



KEY ACTIVITIES: 18 November to 8 December 2020

PLANNING APPLICATIONS considered	OBJECTIONS submitted	SUPPORT submitted	COMMENTS/CONCERNS submitted
9	4	0	0

NEWS ITEMS

Aykley Heads planning application. The County Planning Committee (1 December) voted in favour of developing the site at Aykley Heads, but are required to refer the application to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Subject to the minister's approval, work will begin on the first phase of Aykley Heads Business Park in early 2021.

Bent House Lane planning application. On 3 December Banks Property submitted an outline application for this development of up to 440 dwellings on 17.25 hectares (closing date for comments: 25 December).

Free parking in December. To support local businesses, DCC brought back its 'Free after 3' parking offer of free parking in all council-owned car parks and on-street Pay and Display after 3pm, every day in December.

Virtual Christmas Market. The Parish Council worked with the Durham Markets Company to support independent traders via a Virtual Christmas Market 2020 (27 November to 6 December) as the usual marquee of stalls and candle procession had to be cancelled this year.

COVID-19. Following the second national lockdown, County Durham was placed into Tier 3 (Very High Alert) restrictions along with the rest of the North East.

KEY BUSINESS

Sands common land inquiry. DCC's "Statement of Case" and the "Proofs of Evidence" documents were received from the Planning Inspectorate (deadline for comments: 3 January), however we have now been advised that the public inquiry has been postponed until mid-March 2021.

December talk. A lot of people expressed interest in Martin Roberts' talk (10 December) on the historic buildings and gardens at Kepier - scheduled (via Zoom) for 7pm on 10 December - and Martin agreed to the talk being recorded for later viewing. Just over 100 people attended the talk.

Aykley Heads committee hearing. Despite valiant efforts by Trustees at the hearing, the committee's verdict was "minded to approve". The desire to get its hands on £6M of LEP funding was more important to DCC than the need to build in accordance with the energy standards in the County Durham Plan. Trustees sent a press release to the Northern Echo questioning the point of the County Durham Plan if DCC is ignoring its policies, and they have sent a referral letter to the Secretary of State.

Bent House Lane planning application. The Trust sent a further letter to DCC requesting an opportunity to discuss the masterplan (no response). Trustees are drafting a response to the application to cover landscape, heritage and sustainable transport aspects, alongside the application's lack of compliance with the County Durham Plan policies.

North East Transport Plan consultation. Initial views on this Plan are that it is well-presented but vague on funding and projects are piecemeal. Trustees will draft a response focussing on aspects affecting the Durham city area. The Barnard Castle relief road was only left in the Plan due to the timing of the first draft (before the County Durham Plan was adopted), so it will be removed from the list of projects at the next draft.

Dunelm House. The Secretary of State is now "minded to add Dunelm House to the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest at Grade II". The Trust plans to send in comments (deadline: 18 December).

CURRENT CONCERNS

CIO legal status. An additional change to the new Constitution was discussed and a final check done.

Recruitment. Trustees discussed personal approaches to encourage new membership, including sending out copies of spare publications to new members. Further discussions on subscriptions will be had next year.

Website. The soft launch of the new website is likely to be early in the New Year.

Personalia. An additional four people were nominated to be offered Honorary Membership of the Trust, to add to the four existing Honorary Members.