

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ALL MEMBER BRIEFING

20th October, 2011

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Baldwin, Carson, Cossins, Crudass, L. Hughes, Johnson, Kelley, Knowles, Landers, Lister and S. Richmond. (11)

OFFICERS – Steve Petch, Planning and Economic Strategy Manager, Valerie Adams, Principal Planning Officer, Emma Williams, Planning Officer, David Nelson, Planning Officer and Karen Johnson, Planning Officer.

DARLINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CURRENT POSITION

– The Planning and Economic Strategy Manager outlined the development of the LDF and the role of Scrutiny. He advised that the development plan informed a range of plans and strategies that were concerned in some way with sites or places in Darlington and was a key consideration in making decisions on planning applications. A PowerPoint presentation accompanied the report.

Members gave consideration to presentations relating to the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, Planning for New Housing, Identifying Limits to Development and Provision of Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Discussion papers (previously circulated) assisted Members during consideration of the topics addressed.

In relation to the preparation of a draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document discussion ensued on how planning obligations were calculated and the criteria/priorities that were used for obligations, how much of the document was national policy, how much weight the document carried in the determination of planning applications and appeals, whether the document relates to the community or whether it also applied to commercial development and whether annual changes were identified in the document and if so, were developers informed of the changes. The amount that it costs to maintain open spaces was queried, and it was suggested that a householder levy, similar to that in place at West Park, could be an alternative way of collecting funding for this. Members present felt that affordable housing was the most important thing from planning obligations to be spent on, with public art the least important, however, priorities would have to reflect local circumstances.

In relation to Planning for New Housing, discussion ensued on the space above commercial properties and whether this could be used for living accommodation, retirement properties and the timescales within which planning permissions must be implemented.

In relation to Identifying Limits to Development, discussion ensued on the increasing pressures for development in villages, the criteria for identifying development limits and the lack of housing that was available for carers. It was explained that under current planning policy, new affordable housing could be built on the edge of villages outside development limits, if specific local needs have been identified.

In relation to Provision of Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, discussion ensued on the temporary permission that was granted at the Burma Road site and

the outcome of the appeal on that application, and how it could be avoided for future applications. Discussion also took place on the assessment criteria that it is proposed to use to allocate potential sites, how much weight the development plan policy will carry when it is finalised and the impact of the Localism Bill. The Council's statutory requirements around Gypsies and Travellers was discussed, including minimum requirements for pitch provision and liaison with adjoining local authorities. It was noted that the required number of pitches that had been identified in the Tees Valley Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment was in dispute and that Member training was needed on Gypsy and Traveller heritage and culture to assist in future discussions and policy development.