

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held at **The Guildhall, Chard** on **Thursday 20 February 2020**.

(5.30 pm - 8.40 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Jason Baker (Chairman)

Mike Best	Paul Maxwell
Dave Bulmer	Tricia O'Brien
Martin Carnell	Sue Osborne
Brian Hamilton	Garry Shortland
Ben Hodgson	Linda Vjeh (to 6.40pm)
Val Keitch	Martin Wale
Jenny Kenton	



Officers:

Leisa Kelly	Case Officer (Service Delivery)
David Summerhill	LiveWest (Housing Association)
Dan Bennett	Property and Development Project Manager
Tim Cook	Locality Team Manager
Simon Fox	Lead Specialist - Development Management
Ian Cousins	Agency Planner
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)

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

266. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Previous Meetings (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 11 December 2019 and 22 January 2020 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Brian Hamilton informed members of a mis-statement he had made at the previous meeting in his report about the Ile Youth Management Committee, He corrected information regarding the tenure of the building and land, however a correction to the minutes was not required.

267. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Robin Pailthorpe.

268. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

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

Members noted the next scheduled meeting of the Area West Committee would take place on Wednesday 18 March 2020 at The Guildhall, Chard commencing at 5.30pm.

270. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 5)

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

271. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that he would be attending the launch of the Ilminster Emporium next month, and would provide feedback to the next meeting of Area West Committee.

272. Presentation on Affordable Housing in South Somerset (Agenda Item 7)

The Case Officer (Service Delivery) and a representative from LiveWest (Housing Association) gave a presentation on affordable housing in South Somerset. With the aid of a powerpoint presentation and short video, they provided information about the following:

- Types of Housing Need – expressed and hidden.
- The Annual Local Housing Figure for South Somerset was 725 homes a year, of which 206 should be for affordable housing.
- Figures for registered housing need in South Somerset by band and bed size.
- Expressed need in Area West, as identified by Homefinder was 473.
- How affordable housing linked to the Local Plan and Council Plan.
- The Rural Lettings Framework helped to ensure that vacancies in rural areas are advertised with a local connection criteria.
- Support regarding Community Land Trusts (CLT) within South Somerset and work closely with Wessex Community Assets.
- Grant funding was still available for housing needs surveys, planning feasibility studies, revolving land fund and small grants for Community Land Trusts.
- A LiveWest case example – Bottrell Close in Chard.
- Statistics for LiveWest in the last financial year.
- Different types of construction.
- The current development programme for 2020/21, including a breakdown of tenure and ownership
- Myths regarding the need and allocation of affordable housing.

During discussion the officers responded to points of detail, and some of their comments included:

- Estimates of funds remaining in the grants budget
- Decisions about who would get a property were often based on the applicant's primary parish, Homefinder band and how long they had been on the waiting list.

- Figures regarding meeting of targets over the last decade would be sourced and circulated to members
- Affordable rent levels were usually 80 % of market rent.
- An explanation of the difference between rent to buy and shared ownership,

At the conclusion of the item, the Chairman thanked the officers for their very informative presentation and for attending the meeting.

273. Area West Community Grant Request - Allowenshay Mains Water Project (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 8)

A member of the public addressed members in support of the application, prior to the report being presented. He explained that they were looking for a long term solution for the community and the issues had been ongoing for seven years. There was a now a health issue as a Notice had been served, and the residents concerned had to boil water that was for consumption. He provided an overview of the situation and current water supply infrastructure issues.

The Locality Team Manager then presented the report which asked members to consider a request for a financial contribution towards the provision of mains water to the hamlet of Allowenshay.

He explained that an application had been made for a community grant, however the scheme did not fully meet the required criteria. The recommended was not for a straight refusal of the application due to the exceptional circumstances . He recognised there were some community benefits and it was very much a community lead project, but highlighted it was not the usual type of project supported by community grants. He explained he was not making a recommendation but asking the Committee to consider awarding a grant.

During a short discussion, and in response to questions raised, the member of the public and officer clarified:

- that the residents had now set up a company to deliver the scheme, and if a grant was approved, would be paid to that company.
- There were 27 houses in the hamlet.

Members expressed their support for the scheme, and whilst it did not quite meet the grants criteria, noted it was exceptional circumstances and very much needed by the community. Members acknowledged a request had gone through District Executive a few months previously but failed to get support. It was proposed to support the scheme with a maximum Area grant of £12,500, and to recommend that a report requesting further funding be made again to the District Executive in the next few months. The Locality Team Manager clarified that grant funding would be subject to the standard grant conditions. The Leader of Council commented she would welcome a report going back to District Executive for consideration.

On being put to the vote the proposal was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That Area West Committee:

1. Agreed a grant of £12,500 be awarded to Allowenshay Mains Water Ltd, to be allocated from the Area West Capital Programme and subject to standard grant conditions.
2. Recommend that a report requesting further funding is made to District Executive for consideration in April or May 2020.

