

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held at **The Guildhall, Chard** on **Wednesday 22 January 2020**.

(6.00 - 9.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Jason Baker (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Tricia O'Brien
Martin Carnell	Sue Osborne
Brian Hamilton	Robin Pailthorpe
Val Keitch	Garry Shortland
Jenny Kenton	Linda Vijeh
Paul Maxwell	Martin Wale



Officers:

Jo Morris	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Paula Goddard	Specialist - Legal Services
Debbie Haines	Locality Team Leader
Adrian Moore	Locality Officer
Rachael Whaites	Countryside Manager
Colin Begeman	Agency Planner
Alex Skidmore	Specialist - Development Management

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

252. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th November 2019 (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

253. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mike Best.

254. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Linda Vijeh declared a personal interest in Planning Application No. 19/00273/OUT**, as the applicant was a fellow County Councillor.

Councillors Sue Osborne and Martin Wale also declared personal interests in Planning Application No. 19/00273/OUT**, as the applicant was known to them as a councillor.

255. Date and Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda Item 4)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Area West Committee would be held on Thursday 20th February 2020 at 5.30pm at The Guildhall, Chard.

256. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 5)

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

257. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman urged members to look at possible grant requests in their wards and contact the Locality Manager as the end of the financial year was only a few months away.

258. Promoting Community Safety in Area West - Police Performance and Neighbourhood Policing (Agenda Item 7)

Sgt. Rob Jameson from Avon and Somerset Constabulary was welcomed to the meeting. He gave a short presentation on local issues and initiatives. Particular reference was made to the following:

- Operation Remedy and its possible expansion
- The roll out of Smart Markers to help police identify stolen goods
- Anti-Social Behaviour in Chard
- Cattle thefts
- Staff changes

Sgt. Rob Jameson responded to members questions on points of detail.

The Chairman thanked Sgt. Rob Jameson for attending the meeting and for the good work of his team.

259. Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 8)

The Locality Officer introduced the report which provided an update on the activities and projects carried out by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership. He explained that members were being asked to agree in principle to continue the SSDC contribution to the core funding in 2020/21.

He welcomed Tim Youngs, AONB Manager to the meeting. With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, the AONB Manager informed members about the following:

- National Landscapes Review
- Colchester Declaration - ambition for nature's recovery
- New Volunteer Co-Ordinator
- Strategic arts development and training

- Climate emergency response
- Saving Devon's Treescapes Project
- Nature and wellbeing work
- Project work planned for 2020/21 including engagement with local schools

Cllr. Martin Wale, the appointed representative on the Partnership Management Group commented on the excellent work undertaken and urged members to support the continuation of funding.

The AONB Manager responded to members' questions and comments on points of detail.

Members thanked the AONB Manager for the work undertaken by the Partnership and unanimously approved the recommendations of the report.

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) That the report be noted.
 - 2) That it be agreed in principle to continue the SSDC contribution to the core funding of the AONB Partnership of £6,000 in 2020/21, subject to the Council's budget setting process and available budgets for 2020/21.

Reason: To update members on the work of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership and agree in principle to the continuation of core funding.

(Voting: unanimous)

260. Request for Area Funding to support the work of Leisure and Recreation (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 9)

The Countryside Manager presented the report and with the aid of slides gave members an overview of the service delivered by Leisure and Recreation over the past year. This included:

- It was a busy year for Ham Hill Country Park with the purchase of 30 acres of land, funding secured towards a Children's Roman Trail, expansion of the Orienteering Trail and a Pop Up Museum and Activity Centre.
- A number of successful events were held at Yeovil Country Park including park yoga, a Halloween Trail and Park Run.
- A Community Ranger post had been secured and would work across all areas including engagement work with local schools.
- The volunteer team at Chard Reservoir had been involved with hedge laying and tree planting and also provided help with a number of events including a wildlife project with Avishayes School, Bushcraft and Bug events, and a Forest School taster session funded by Somerset Skills and Learning.

The Leisure and Recreation Manager asked members to consider granting £1,200 from the Area West discretionary budget to fund a Forest School taster session at Chard Reservoir during February Half Term. The taster session would be themed around birds with a bird nature trail, bird feeder activity and activities such as fire lighting and campfire cooking.

