

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee - South held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT, on Tuesday, 19 December 2023 at 2.00 pm

**Present:**

Cllr Peter Seib (Chair)

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr Andy Kendall

Cllr Sue Osborne

Cllr Martin Wale

Cllr Henry Hobhouse

Cllr Tim Kerley

Cllr Evie Potts-Jones

**In attendance:**

Cllr John Bailey

Cllr Kevin Messenger

Cllr Tony Lock

Cllr Andy Soughton

**Other Members present remotely:**

Cllr Jason Baker

Cllr Mike Best

**52 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jason Baker, Mike Best, Jenny Kenton, Oliver Patrick and Jeny Snell.

It was noted that Councillors Jason Baker and Mike Best were in attendance online via Teams.

**53 Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 2**

Resolved that the minutes of the Planning Committee - South held on Tuesday 28 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **54 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **55 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4**

There were no questions from members of the public.

#### **56 Planning Application 21/00311/OUT - Land to the North of Somerton Road, Adj The White Bungalow, Somerton Road, Langport. - Agenda Item 5**

The Planning Officer presented the application as detailed in the agenda report, and with the aid of a Powerpoint presentation highlighted key elements of the proposal including:

- A reminder that this was an outline application with all matters reserved except access.
- An indicative masterplan.
- It was noted the Open Spaces Officer had indicated that the open play space would be better sited in the centre of the proposed development rather than in the location shown on the indicative masterplan, and the exact location of the play space would be addressed at the Reserved Matters stage.
- Details of the proposed access to which Highways had not raised an objection.
- The proposal was within the direction of growth in the Local Plan.
- There was approximately a 250m distance kept between the proposed development and Wearne – a distance considered acceptable to prevent coalescence.
- The key considerations – principle of development and highway access.

The application was recommended for approval subject to planning obligations and conditions as set out in the agenda report.

Two members of the public addressed the committee in objection to the application. Some of their points included:

- New housing in the area had already grossly exceeded figures in the Local Plan, and there is a lot of local opposition to this development.
- Resources and facilities in the area are over-stretched.
- A property 'The Quackery' was only 50m away which will be coalescence.
- Development should be on brownfield land nearer to employment rather than on this productive agricultural land.
- Concern about lack of notice for this application and meeting to local

councils.

- Not convinced there is a need for dense development in rural area. More harm than benefit.
- Concern about flooding as believe there is a watercourse nearby on the eastern edge of the site.
- Concerns also about traffic and transport.

A supporter spoke on behalf of the housing provider, Abri. She noted they had looked to obtain the site to build homes, and she noted there was a need for affordable homes in the area and this proposal would help towards that delivery. The proposal was for a variety of homes including some smaller homes and bungalows and there would also be a mix of different tenures.

A spokesperson for Huish Episcopi Parish Council then addressed the committee and some of his points included:

- Question the need at this time to turn productive land into housing.
- Housing already delivered in the area was well above the figure stated in the Local Plan
- There are very few local work opportunities together with no added infrastructure improvements.
- Reference to other elements in the Local Plan such as delivery of employment land.
- Reference to previous Planning Inspector comments about Wearne and coalescence.

A spokesperson for the neighbouring Parish Council of High Ham also addressed the committee about local traffic and HGV routes. He referred to recent traffic flow data and provided members with details of vehicle movement figures on week days and at weekends for Picts Hill which was a short distance along the road from the access point for the proposed development.

The applicant's spokesperson addressed members and noted this proposal was one of the few applications able to move forward at this time as it had a phosphates solution. There were large numbers of people on the housing register and this proposal would deliver much needed local housing. More houses in the area would help support viability for local services.

In response to points of detail and technical questions raised by the public speakers, the Planning Officer clarified that:

- Housing figures in the Local Plan were not a maximum figure, they were a minimum. The housing figure approved to date including this application would be 605 which was in line with other similar places.

- Regarding health and education contribution – both had been consulted.
- Coalescence – the parish had correctly highlighted previous Planning Inspector’s comments that the main settlement of Wearne was considered to be to the North of this application site rather than to the East.

In response to questions from members the Planning Officer and Lead Specialist also noted that:

- The indicative masterplan showed a layout for 100 houses.
- If concerned about local tenure for the proposed dwellings the LPA could ask for a lettings plan. At the current time the Abri business plan and details regarding intended tenure for the proposed dwellings were unknown.
- There had been updates to the NPPF announced a few hours prior to this meeting, and a brief overview was provided.
- If members wished they could request that the Heads of Terms included a cascade to require some of the housing for local people.
- Some elements regarding distance to nearby properties was down to landscape character.
- The latest position of the five year land supply
- The waterways and ponds to the east of the site were not within flood zones.

During a short discussion a member expressed her reluctant support for the application and fully acknowledged the local views, however the site was within the direction of growth in the Local Plan and there were a number of material conditions and some benefit.

There was a general consensus from members to add the requirement for a cascade mechanism. The Legal Specialist advised that the requirement should be included within the resolution.

It was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Sue Osborne, to approve the application as per the officer recommendation as set out in the agenda report, subject to an additional point for the Section 106 obligations to include a cascade mechanism regarding the affordable housing.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That planning application 21/00311/OUT for up to 100 dwellings, associated open space and infrastructure with all matters reserved except access at Land To The North Of Somerton Road, Adj The White Bungalow, Somerton Road, Langport, Somerset be APPROVED, subject to the prior completion of a section 106

agreement to include a cascade mechanism regarding the affordable housing and the imposition of conditions as per the officer recommendation as detailed in the agenda report.

