact on this junction Durham County Council took into consideration Sunderland's longer term plan to construct the Ryhope/Doxford Park link road. Mr McGargill shared drawings of the proposed link road with members of the public and Councillors.

Mr McGargill stated that Sunderland City Council are attempting to secure funding or are going to ask Central Government for the funding to connect the two roads to make the link road of the parts of the road that are missing. Once the link road is put in place that will relieve some of the traffic from Seaton Lane and Seaham Lodge junction but until the link road is completed there will be a problem with the junction. Mr McGargill insisted that some modelling was carried out by a transport consultant which indicated the extent of the problems at that particular junction and also insisted that until there was a solution for the junction that Sunderland City Council place some conditions on the final approval of the 500 units. Two planning conditions were secured the first being that the builders are not allowed to build more than 20 units before they have a solution to the junction and the second condition was that they were not allowed to occupy more than 40 units before the solution was delivered. If they want to continue building there they need to come up with a solution and also deliver the solution. Developers tend to build at a rate of 30 units per year Sunderland City Council will have one year to come up with a solution and deliver it. When Sunderland City Council decided to approve the 500 units

there wasn't a solution to the problem. The HCA are the land holders and Barratts are the builders. The HCA are also land owners with Durham County Council on the sites which Kier Developments are bringing forward in Seaham. The link between the two is the HCA (Homes and Community Association) are land holders of both. The HCA engaged their developers and consultants to think of a comprehensive scheme that could accommodate all of the traffic from Cherry Knowle and the traffic from Seaham to see if the junction can work. They are looking to see if it can work safely, if it can accommodate all of the traffic, can it accommodate pedestrians and if it impacts on the A19. The only way forward is to increase the junction to two lanes to cope with the extra capacity. Mr McGargill noted that if this junction is not delivered upon then this will also impact on any further housing developments planned for the north of Seaham.

Mr McGargill stated that the model has looked at the balance of demand and what it is now and what it will be in the future. He also stated that the traffic lights are balanced accordingly to the road usage.

The dis-benefit of the plans is that it will take away some of the pathways from the outside of the houses. It will go to the Councillors for permission and the dis-benefits will be raised at the meeting. He also stated that it is not abnormal throughout the county that residents have to cross two lanes to get to their drives. Risk assessments will be carried out.

A Member stated that if you are talking about having the Doxford Park link road it would be common sense to build the link road first then there wouldn't be increased traffic flow if the link road was put in first. Seaham people shouldn't have to cope with Sunderland's problems. The junction is a nightmare now and you are proposing to put another lane in its going to make a bad situation worse.

A resident stated that they are already taking traffic for Doxford Park now and there are already lorries coming into Seaham via the junction and residents are going to be reversing into two lanes of oncoming traffic, how are residents expected to get in and out of their drives safely.

A resident stated that Durham County Council don't realise that Seaton Lane is already saturated and the proposed link road will alleviate the traffic a little bit. It's about getting the traffic back onto the A19 northward. There is an old railway line with a bridge over the A19 if that was used somehow people wouldn't need to come into Seaham at all. Seaton Lane can't take any more traffic.

Mr McGargill stated that residents will be allowed to attend the planning meeting at Durham County Council and they could appoint a speaker to speak on everyone's behalf.

A resident stated that people come into Seaham on a weekend to see Tommy or visit the seafront. Could a sign not be placed on the A19 taking people straight ahead so they come off at Dalton Park and follow the new road down to the coast this would alleviate a lot of the traffic on Seaton Lane.

A resident stated that it isn't as simple as someone taking away the footpath at the front of the houses. There will be an increase in fumes and vibration. The resident stated he has a young family and it isn't safe for him to reverse into two lanes. Mr

McGargill stated that he understood that there were dis-benefits to the proposals but they are not exceptional in terms of the highway.

A resident questioned whether there had been any other proposals from the building firms on how to alleviate the problems in Seaham. Mr McGargill stated in the times of austerity money isn't always available from Government so Council's rely on developers to pay for this.

A Member stated that even if this is to go ahead the diagrams seem quite poor. There are 4 uncontrolled pedestrian crossings and where the houses are they are virtually nil and there will be 3 lanes of traffic to cross if this proposals goes ahead.

A resident stated that the work is designed to mitigate the traffic from the development at Cherry Knowle and he had carried out some figures on the Forbes Traffic Assessment and that work is simply to mitigate the extra traffic. The degree of segregation as he understands it at the moment is 85% and the projected segregation with improvements forecasted to 2027 would be on Seaton Lane at peak time would be 95%. That is still increasing taking away the developments the degree of segregation as we go along year on year because of the developments.

It was agreed that there are a number of issues and Members requested that a special planning meeting takes place in the new year solely to discuss this issue. There will also be a consultation process for Councillors and residents that can be taken part in.

A Member stated that this is Sunderland City Council's problem and it should be on their shoulders to find a way forward and this should not impact on Seaham.

A resident stated that with all of the new housing developments can Seaham actually cope with this. There are no school places, not enough Doctor's or Dentists and can the Police cope. It was noted that housing is part of the national planning. She also stated there isn't enough social housing for our own residents. Mr Foxon stated that 10% of the properties built will be for social rented housing.

It was noted that the infrastructure in the town needs to be in place before building any more houses.

A Member stated that there was a discussion in the Chamber a few months ago and Councillors were assured that they would be kept informed of developments to allay fears with regards to the traffic. Seaham Town Council were not made aware of the impact of the development at Cherry Knowle. The planning is going to be decided in January and nobody has come back to Seaham Town Council to inform them of developments. He feels Seaham Town Council has been let down by Planners and Developers.

