

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, Brympton Way on Wednesday 27 March 2019.**

(2.00 pm - 4.00 pm)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Graham Middleton (Chairman)

Clare Paul	Jo Roundell Greene
Neil Bloomfield	Sylvia Seal
Adam Dance (to 3.55pm)	Sue Steele
Tiffany Osborne	Gerard Tucker
Crispin Raikes	Derek Yeomans



**Others:**

Val Keitch

**Officers:**

Rob Jameson	Avon & Somerset Constabulary
Debbie Haines	Locality Team Leader
Marc Dorfman	Senior Planning Adviser
Mike Hicks	Specialist (Development Management)
Kate English	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

*NB: Where an executive or key decision is made, a reason will be noted immediately beneath the Committee's resolution.*

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### 112. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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### 113. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Page and Dean Ruddle.

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### 114. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillors Adam Dance and Crispin Raikes each declared a personal interest for agenda item 12 – planning application 18/01481/OUT, as they are also members of South Petherton Parish Council which had made comments on the application.

#### **115. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 4)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Area North Committee was scheduled for 2.00pm on Wednesday 24 April 2019, at a venue to be confirmed (but likely to be the Edgar Hall in Somerton).

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#### **116. Public question time (Agenda Item 5)**

There were no questions from members of the public present at the meeting.

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#### **117. Chairman's announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

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#### **118. Reports from members (Agenda Item 7)**

Councillor Sue Steele referred to a new tourism brochure for the area, and praised the work that had been done to promote the local area.

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#### **119. Neighbourhood Policing (Agenda Item 8)**

The Neighbourhood Police Team Sergeant for South Somerset (Avon and Somerset Constabulary), provided members with a verbal update on the revised structure and new ways of working for the local beat teams. He informed members that shift patterns had also changed, and the Somerton and Wincanton teams were no longer working to the same shift routines. This had led to occasions where the beat team may not be available, but he reassured members that responses to emergency 999 calls would continue to be covered at all times by the patrol team.

During his update, the Sergeant also highlighted that rural theft was still an issue and an organised group was operating in the area. He noted it was anticipated local beat boundaries would change in line with the new ward boundaries, and it was likely a new additional sergeant for the area would be in post shortly.

During a short discussion, the Sergeant responded to points of detail raised by members including information about:

- Priority and approaches for dealing with rural crime
- Reporting and statistical information
- Attendance of officers at parish council meetings

The Chairman thanked Sergeant Rob Jameson for attending the meeting.

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#### **120. Area North Committee Forward Plan (Agenda Item 9)**

There was no discussion and members were content to note the Forward Plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the Area North Forward Plan be noted.

## **121. Planning Appeals (Agenda Item 10)**

Members noted the report that detailed planning appeals which have been lodged, dismissed or allowed.

One member commented that the Inspector's comments, regarding the application for 2 dwellings at Henley, were very interesting and the appeal would be a useful case study for new members.

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## **122. Schedule of Planning Applications to be Determined By Committee (Agenda Item 11)**

Members noted the schedule of planning applications to be determined at the meeting.

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## **123. Planning Application 18/01481/OUT - Land East of Stoodham, South Petherton (Agenda Item 12)**

***Proposal: Outline application for the erection of 6 dwellings.***

The Specialist (Development Management) presented the application as detailed in the agenda, and highlighted that access via the junction of Stoodham with Silver Street was a contentious issue locally due to safety concerns. He highlighted the key considerations for the application and noted it was accepted by the Local Planning Authority and SCC Highways that the Stoodham / Silver Street junction was a sub-standard junction.

It was acknowledged that the applicant had suggested some highway improvements along Silver Street, however SCC Highways had responded saying that the improvements were not required. The Highways opinion was that the proposed improvements would not significantly improve the safety of the junction, and the predicted amount of additional traffic movements did not necessitate junction improvements. It was noted that the first 25 metres or so of road going into Stoodham was narrow and the applicant was proposing to widen other sections further along the road nearer the application site. The Specialist explained that if members were minded to approve the application that condition 2 should be amended to remove reference to improvements to the junction.

