

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of Planning Committee meeting held via Zoom at 14:00 pm on Friday 22nd January 2021.

Present: Cllr R Cornwell (Chair), Cllr J Ashby, Cllr V Ashfield, Cllr L Brown, Cllr J Elmer, Cllr G Holland and Cllr C Reeves.

Also present: Mr A Shanley (Parish Clerk), Mr John Lowe, Cllr E Ashby, Mr Peter Smith, Mr Michael Hurlow, Mr Mike Burkett and Mr Mark Brown (members of the public)

1. Welcome and apologies

None received.

2. To receive any declarations of interest from members

Cllr V Ashfield declared an interest in application DM/20/03394/VOC and took no part in the discussions on this application.

3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 8 January 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2021 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. To receive any public participation comments on the following agenda items.

Cllr E Ashby advised that she was attending the meeting to hear discussions on the Article 4 Direction consultation.

Mr John Lowe advised that he was attending the meeting to hear discussions on items 5-10 on the Agenda.

Mr Michael Hurlow advised that he was attending the meeting to hear discussions on item 8 of the Agenda.

Messrs Peter Smith, Mark Brown and Mike Burkett advised that they were attending the meeting in order to present plans for the upper floor of the former Cotswolds shop unit.

5. Matters arising:

(a) To approve responses on the following planning applications:

DM/20/03238/OUT | Outline application for Purpose Built Student Accommodation comprising 850 bedrooms, with all matters reserved. | Land To The North Of Mount Oswald South Road Durham DH1 3TQ. The response to this application was **approved** by the Committee.

DM/20/03394/VOC | Variation of conditions 1 (approved plans) and 7 (lighting) of planning permission DM/20/00702/VOC (Erection of office HQ with associated works and car parking) to facilitate amendments to the design of the MSCP | The Sands Carpark And Durham Sixth Form Car Park Site Freemans Place Durham DH1 1SQ. The response to this application was **approved** by the Committee.

DM/20/03455/FPA | Change of use from dwelling to three flats (use class C3) including internal alterations, dormer windows in roofspace to rear, rooflight to front and fenestration changes. | 64 Gilesgate Durham DH1 1HY. The response to this application was **approved** by the Committee.

(b) To consider the outcome of the following Area Committee hearing:

DM/14/03327/FPA – Erection of four detached dwellings | Fernhill, Newcastle Road, Crossgate Moor, Durham, DH1 4JZ. The Committee **noted** that this application was refused at the Area Committee hearing.

6. Presentation on proposals for 7-8 Silver Street (former Cotswold store)

Mr Peter Smith advised that an application would soon be forthcoming for the upper floors of the former Cotswold store (7-8 Silver Street) to convert this space into 2 x 6 bedroom apartments to be let to students.

Peter advised that there would be no change to the envelope of the building, expect for the introduction of windows to the vennels, and the downstairs unit would be retained and be let as a retail space.

Peter advised that the conversion of the upper floors would help to subsidise the rent for the downstairs unit.

Peter advised that he hoped that this project will go some way in helping to revitalise the city centre, by filling an empty unit. Peter advised that he felt that the City needed to be revitalised by filling one empty store at a time.

Peter advised that litter arising from the upper floors would be collected twice per week and there is an internal waste storage as part of the plans, in order to avoid waste spilling on to the streets.

Mike Burkett advised that he was involved with marketing 11 vacant units in Durham City at present and supported what Peter Smith had advised regarding the upper floors being rented out going some way in subsidising the rents for the ground floor retail unit. Mike advised that rents were often high in Durham and, as a result, the rateable value for business rates is also high.

Cllr R Cornwell highlighted that the envelope of the building is of real architectural value and he hoped that this could be retained as such. Mark Brown advised that this would remain unchanged.

Cllr J Ashby raised the concern of introducing windows to the vennels and advised that he felt that the police may take issue with this as this could invite burglaries.

Cllr L Brown asked whether the windows faced the World Heritage Site. Mark Brown advised that they would not.

Cllr G Holland advised that he felt that there needed to be a more strategic approach to the City and getting empty units filled.

Cllr J Elmer and Cllr R Cornwell asked whether the original façade of the building to the ground floor could be reclaimed and exposed as it may be that the original façade to the ground floor is still in good condition.

Peter, Mark and Mike thanked the Committee for their time and Mark and Mike left the meeting at this stage.

7. Regulation of Private Landlords in Durham City

Cllr J Ashby presented a report to the Committee on the subject of regulation of private landlords.

Cllr J Ashby advised that the letting of residential properties for rent in Durham City is currently guided by a voluntary Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme, which requires private landlords to work in line with a Code of Practice. The Code of Practice sets out a wide range of legal requirements including:

an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), a Gas Safety Certificate, safe electrical equipment, a smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector (only required for solid fuel fires).