A Member stated that schools, Dentists and Doctors should be put in place before any further housing is allowed in Seaham. Also the junction is the main way in and out of this town and it needs to be accessible for the emergency services to get in and out.

A Member stated that she has heard what has been taken into account but she hasn't heard anyone say that they have taken the residents into account.

RECOMMENDED that a Special Planning meeting is arranged in January to discuss this further with Durham County Council and residents to be invited.

Removal of Lights at George Elmy Lifeboat Way

Mr Kevin Robson and Mr Bob Major, Durham County Council were welcomed to the meeting to discuss the removal of the street lighting at George Elmy Lifeboat Way.

Mr Kevin Robson stated that he is responsible for converting existing street lighting in residential areas to LED lights, taking out street lights which are not needed by statutory standards and a smaller element of signed illumination.

There are two proposals one in East Cliff Road coming down from Dawdon and one in George Elmy Lifeboat Way. They are two consecutive stretches of highway with the street lights proposed to be taken out along there. There are no planned removals in any conflict areas it is only the areas outside of the residential area and restricted speed area. The proposal has been risk assessed by the Independent Road Safety Auditor and most of the issues received are around the darkness of the area.

A Member stated that his concern with regard to the lights being removed is the amount of people who walk in that area on the path and the young girls go jogging. From Spectrum Park roundabout down to the Edith Street roundabout those lights are not particularly needed it's from the bottom roundabout down towards Asda it will be plunged into darkness. Spectrum Business Park runs 24 hours per day and there will be people coming out of there to possibly go to the bus station. The Member questioned whether this was a cost cutting exercise. If you go further up to the next roundabout at Robertson's factory roundabout if you turn left there you can go into Yearsley Logistics, Metromail and Kans and Kandy there are 13 lights along there which haven't been mentioned about removing them. Could these lights be removed in place of the others. To take the lights out from Edith Street to the underpass to the Docks they are on both sides of the road take the ones from the other side of the road but leave the lights on the path side.

Mr Robson stated there are valid road safety reasons why they can't take lights from one side of the road and leave them on the other side there are standards that have to be met and the Council decided they wouldn't remove street lights where there is a 30mph speed limit.

The way the policy has been reviewed and changed to allow the street lights for removal the use of the footpath if it's not in conflict it doesn't affect the risk assessment.

A Member questioned if this is a cost cutting exercise how much are the County Council expecting to save. Mr Robson stated it isn't purely a cost cutting exercise it is also part of carbon reduction. Initially Durham are looking to remove 7000 potentially and now it's down to 3000. The Member asked how many in this area. It was stated there are approximately 30 on the two sites. A Member asked what the carbon footprint is for 30 lights and the carbon footprint for 30 LED lights. Mr Robson stated he would have to provide these figures from the technical staff and report back.

All areas are reviewed that fall within the policy. The area near Robertson's may not have been reviewed as yet. A Member questioned whether those lights could be removed and to leave the other lights in so people are quite safe between Edith Street roundabout and Asda. Mr Robson noted it was a valid request but the driver is if they are not required under the policy and the risk assessment shows it is safe to take them out they wouldn't be offset against the removal of East Cliff and George Elmy Lifeboat Way they would take those lights out as well.

A Member stated that there was an option for Seaham Town Council to pay to keep those lights in via a service level agreement for both sites. This would cost Seaham Town Council:

1st site 241 East Cliff - £6k

2nd site George Elmy Lifeboat Way – if paid up front around £15k or in instalments over 10 years the cost would be £16.5k.

A Member stated that this would mean the Town Council were taking on and potentially paying for what is a County Council funded function. This is a policy decision which would need to be discussed at Clerk's Advisory Sub-Committee. It is a policy which would affect the whole Council and would need to be looked at separately and in simple terms why should Seaham residents pay twice. That function is the responsibility of Durham County Council.

A Member questioned if you are allowing Seaham Town Council to pay for the lights how will it bring down the carbon footprint.

A Member stated it is clearly a cost cutting exercise and the carbon footprint is a non-starter. The removal of the lights will put people's safety at risk and you can't put cost cutting before safety. He also asked has anyone actually turned the lights off and tried it to see what happens.

RECOMMENDED that this item is referred to the Clerk's Advisory Sub-Committee for further discussion on whether there is an alternative way.

4. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

a) Neighbourhood Services – Highways

RECOMMENDED the Council accept the Neighbourhood Services Highways reports for 6th November and 20th November, 2017.

5. PLANNING ISSUES

a) Monthly List

RECOMMENDED the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5505 to 5506 as circulated be noted.

6. LUXURY LODGES AT SEAHAM HALL

The Deputy Town Clerk stated that Councillors and members of the public have been invited to attend a consultation on Friday 1st December, 2017 to discuss the proposed luxury lodges at Seaham Hall.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information.

7. REQUEST FOR SEAHAM TOWN HALL TO BE USED AS AN EMERGENCY MEETING POINT

A request was received from Mr Stephen Norris, Durham County Council requesting that Seaham Town Hall be used as an emergency meeting point for Seaham High School.

RECOMMENDED that Seaham Town Hall be used as an emergency meeting point be approved.

8. HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

RECOMMENDED that Members note the Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £5m which can be divided up amongst coastal towns between Sunderland and Hartlepool.

9. TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE

RECOMMENDED that Councillors note that Cottages Road will be closed on Sunday 10th December, 2017 due to work being carried out on the railway bridge.

10. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.