

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 7th AUGUST, 2018

Present: Councillor D McKenna, (Chair)
Mrs B E Allen, S P Colborn, S Cudlip,
G N Hepworth, T Shepherd, B Taylor,
Miss L Willis.

Apologies: R Arthur, D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings,
Mrs S Forster, Ms R M Gratton,
Mrs L Kennedy, 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.

2. SPECIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSAL TO SELL THE LAND TO THE SOUTH OF SEAHAM RAILWAY STATION, STATION ROAD, SEAHAM

The Acting Town Clerk stated that Network Rail are planning to sell the land to the open market for the land to be used as either commercial or residential buildings and there are 11 proposed parking spaces for station users or visitors.

The consultation document provided by Network Rail shows little or no regards for the need for safe and open access to the underpass. It was noted that Network Rail bought the land in 2011 so improvements could be carried out to the railway crossing and Network Rail stated at the time that they would landscape the land which hasn't been carried out and the land is used for fly tipping and is very unsightly.

A Member stated that the Town Council should make an objection to the sale of the land until there are definite proposals for the use of the land. The current proposal shows plans for 36 x 2 bedroomed apartments. It was noted that Seaham will be swamped with new developments which are also proposed across other areas of Seaham which will add even further burdens to schools and health services.

Members discussed the location of the site which is situated in a cul-de-sac position and the extra traffic that would increase on the small roundabout. There is already insufficient parking at the train station and cars are often parked on the roadside which would only increase due to extra dwellings being built there. It was noted that O'Neill Drive also a cul-de-sac in Peterlee next to the hospital has a similar problem with parking issues which residents regularly make complaints about.

Members noted that there is to be an expansion of the railway with Horden opening a train station and there is also the possibility in the future of the metro line being extended to Seaham so extra parking would be paramount.

A Member questioned whether the proposals prejudiced the underpass to which the Acting Town Clerk stated that currently the plans show that it does and members of the public would have to walk around via Strangford Road to be able to reach the other side of the station. It was noted that these issues would also need to be raised with Network Rail as the public right of way cannot be cut off.

Members agreed that the Acting Town Clerk should write a letter of response to Network Rail stating the Town Council's objections to the proposals and the need for extra parking at the train station.

RECOMMENDED that a letter of objection is sent to Network Rail outlining the need for more parking spaces and improved proposals for the development of the site and also highlighting the need for a safe and open access to the underpass.

3. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK – REPLACEMENT PANEL MEMBER

It was reported that a Member of the Appointments Panel is unable to commit to the interview date of the 24th August, 2018 due to prior holiday arrangements. A Member from Seaham Community Party was nominated to replace this Member and it was noted that if for any reason a Member of the Labour Party was unable to attend then they should also be replaced by a Labour Party Member.

RECOMMENDED that a Member of Seaham Community Party be appointed as the new Panel Member for interviews and a Labour Party Member be a substitute Member of the Panel in the instance that a Labour Party Panel Member is unable to attend.