Cllr J Ashby advised that the Scheme is clear and reasonably comprehensive, but only applies to landlords who have voluntarily joined it. Similarly, the sanction of being suspended from the Scheme if breaches are discovered can only apply to landlords who are members.

Cllr J Ashby advised that the Committee's attention has recently been drawn to a number of properties that allegedly lack an Energy Performance Certificate. Cllr J Ashby advised that he felt that this, amongst other issues, demonstrates that the Scheme is insufficient to ensure the safety of the occupants of all rented accommodation in the city.

Cllr J Ashby recommended that Members refer the information about missing EPCs to the Landlord Licensing Working Party that is liaising with the County Council on ways in which the private rented sector in Durham city might be brought into a compulsory, self-financing landlord licensing scheme, and to request the County Council to investigate the cases specified.

Both of these proposals were unanimously **agreed** by the Committee.

8. To consider these planning applications (the date in brackets is the deadline to call to committee):

a. To note:

DM/20/03667/FPA | Lean-to hipped roof to existing single storey extension to front | 21 And 23 Geoffrey Avenue Durham DH1 4PF (26 January). It was **agreed** to note this application.

DM/20/03717/FPA | Replacement of Existing Decayed Front Doors and Windows | 46 Albert Street Durham DH1 4RJ (28 January). It was **agreed** to note this application.

DM/20/03743/FPA | Replacement of existing 20m telecommunications pole with new 20m telecommunications pole, supporting 6 no. antennas and 3 no. remote radio units, and removal of existing ground RBS 6102 cabinet and installation of York cabinet along with ancillary development. | Land To The North East Of Keenan House Old Dryburn Way Durham DH1 5BN (28 January). It was **agreed** to note this application.

DM/21/00022/FPA | Construction of 4 no. refuse storage areas with associated boundary fencing | 9 The Chains Durham DH1 1QZ (not available). It was **agreed** to note this application.

DM/21/00041/LB | Renovation including the creation of internal Jack & Jill style en-suite, replacement of front and rear windows, insertion of replacement window frames and new front door, repaired pointing and render to lower third of rear elevation (retrospective) | 211 Gilesgate Durham DH1 1QN (4 February). It was **agreed** to note this application.

b. To consider making representations

DM/20/03217/PNC | Convert third floor from B1 use to C3 to provide an additional 8 x 1 bedroom studio apartments | Third Floor Bridge House North Road Durham DH1 4PW (4 February). It was **agreed** to maintain the current position that this proposal does not meet the criteria for permitted development and consequently a full planning application should be requested. The Clerk **agreed** to draft a letter to that effect.

DM/19/03313/FPA | Temporary change of use until end of August 2021 from C3 to C4. | 3 The Bowers Durham DH1 4EH (5 February). It was **agreed** to object to this application. Cllr R Cornwell **agreed** to draft the response to this application.

DM/20/03760/FPA | Partial change of use to create 70 bed Student Accommodation Facility to include the erection of a two storey extension to existing roof and associated access arrangements | First To Third Floors 4 - 6 Silver Street Durham DH1 3RB (4 February). It was **agreed** to object to this application and it was also **agreed** to call this application in to the Central and East Area County Planning Committee. Cllr J Ashby **agreed** to draft the response to this application.

9. DCC Spatial Planning Policy consultations

The Committee considered the spatial planning policy consultations as provided by the report.

It was noted that the Parish Council had already contracted the services of a local planning consultant to build a case of evidence in support of an extension of the Article 4 Direction Area. This report included a recommendation that the Article 4 Direction be extended to other areas outside Mount Oswald, which weren't currently being consulted on as part of the proposal. It was **agreed** to adopt the consultant's report without the inclusion of references to other areas outside that being proposed by DCC, to recommend this to Full Council and to await the outcome of the two upcoming drop-in e-events being hosted by the County Council on the 2nd and 10th February, in case of anything arising which may influence the Parish Council's response to this consultation.

10. Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair advised that he and Sue Childs had had a very constructive meeting with Durham County Council on the outstanding issue of the maps provided as part of the Neighbourhood Plan and a number of good suggestions had been

made at this meeting; including extending the designated green space areas of Flass Vale and Observatory Hill. The Chair advised that we are still awaiting the outcome of the proofreading being carried out by DCC on the Neighbourhood Plan.

11. Traffic Regulation Orders - Framwelgate Peth / Milburngate Development

It was noted that correspondence had taken place between the Parish Council and the County Council's Highways team regarding the current highways arrangements at the junction leading into the site. In view of this correspondence having reached an impasse, it was agreed that a press release should be issued in order to highlight the Parish Council's concerns.

12. Dates of future meetings

Friday 5 February 2021 - 14.00 to 16.00 hrs – via Zoom.

Friday 19 February 2021 - 14.00 to 16.00 hrs – via Zoom.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members of the Committee and members of the public for their participation and closed the meeting.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Cansell," with a comma at the end. The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Planning Committee
(5th February 2021)**