(voting: unanimous)

**57 Planning Application 21/01035/OUT - Land OS 6925, Coat Road, Martock. -**  
Agenda Item 6

The Planning Officer presented the application as detailed in the agenda report, and with the aid of a Powerpoint presentation highlighted key elements of the proposal including:

- An indicative layout with proposed development to the east of the site, and with open space and planting to the west.
- The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) had not objected to the proposal – noted that surface water was indicated possibly to cause flooding further west of the site.
- Proposed works to connect off road path into Martock.
- The proposed woodland area was identified as an area of high landscape sensitivity.
- Martock Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges site acceptable for development.
- Reference to housing figures in the Local Plan – acknowledgement that Martock already above the number in the Plan, however the figures in the Local Plan were not a maximum.
- The key considerations were the principle of development and highway safety.
- Highways were content with the proposal subject to Section 106 obligations and conditions.
- The phosphates solution included a package treatment plant and also phosphates credits which had been purchased from the scheme agreed by the Council.

The application was recommended for approval subject to planning obligations and conditions as set out in the agenda report.

Five members of the public addressed the committee in objection to the application. Some images had been submitted which were included in the officer presentation, and some of their points raised included:

- Opposed this in 2021 as it went against settlement policy. Original application proposed 55 houses. Have not met with the developers.
- When the application was originally submitted there was a five year land supply.
- Reference to local upgrades by Wessex Water. Would like to see proposal for

update to phosphate policy of the Council.

- Since application submitted, 140 houses have been built in the village which has altered the traffic.
- There are still a number of issues to be addressed.
- The dyke that separates the site from the neighbouring property to the west floods. Flooding impacts the structural integrity of that property.
- Recent flooding made Coat Road impassable to ordinary vehicles, and the site where the package treatment plant is proposed to be also floods.
- A package treatment plant and phosphates credits were proposed but no details seem to be available on the public website.
- The green gap between Coat and Martock is a high landscape sensitivity area.
- Reference to the green gap policy in the Local Plan and that it should be protected.
- What are the plans for the green area in the middle of the 'U' shape application area as there is no road access to that site?
- This is not the right number of dwellings at the right time.
- Traffic figures have been based on old data of 2018 and doesn't include the impact of the Barratt development of 120 houses to the South of Coat Road.
- Already difficult to access local NHS services.
- No identified need for these houses in Martock at the moment.

A spokesperson for Martock Parish Council endorsed the comments of previous speakers. He noted the Parish Council did not fully object to development but were opposed to the proposal for 100 houses rather than 55. He also referred to the traffic data which was sourced from before the Barratt development had been built. He asked that the application be refused for further consideration.

Division member, Councillor John Bailey, acknowledged that residents required somewhere to live but quality as well as quantity was needed. Consultation seemed to have been slim and should take in to account market changes of recent years in the village. The green gap pushes 100 houses into a smaller area which leaves a large space, what is the purpose of that space? Many of the village residents out-commute and extra houses have been built since 2021, so increasing traffic. What account has been taken of an active travel plan? In light of all the questions raised he felt members should consider deferring the application.

The agent then addressed the committee and noted they had worked extensively with the Council over the last six years to bring the proposal forward. The Neighbourhood Plan made clear that this location was acceptable for housing. Martock as a rural centre was a sustainable location for growth. The proposal had benefits as the housing would contribute towards the land supply and there would be financial obligations. There were no technical objections to the proposal and given

compliance with planning policy she urged approval of the application.

In response to points of detail and technical questions raised by the public speakers, the Planning Officer clarified that:

- It was recognised that Martock had taken further development than set out in the Local Plan. However the figures in the Local Plan are minimum figures not maximum.
- Highways had not raised any objections but had requested conditions as detailed in the agenda report.
- A requirement for an active travel plan was included with the Section 106 obligations.
- Modelling indicated the area of the site proposed for locating the housing did not flood.

In response to questions from members the Planning Officer and Lead Specialist also noted that:

- Responses from statutory consultees showed flooding outside the site and not within.
- The flood risk report was done in 2022.
- Comments from the public have been quite technical in nature. Acknowledge the benefit of having specialist officers present such as Highways and Lead Local Flood Authority.
- About 7m of hedge was proposed to be removed for the access.
- The proposal is for no water to leave the site.

There was a short discussion during which it was suggested to defer the application to receive further information about flooding. It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor Henry Hobhouse to defer the application for further information regarding flooding matters and the presence of specialist officers to answer technical questions. On being put to the vote, the proposal to defer the application was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That planning application 21/01035/OUT for up to 100 dwellings with associated works including, access, public open space and landscaping at Land OS 6925, Coat Road, Martock, Somerset be DEFERRED for further information regarding flooding matters and the presence of an officer from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to be present at the next possible Planning South Committee meeting.

(voting: unanimous)

**58 Planning Application 18/04057/OUT - Land East of Mount Hindrance Farm, Mount Hindrance Lane, Chard. - Agenda Item 7**

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda prior to the meeting.

**59 Appeal Decisions (for information) - Agenda Item 8**

Members noted the planning appeal decisions for the Planning South area.

**(The meeting ended at 4.20 pm)**

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**CHAIR**