Reason: To consider a financial contribution towards the provision of mains water to the hamlet of Allowenshay.

(Voting: Unanimous)

274. Chard Regeneration Scheme Update Report (Agenda Item 9)

The Property & Development Project Manager presented the report which provided an update on the Chard Regeneration Scheme project. He was pleased to confirm the project was currently on schedule, and showed a short presentation of the demolition works that had taken place on site.

During brief discussion the Property & Development Project Manager responded to points of detail raised. He invited members to a site visit when the weather improved and many members expressed an interest.

Several members wished to convey their compliments to the staff involved with the demolition works. The Chairman thanked the officer for his update and attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Chard Regeneration Scheme Update report be noted.

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

Councillor Val Keitch noted she was unable to provide an update regarding the Meeting House Arts Centre in Ilminster as she had experienced difficulties in making contact with the trustees. She noted good work was being done and many events were taking place, and she would endeavour to obtain some information and bring an update to a future meeting.

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

Councillor Sue Osborne, as the representative for the Stop Line Way Steering Group, noted she was experiencing difficulties sourcing an update for the next meeting of Area West Committee. In response, the Locality Team Manager noted he would take away the matter as an action for follow up.

In response to a question regarding an update report on Historic Buildings at Risk, the Locality Team Manager noted it would be some time before a report came forward due to officer availability. He noted a piece of work was being commissioned district-wide which would come back to Committee for information at some point in the future. He

commented he would attempt to get an interim update report but it would likely be in a briefer format than previous reports. It was a similar situation regarding S106 update reports, but reminded members that if they had particular issues to make contact with himself or a member of the planning team for more information or to receive a specific scheme update.

During a brief discussion some members felt an update on CIL contributions received and distributed within Area West would be of interest.

The Locality Team Manager advised there would be additional reports in May - Area Chapter Outturn report and Resourcing for 20/21 report.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Area West Committee Forward Plan be noted subject to the following amendments:
 - Area Chapter Outturn report and Resourcing for 20/21 report – May
 2. That a request be made for a report on CIL contributions received and distributed in Area West.
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277. Area West - Area Chapter 2019/2020 Quarter 3 Overview (For Information Only) (Agenda Item 12)

Members received the report which provided a quarterly overview for the Area Chapter for Area West.

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

RESOLVED: That the Area West Chapter 3rd Quarter Overview be noted.

278. Planning Appeals (For Information Only) (Agenda Item 13)

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

279. Schedule of Planning Applications to be Determined by Committee (Agenda Item 14)

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

280. Planning Application 19/00698/OUT - Land OS 0420, Part Tail Mill Lane, Merriott, TA16 5PF (Agenda Item 15)

Proposal: The erection of 9 No. residential dwellings.

The Agency Planner presented the application as detailed in the agenda report and highlighted the conservation area boundary adjacent to the application site. He explained

that the main issue was the landscape impact as the proposal would be at odds with the landscape character. The Highway Authority were satisfied with the proposed access arrangements.

The Lead Specialist (Planning) explained the reason for referral of this application and the following application (19/00810/FUL) to Area West Committee was because the current officer dealing with the applications held a different view to the previous officer who had offered pre-application advice.

In response to questions from members, some of the points clarified by the Agency Planner and Lead Specialist (Planning) included:

- Refusal or approval of this application would not impact on the access arrangements for application 19/00810/FUL . Each application was independent of the other and each application needed be considered on their own merits.
- The circumstances regarding the advice provided at the pre-application stage.
- The site gently sloped away towards the existing houses however it was not considered to be of great significance, or to be so considerably lower to be of concern.
- Clarity regarding connectivity of the site with the village.
- The site was currently undeveloped land.
- The current status of development at Tail Mill.
- Landscape comments and concerns raised in the Local Plan process and other previous nearby applications was considered relevant and had been taken into account given that there was no longer a Landscape Officer.
- There was no planning history on this particular piece of land.

A representative for Merriott Parish Council spoke in objection to the application, and noted there was no community benefit or affordable housing being proposed. The Parish Council supported the officer recommendation to refuse the application.

The Agent then addressed members and explained the sequence of events leading to the application being considered by the Committee. He understood the concerns of the Conservation Officer to have been addressed at a site visit and was surprised to find out the officer report had been written up with a recommendation of refusal. He also noted the agenda report made no mention that the proposal was for custom build dwellings.

Ward member, Councillor Paul Maxwell, noted the application was on a greenfield site in open countryside, and believed if the proposal was approved it would have a harmful impact on the landscape, wildlife, historic buildings of Merriott and be disconnected from the village. He did not support the application and agreed with the officer recommendation for refusal.