The Specialist updated members that a petition had been received since publication of the agenda. He also verbally corrected an incomplete sentence showing in the agenda report.

Two members of South Petherton Parish Council and two members of the public spoke in objection to the proposal. Some of their comments included:

- A large number of people had attended the Parish Council meeting when the application was discussed.
- There doesn't seem to be much reference to the South Petherton Neighbourhood Plan which indicates this site for no development. It has weight and should not be ignored
- Access is via a dangerous junction. Pedestrian safety has been overlooked.
- This isn't infill development. This application will set a precedent and it will be difficult to refuse more housing further into the field.

- South Petherton is already over the housing figures stated in the Local Plan.
- More houses are being built but the local facilities are being lost such as the bank.
- A petition has been submitted with signatures of around 70 people.
- A traffic count had been done during the morning commute. At this time visibility from Stoodham onto Silver Street was often impaired by parked vehicles.
- The start of Stoodham is narrow and single lane. Cars entering the road sometimes have to reverse back out onto Silver Street to let vehicles pass. There is no pavement along the first section of Stoodham.
- Visitors to the proposed properties will add to the vehicle movements and their parked cars will further hinder access along the road.
- An application similar to this was turned down in the 1970s partly due to highway safety.
- Archaeological reports suggest there may be settlement remains of interest at Stoodham,
- The SSDC Landscape Plan refers to the site as being very visible and the fields being of high sensitivity. Building here will cause demonstrable harm.

The applicant's Highways Adviser and Agent then addressed members. Their comments included:

- Acknowledge junction isn't to core standard. SCC Highways have stated they would prefer the junction to remain unchanged.
- Site is in a sustainable location.
- Traffic movements had been recorded for a morning and late afternoon commute which had indicated approximately one car movement per two houses.
- Only one traffic incident had been recorded over a number of years and that had involved a driver under the influence.
- The proposal is a small scale development that will result in less than a 1% increase in the population of South Petherton, and won't impact on the local infrastructure.
- No objections from Highways. The junction already serves 82 dwellings. Impact would need to be severe to warrant a refusal of the application.

Ward member, Councillor Adam Dance, raised a number of concerns about the proposal including:

- Administration process – some nearby residents who had made objections had not received a letter notifying them of the meeting. The time of this meeting had meant many people could not attend.
- Aware of several accidents the junction, and only a child was clipped by a passing vehicle. It's difficult to get lorries into Stoodham.
- Infant school is already at capacity
- It was 10 years ago that houses had been built at Stoodham, not recently, as stated in the officer report.
- Vehicles are frequently parked in the 'keep clear' zone marked on Silver Street. Silver Street is often congested especially when two large vehicles meet.
- Acknowledge single storey dwellings are needed in South Petherton, but the site is located a long walk away for the elderly to reach local facilities.
- The Neighbourhood Plan should not be ignored. Parishioners know best about their local area.

Fellow ward member, Councillor Crispin Raikes, also made several comments including:

- Not the houses as such that are a concern but the location.

- The junction is very dangerous. There was strange wording in the officer report – it's acknowledge the junction is sub-standard, but as people have to drive slowly it makes the junction acceptable.
- When exiting Stoodham onto Silver Street there is poor visibility.
- Huge fear of local residents is if this proposal is the start of further development.
- In reality likely to be far more traffic movements than indicated in the report.
- Struggle to understand the logic that the proposal will have no impact.
- Condition 9 refers to the visibility splays required for the proposed dwellings, and yet nothing like the same visibility requirements can be achieved at the Stoodham / Silver Street junction.

