

# SADBERGE PARISH COUNCIL

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Luke Swinhoe  
Assistant Director, Law and Governance  
Darlington Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Darlington  
County Durham  
DL1 5QT

6 Church View  
Sadberge  
Darlington  
County Durham  
DL2 1SD  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2017

## COMPLAINT

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of Sadberge Parish Council to **complain** about the way in which Darlington Borough Council's Planning Applications Committee decided to grant planning permission for a development of 25 new houses on the east side of Middleton Road on the southern edge of Sadberge (Application reference 17/00358/FUL).

I, along with another Sadberge parish councillor and the Clerk to the Parish Council (Alastair Mackenzie), attended the Planning Applications Committee meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017. **The process by which the Planning Applications Committee reached its decision to grant planning permission for the development was unsatisfactory and unfit for purpose.** The Planning Officer's responses to the issues raised by myself and Mr. Mackenzie were inadequate, and the Committee members failed to fulfil their duty to address the issues and to press the Planning Officer for appropriate information and justification of his advice.

In particular:-

### Sustainability

In his input to the Committee, Mr. Mackenzie pointed out that Darlington Borough Council's Interim Planning Position Statement (April 2016) included an assessment of the key sustainability factors for Darlington Borough villages, and Sadberge had failed every one of the sustainability tests. The Planning Officer failed to explain the discrepancy between the Interim Planning Position Statement's categorisation of Sadberge as being an unsustainable location for development and his conclusion in the report on this planning application that the development would "contribute to the three dimensions of sustainable development" and none of the Committee members asked him for an explanation.

The Planning Officer made a point of the fact that the developer had agreed to make a sustainable transport contribution of £30,000, and that this would fund the (one day per week) bus service for two years from 2019 to 2021. However, in response to my questions he admitted that neither he nor the developer had contacted the bus service provider to verify that the proposed contribution would, in fact, enable the continuation of the service. I pointed out that I had spoken to the bus service provider and established that the current funding will run out in December 2018 and that once the service has been discontinued it may not be easy to reinstate it. The Planning Officer had no response to this, and again none of the Committee members asked him for an explanation or justification of his advice.

### Conservation Area

The Planning Officer's report on the planning application described how amendments were made to the plans to address the issue of the look of the development's street frontage along Middleton Road. However, at the Planning Applications Committee meeting I pointed out that a key purpose of the Conservation Area was to "safeguard the appearance of a ridge village in the landscape", and that the proposed development would destroy that aspect of the village's character. Once again, the Planning Officer had no adequate response to my statement and none of the Committee members pursued this point further.

For these reasons, Sadberge Parish Council believes that the process by which the Planning Applications Committee reached its decision on this planning application was deficient, unsatisfactory and unfit for purpose.

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor Lee Tate**  
**Chair of Sadberge Parish Council**

Copy to: The Planning Inspectorate  
Councillor Brian Jones