During a very brief discussion, some members expressed their disappointment to hear of the events leading up to the Committee meeting, and felt some of the information mentioned verbally at the meeting should have been included within the agenda report.

It was proposed and seconded to refuse the application as per the officer recommendation, and on being put to the vote, the proposal was carried 10 votes in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED: That planning application 19/00698/OUT be REFUSED, as per the officer recommendation, for the following reason:

01. The proposal represents new residential development projecting into open countryside for which an overriding essential need has not been justified and a pattern of development failing to follow the character of development on Tail Mill Lane. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact upon local landscape character. The proposal would also be harmful to the setting and significance of the heritage assets due to its proximity, prominence, design and change in character of the area and does not bring any enhancement to the heritage assets. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies EQ2 and EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028. The adverse impacts are considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the modest benefits towards meeting the Local Planning Authority's housing supply, contrary to paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives:

1. In accordance with paragraph 39 of the NPPF the council, as local planning authority, takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. The council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by;
 - offering a pre-application advice service, and
 - as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions

In this case, pre-application advice was given and highlighted landscape and heritage concerns. Having assessed the application, there were no minor or obvious solutions to overcome the significant concerns caused by the proposals that had been previously highlighted.

(Voting: 10 in favour of refusal, 0 against, 2 abstentions)

281. Planning Application 19/00810/FUL - Land At Tail Mill, Tail Mill Lane, Merriott, TA16 5PF (Agenda Item 16)

Proposal: The erection of 2 No. commercial buildings with the provision for car parking, access and turning areas. The proposed buildings are to provide employment opportunity for SME businesses and to the local residents of Merriott.

The Agency Planner presented the application as detailed in the agenda report and highlighted the red line for the application included access via Tail Mill Lane. He noted the principle of the development and buildings were considered to be acceptable, however the proposed access road was considered to cause visual harm to the open countryside.

In response to questions from members, some of the points clarified by the Agency Planner and Lead Specialist (Planning) included:

- it was unclear why the applicant had chosen not to utilise the existing access at the top of the site. The application needed to be considered with the new access arrangement.
- Clarity regarding how much of the existing hardstanding would be for the new build.
- No use classes had been mentioned in the report as the officer recommendation was for refusal. If members were minded to approve the application, use classes could be included in the conditions.
- If members were minded to approve and allow the new road it would erode slightly some of the comments made regarding application 19/00698/OUT earlier on the agenda.
- The application needed to be considered as set out in the agenda.
- Committee could refuse the application if they wished. The applicant could then re-submit a revised scheme.
- The new access road is proposed to be metalled two carriageway to potentially adoptable standard.

A representative for Merriott Parish Council addressed members and noted the Parish Council supported the application in principle, however, the access would be more acceptable if it was engineered to be more like a farm track and less visible.

The Agent spoke of his disappointment that the application was recommended for refusal when the previous officer dealing with the application had indicated support for the proposal. He noted some other local applications had mentioned the lack of employment opportunities locally. Landscape impact seemed to be the issue, and he commented that the buildings would be more visible than the road. He felt the benefits of the application to the rural community were significant.

Ward member, Councillor Paul Maxwell, commented the principle of employment opportunities was positive and he noted the proposal was on a brownfield site. The issue was the access road through open countryside. He did not support the current proposal, but felt he would be more supportive without the proposed access road.

Two proposals were made, firstly to refuse the application as per the officer recommendation, and secondly a counter proposal to approve the application.

During debate some mixed views were expressed including:

- National policy suggests the application should be supported.
- Support view of the Parish Council but concerned about the position of the road.
- There is existing access to the site without the new road having an impact on the landscape.
- Agree there will be employment opportunities but the new access road is a concern.
- Principle of employment seems acceptable.

The ward member queried if the application could be deferred to enable discussions with the applicant about the proposed access. In response, the Chairman suggested a short adjournment so that officers could discuss the options.

On reconvening the meeting, the Chairman permitted the agent to briefly address members again. The agent commented they would be agreeable to the application being deferred to try and negotiate about the access, but highlighted the application had been

ongoing for almost a year and the landscape concerns had only been raised four weeks prior to the meeting.

The two proposals already made were subsequently withdrawn, as both proposers supported the idea to defer the application. It was then formally proposed and seconded to defer the application to enable negotiations with the applicant regarding the access. Members requested that the application be returned to Committee in March 2020.

The Lead Specialist (Planning) confirmed officers could look to bring the application back in March, but advised that if any re-consultation was required then some consultee responses may not be included in the agenda written report, and hence there might be a number of verbal updates at the meeting.

At the conclusion of debate, the proposal to defer the application was carried 11 votes in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions

RESOLVED: That planning application 19/00810/FUL be DEFERRED to enable negotiations regarding the access.

(Voting: 11 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)

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Chairman