In response to a member question, it was confirmed that there was no intention to reduce the main budget for Chard Reservoir Local Nature Reserve.

Members congratulated the Leisure and Recreation Service on all their hard work and unanimously supported the recommendations of the report.

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) That the report and the work of the Leisure and Recreation Service be noted.
 - 2) That £1,200 be approved from the Area West discretionary budget to fund a Forest School taster session at Chard Reservoir during February Half Term.

Reason: To consider a request for funding a Forest School taster session at Chard Reservoir in February Half Term.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

261. Reports from Members on Outside Organisations (Agenda Item 10)

Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Members noted the update given by Councillor Martin Wale under Agenda Item 8

Ile Youth Centre Management Committee

Members noted the verbal update given by Councillor Brian Hamilton. He referred to the following:

- The building had suffered from a major vandalism incident and the roof badly damaged.
- The insurance for the building had increased as well as the running and general maintenance costs.
- The building received a steady income from the revenue it raised through renting out its car park spaces to local businesses although revenue from users of the building had decreased.
- The building was currently used by the Scout movement, with Beavers, Cubs and Scouts all meeting there.
- Youth clubs and youth training courses no longer run due to funding issues and a lack of volunteers.
- Concern that without more investment of time and effort by the community, the facility may be lost.

Chard and District Museum Society

Members noted the report that had been circulated by Councillor Jenny Kenton.

262. Area West Committee Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman advised that a request would be made for an update report on the Chard Regeneration Scheme to be presented to the February Area West Committee meeting.

Councillor Val Keitch advised that there was still a query over her representation on the Ilminster Forum and asked for her report to be deferred.

It was proposed and seconded to request a report on Historic Buildings at Risk in Area West. A vote was taken on the proposal which was unanimously supported by members.

RESOLVED: 1. That the Area West Committee Forward Plan be noted subject to the following amendment:

February – Chard Regeneration Scheme Update Report

2. That a request be made for a report on Historic Buildings at Risk in Area West.

263. Planning Appeals (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the report which gave details of two appeals received.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

264. Schedule of Planning Applications to be Determined by Committee (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted the schedule of planning applications to be determined by the Committee.

265. Planning Application 19/00273/OUT ** - Bay Tree Farm, Claycastle, Haselbury Plucknett (Agenda Item 14)

Application Proposal: Outline application for the development of up to 35 dwellings with all matters reserved except access including the demolition of the existing building and highways works to Claycastle.

The Agency Planner updated that there was an error on page 23 of the report and made an amendment to the site description and proposal.

The Agency Planner presented the application as outlined in the agenda. With aid of a powerpoint presentation he referred to the following:

- The key considerations were outline application, principle of development and access for consideration.
- Access was the only matter for consideration. The appearance, landscaping, layout and scale would be considered as part of a Reserved Matters application.
- Location of the application site and surrounding area.
- Indicative layout showing the central access road through the site.
- 12 of the proposed 35 dwellings would be affordable.
- Photographs of the site showing views of the existing entrance, the commercial building to be removed and the surrounding area.

- 132 written representations had been received in relation to flooding, concerns over the access, additional traffic, no low cost homes, no policy support and change to the character of the area.
- The application was located on the edge of the existing built form of the village.
- Haselbury Plucknett did not have a development area identified in the Local Plan and should be considered as open countryside.
- As SSDC was unable to demonstrate a five-year housing supply policies relevant to the supply of housing were to be considered out of date.
- Haselbury Plucknett had a primary school, pub and faith facility therefore the site was considered to be located within a sustainable location.
- The proposal would result in additional housing which would make an additional contribution towards meeting SSDC's five-year housing as well as providing a good mix of market and affordable dwellings.
- The principle of development on the site was finely balanced and should be assessed against the harm to the character of the village and landscape setting and the benefits of the proposal. It was considered that the benefits of the scheme outweighed the harm.
- The Highway Authority were of the opinion that the proposal would not result in any capacity issues on the local road network and there were no severe highway safety concerns.
- The public right of way running through the site would be upgraded through a S106 contribution.
- Ecology, drainage, residential amenity and the historic environment had all been identified as being acceptable with conditions proposed to mitigate flooding and surface water.