During discussion, some of the comments and concerns raised by members included:

- One of the public speakers referred to landscape harm. The document referred to says this site is in an area of high landscape sensitivity. Shouldn't consider the site if it's against our own landscape assessment.
- Shouldn't have a dangerous junction and justify it by saying it's only an additional 6 houses.
- If this was a whole new development the access road would need to be nearer 5 metres wide not 3.7 metres.
- Feel there will probably be more vehicle movements than stated, and may be not all traffic movements have been taken into account.
- This doesn't seem to be an appropriate or suitable location. If approved there must be an archaeological survey.
- South Petherton's Neighbourhood Plan is very recent.
- Where is the tipping point for small developments on top of other small developments?
- Site is a very odd shape for development.
- It's an actively farmed field, why build here?
- Neighbourhood Plans don't over-rule policy but are a consideration.
- Cannot take into account people's driving ability.
- Agree junction unsatisfactory but Highways say it is acceptable

The Senior Planning Adviser responded to points of detail raised during discussion, including:

- Each report for an application took into account planning policies and local objections etc.
- Officers were aware of delicate strategic issues across the district.
- Many applications were finely balance, and this application was such an example.
- In landscape terms there was limited opportunity to build at the location. From a long view the field would still be seen, and the recommendation for the application was a balance of judgement.
- Valid comments about tipping points have been made.
- The traffic and highway safety issues were delicate and complicated. Balance in the officer report is that the impact of a further 6 houses would not be significant.
- Understand the objection on grounds of highways safety.
- Archaeology had been consulted and had raised no objection - but their response had been omitted from the report in error.
- Regarding the administration process – unfortunately mistakes could happen, for which officers apologised. It was confirmed that people who had submitted representations should receive a letter informing them of the committee meeting.
- Neighbourhood Plans were important and need to be taken into account when considering applications.

- Site is in a sustainable location due its distance to local facilities,

At the conclusion of debate it was proposed and seconded to refuse the application, on the grounds of highway safety at the Stoodham / Silver Street junction, and landscape harm. In response, the Specialist (Development Management), suggested the wording for the reasons for refusal, which were agreed by members. On being put to the vote the proposal was carried 6 votes in favour to refuse the application, 3 against and 2 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:** That planning application 18/01481/OUT be REFUSED, contrary to the officer recommendation, for the following reasons:

01 The proposal by reason of the increase in the use of a substandard junction by reason of its substandard visibility, width and lack of footway would result in severe harm to users of the highway contrary to Policy TA5 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and paragraph 108 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018).

02 The proposal by reason of its scale and siting in a sensitive location would result in significant harm to landscape character contrary to Policy EQ2 of the Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018).

*(Voting: 6 in favour, 3 against, 2 abstentions)*

#### 124. **Planning Application 19/00259/HOU - 15 Piece Lane, Shepton Beauchamp (Agenda Item 13)**

***Proposal: Conversion of existing garage with single storey lean to extension to the rear of the property to create a new kitchen, diner and utility room.***

The Chairman remaindered those present that the application was only before members for consideration due to the position held by one of the applicants.

The Case Officer (Service Delivery) presented the application as detailed in the agenda report, and noted that all elements of the proposal were deemed to be acceptable.

Ward members, Councillor Crispin Raikes, commented that the application had been discussed at the Parish Council meeting where no adverse comments had been raised.

There being no further discussion it was proposed and seconded to approve the application, and on being put to the vote this was carried 9 in favour with 1 abstention.

**RESOLVED:** That planning application 19/00259/HOU be APPROVED, as per the officer recommendation, subject to the following:

##### **Justification**

Approve for the following reason:

01. The proposal, by reason of its size, scale and materials, respects

the character of the area and causes no demonstrable harm to residential amenity in accordance with the aims and objectives of Policies SD1, EQ2, TA5 & TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-28) and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018).

**Subject to the following conditions:**

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans date stamped as received on 28th January 2019 and reference:

Drawing No.: 6851 - 01 - Drawing Title: Proposed Site Plan, Location Plan and Survey Drawings - Scales: 1:50, 1:100, 1:500 and 1:1250

Drawing No.: 6851 - 02 - Drawing Title: Proposed Floor Plans, Sections, Elevations and Roof Plan - Scales: 1:50 and 1:100

The external surfaces of the development shall be of materials as indicated in the application form and no other materials shall be used without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

*(Voting: 9 in favour, 1 abstention)*

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Chairman