

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in Cotherstone Village Hall
on Wednesday 23 July 2019 at 7.00pm

In attendance: Cllr John Birkett (Chair), Cllr Jenny Watson, Cllr Vince Bendin, Cllr Richard Hunter, Cllr Richard Green, Cllr Tim Sabey
Clerk: Judith Mashiter
Public: 22 local electors

1. Approval of apologies for absence

All councillors were present.

2. Declarations of interest

None

3. Requests for dispensations

No requests had been received.

4. Minutes

Draft minutes had been circulated.

It was resolved that the minutes of meeting of the Parish Council held 10 July 2019 are an accurate record.

5. Public participation

Cllr Birkett explained that the usual public participation time of 10 minutes would be extended to allow all those present to express their views to councillors on the planning application being considered at agenda item 6.

Comments were made as follows (not presented in chronological order, but grouped by theme)

Parish Council involvement and procedural issues

- Has the Parish Council been approached about potential responsibility for the new piece of village green identified in the application? Cllr Birkett responded that no approach has been made to the Parish Council on any matters connected with the application.
- Parish Council was thanked for convening this meeting to allow residents to express their views.
- Can residents be assured that Durham County Council officers will properly scrutinise the proposals for compliance with all planning laws?
- Although this is a Full Planning Application, some of the language used suggests that the application is only Outline — has sufficient detail been submitted? Some people had not been able to access the pre-application advice section on the planning portal.
- Scepticism was expressed about the timing of the submission in the summer period, and frustration with the short window for consultation. Cllr Hunter explained that the statutory periods were being applied.
- Could the Parish Council request conditions be attached, either alongside any objection to the proposals, or subsequently, should the application be approved? Cllr Hunter confirmed that any Parish Council objection would be based on material planning concerns and could not include a request for conditions.
- Cllr Birkett emphasised that the Parish Council, although a statutory consultee, was just one 'voice' and urged residents to respond individually to the application, using photographs if appropriate.
- Standard Consultation Expiry date was confirmed as 2 August
- No feedback is provided to response submissions
- If the application is determined by Planning Committee, not delegated authority by a Planning Officer, then members of the public can attend and speak to the Committee

The application generally

- The application is flawed, impacts have been ignored and many benefits don't seem real, are overstated and certainly don't outweigh benefits. Resident would encourage Parish Council to formally object and for as many individuals as possible to do likewise, with as many points as possible and in an individual (not a template letter) way.
- Has demand for housing in Cotherstone been evidenced? What demand is there locally is for either bungalows or 3/4-bedroomed housing, not the largely 2-bedroom housing proposed? There are huge numbers of houses being

built nearby at Startforth, with more proposed at Staindrop. One resident was concerned that the new properties could become holiday homes.

- Has any assessment been made of whether public transport, schools, health services etc are sufficient to cope with the proposed housing?
- The village has traditionally been a 'ribbon' development, along the main road, and this proposal is for another 'estate' and encroaches into the Conservation Area.

Cotherstone Neighbourhood Plan and County Durham Plan

- Clarification was sought on the status of Cotherstone Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Hunter explained that a draft Plan will hopefully be completed by September/October; the application site has been identified in it as a potential site for future development; in the former Teesdale Plan there was a clear village line and outside of that the Conservation Area, whereas the draft County Durham Plan has the village 'envelope' up to the railway line; the draft County Durham Plan doesn't identify any housing sites in Cotherstone, so this application would represent a 'windfall' in terms of meeting the County Council's housing targets; application for sites along the back lane have always been refused. It was confirmed that the Teesdale Plan is retained until a new County Durham Plan has passed Examination. Cllr Hunter confirmed that there is no reason why draft policies developed for the Neighbourhood Plan, even though the Plan itself has no statutory weight, cannot be mentioned in response to this application.

Responding to the consultation

- It was suggested that the support of County Councillors be enlisted, though one resident reported that this did not help at all with a previous application.

General

- Frustration was expressed that elsewhere (eg. Darlington) the planning authority has caved in to developers, possibly under financial pressure.
- Clarification was sought and provided that all trees in Cotherstone have protection due to being in a Conservation Area and do not, therefore, have or need individual Tree Protection Orders. Any and all work to the trees should be notified and approved.

Site-specific practical issues

- Field drains and potential flooding of the site and the adjacent road
- Change to appearance of the village on approaching from the south, due to removal of trees and loss of green space. Views of the church, from the Tees Valley Railway Walk would be lost (and such a loss was a key reason for an application being refused some years ago).
- Risk to pedestrians walking from new housing to the village on narrow road without a pavement (and no scope to introduce a pavement)
- Risk caused by increased traffic volume (assuming 2 cars per house = 16 residents' cars, adding to existing mixed traffic of cars, bikes, motorcycles, waggons, tractors), speed and a blind corner on a 15ft-wide road. Even were the 30mph limit pulled further out of the village (as happened with Birkett Close development), this would not guarantee drivers would adhere to it.
- The plans don't refer to any waste water or flooding assessment; if Northumbrian Water rely on Durham County Council to flag up any problem prior to them assessing capacity, then the problem might only become manifest once the development is built; land drains are a key issue as two surface drains empty into the sewer there. Build-up of tarmac and asphalt over many years has exacerbated the problem, as has the lack of regular maintenance of the gully. Historic flooding of the site and the adjacent road should be provided, along with photographs if possible.
- Are there archaeological remains in the field and should the County Archaeologist investigate this? A recent LIDAR survey identified an unusual feature in the southwest corner of the site, where a new entrance is proposed.
- Ecological issues – with bats, badgers, great crested newts – should be thoroughly investigated.
- Public Rights of Way issues connected with the development would cause concern for some residents and necessitate a change in the way their property is used.

6. Planning matters

It was resolved to submit an objection response to planning application DM/19/02083/FPA based on multiple material matters and to also request that the application be determined by Durham County Council Planning Committee rather than under delegated authority. Agreed that no benefit would be gained from requesting an extension to the consultation response period.

Meeting closed: 8.05pm