The Agency Planner concluded that the proposed development represented an appropriate and sustainable form of development and recommended approval of the application subject to conditions.

In response to questions, the Agency Planner and Specialist – Planning confirmed the following:

- All statutory bodies consulted on the application had responded.
- The Local Flooding Authority was the body responsible for providing expert advice and had provided a set of conditions.
- A Viability Assessment could be requested at the Reserved Matters stage.
- Details of the surface water drainage scheme would be provided as part of Reserved Matter as outlined in Condition 14.
- The Council currently had a supply of 4.5 years of Housing Land supply.
- Consideration of Affordable Housing was taken from the 2014 Village Plan.

The Committee was addressed by the Parish Council representative, CPRE representative and 3 people in objection to the application. Comments expressed related to the following:

- Report related to 2 sites
- Objections from the local community
- Application did not comply with the Local Plan
- Lack of consultation
- Adverse impact on Listed Building setting

- The proposed site was prone to flooding and mitigation measures proposed would not work
- Effect on wildlife
- Development would cause harm to the landscape and character of the village
- No housing need identified
- Back land development

At this point in the proceedings, the Agency Planner amended his report to remove Policy LMT3 Somerton Direction of Growth on page 24 of the report.

The Committee was then addressed by 3 people in support of the application. Points raised related to the following:

- The traffic impact had been robustly assessed and would not be severe.
- There had been no record of any accidents/injuries at the crossroads and along Claycastle in the last 20 years.
- The development provided a safe and suitable access from Claycastle.
- Local widening of Claycastle would help mitigate against development traffic.
- It was safe for pedestrians to walk along Claycastle.
- The site was part brownfield and part greenfield however the drainage design had been based upon a greenfield site.
- A site investigation was undertaken which concluded that soakaways were a viable solution for surface water disposal on the site.
- Part of the site had a high ground water level and would be suitable for permeable paving.
- Surface water flowing off the site would be attenuated by a controlled discharge system.
- The proposed drainage scheme endorsed by the Lead Local Flooding Authority would reduce flows off the site and improve drainage in the area.
- An ecological assessment had been undertaken on the site followed by further species assessment surveys.
- All habitats and species recorded on the site were considered to be common.
- Eastern hedgerows would be maintained.
- None of the species identified were reliant on grassland habitat and would not be impacted by the development.
- Mitigation and enhancement measures were proposed consistent with Policy EQ4 in the NPPF.

The Applicant and his Agent addressed the Committee in support of their application. Points raised related to the following:

- Identified need for housing in the district
- No objections from statutory bodies
- Applicant sought to address issues raised
- Viable and sustainable village
- The local school could accommodate additional children
- 60 people had made a request for affordable housing in the Village Plan
- Edge of the village development was supported in the Village Plan
- There was a good bus network in the village

During the debate members made a number of comments in objection to the application which related to the following:

- The site was at risk of significant flooding
- Site was located in open countryside
- Concerns over viability
- Concerns over loss of character in the village
- Visual impact
- Landscape impact
- Effect on wildlife and biodiversity
- Road network not robust enough to take additional traffic
- No support from local community
- Proposal not consistent with Village Plan
- Very near to neighbouring settlement

It was proposed and seconded to refuse the application. The Lead Specialist – Planning suggested to members the following reason for refusal based on the following issues raised during the debate:

- Detrimental impact on the character of the village
- Contrary to Policy EQ2, SS2 and Part 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the National Planning Policy Framework

Members agreed with the suggested reason for refusal and on being put to the vote the application was recommended for refusal by 10 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED: That Planning Application No. 19/00273/OUT** be **REFERRED** to the Regulation Committee with a recommendation from Area West Committee that the application be refused for the following reason:

1. The proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character of the village and landscape. The resultant demonstrable harm is not outweighed by the benefits and therefore the scheme is contrary to policies SS2 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and Chapter 15 of the NPPF.

(Voting: 10 in favour, 2 abstentions)

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Chairman