

Developer in court over Hartford Hall

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DEVELOPERS are being taken to court over their alleged failure to rectify a series of problems on a trouble- plagued luxury housing estate.

Ho Sanderson and his wife Margaret are due to appear before magistrates in Bedlington next month after legal proceedings were started against them by Wansbeck District Council.

The prosecution refers to the couple's alleged failure to comply with planning conditions imposed by the council on the development of the Hartford Hall residential estate near Bedlington.

More than 70 upmarket houses and apartments were created at Hartford Hall, but the project has been dogged by problems and complaints – with residents claiming last year that the developers had gone against a promise to restore the parkland and gardens as a haven for wildlife.

In August following 18 months of discussions with Hartford Hall Estate Ltd, the company behind the multi-million pound redevelopment of the former Georgian mansion and its wooded grounds, the council ordered developer Mr Sanderson to address a number of problems on the estate or face the possibility of legal action.

He was set a 28-day deadline to get rid of unsightly construction waste left lying on the estate and submit detailed plans and timetables for the completion for a catalogue of work which he had failed to carry out.

Now the council is taking Mr and Mrs Sanderson to court over their alleged failure to comply with the breach-of-conditions notices served in August.

The authority ordered him to submit plans and timetables for the surfacing and marking out of car parking areas; completion of site access work; drainage, street lighting, landscaping and construction of roads and footpaths and the creation of an equipped and landscaped children's play area. He was also required to carry out an approved landscaping scheme for the estate, to be maintained for five years, during the next available planting season.

Last night a council spokesman said: "We have been attempting to get Hartford Hall Estate to comply with the planning conditions to complete the development without success. We have been left with no option but to seek a court ruling on their failure to comply with the conditions."

Planning permission was granted in 2001 to develop Hartford Hall, its outbuildings and grounds as a luxury housing estate to save it from ruin and remove it from the English Heritage 'at risk' register of historic buildings.

In 2005, a number of families listed a catalogue of complaints about their expensive homes. Hartford Hall Estate Ltd has been ordered to pay fines and costs totalling £29,000 after twice being prosecuted by the Environment Agency for breaching rules on sewage effluent discharging into the River Blyth.

In 2007 a group of residents staged a demonstration in Bedlington against plans to build a further 30 homes on the estate to raise funds for the completion of the project. A spokesman for Hartford Hall Estate Ltd said: "The majority of planning conditions have been met. The estate has written to Wansbeck Council and has not yet received a reply."

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