

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee - South held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT, on Tuesday, 26 November 2024 at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Jason Baker (Chair)
Cllr Peter Seib (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Mike Best
Cllr Jenny Kenton
Cllr Sue Osborne
Cllr Tom Power

Cllr Andy Kendall
Cllr Kevin Messenger
Cllr Oliver Patrick
Cllr Martin Wale

44 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Councillors Stephen Page and Tim Kerley.

The committee currently has one vacancy.

45 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of interest received.

46 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 3

There were no member of the public registered to speak under Public Question Time.

47 Planning Application 19/00655/OUT - Land OS 9609, Brewham Road, Bruton, Somerset. - Agenda Item 4

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

- Principle of development
- Highways improvements
- Phosphate mitigation
- The planning balance

The outline application was recommended for approval subject to subject to the

prior completion of a Planning Obligation/Agreement, confirmation of approval of the Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment from Natural England, and the stated planning conditions. Delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Area Chair (South). Details of access are submitted for approval with all other matters (Layout, Scale, Appearance and Landscaping) reserved for later approval.

She advised that this application was deferred by the SSDC Regulation committee in 2019 pending phosphates mitigation which has now been conditioned awaiting approval from Natural England, and deferred again by the Somerset Council Planning Committee-South on 23 July 2024 to allow further highway assessment of the highway safety merits of the scheme to address concerns over the proposed pedestrian safety mitigation and off-site highway works. She confirmed that consultation with Highways had been undertaken and there are no objections to the scheme and there are no reasonable grounds to refuse the application on highways safety.

She asked members to consider the tilted balance (presumption in favour of sustainable development) and that the scheme will make a significant contribution to the borough-wide housing shortfall, with 21 of the 60 dwellings being affordable housing.

Several members of the public addressed the committee in objection to the application. Their comments included:

- The Planning Service has failed to get a second opinion on Highways safety, rather, just repeating the consultation responses previously received.
- There is a failure to comply with the law regarding the width of the footpath proposed, which should be 2m.
- Failure to reasonably perceive the risks to pedestrians as identified in the independent Road Safety Audit commissioned by Bruton Town Council and shared with the committee.

A representative of Bruton Town Council urged the committee to refuse the application based on the unsafe access proposals.

The Division Member, Councillor Lucy Trimnell addressed the committee with a number of concerns including:

- The tilted balance and housing obligations are preventing members from making decisions on planning applications based on the genuine views of the communities they serve.
- Whilst the Highways plans may work on paper, but in practice there will be road safety issues, which have been overlooked.
- Road infrastructure in Bruton is unsuitable and cannot support a development of this scale
- The report states that there are employment benefits for the people of Bruton, but this is not guaranteed and is misleading.

A representative from Acorn Property group then addressed the committee. He advised that:

- The proposed scheme has been designed by experts and fully complies with all local planning policies.
- The Town Council has been fully consulted throughout the process
- Highways safety measures are included in the proposals
- The scheme proposes 21 affordable units and the majority of those will be social rent, which is in great need.

There was a question concerning the independent highways safety audit submitted to the committee and why it had not been considered as part of the planning application process. The Highways officer in attendance advised that two independent safety audit had already been completed and reviewed as part of the process.

During discussion, the following points were made by Members:-

- Despite reassurance in the report, local members felt strongly that the highways aspects of the proposal are unsafe and that Bruton is not suitable for a development of this size.
- General feeling that the tilted balance applies and that there are no reasonable planning grounds to object to the application.

At the conclusion of the debate, the officer's recommendation to approve the application was proposed by Councillor Patrick and seconded by Councillor Seib. When put to the vote, the proposal was carried by 6 in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions.

Resolved

That planning application 19/00655/OUT to consider an outline planning application for the development of up to 60 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), together with associated highways and drainage infrastructure, public open space and landscaping at Land OS 9609, Brewham Road, Bruton, Somerset be **APPROVED**, subject to the prior completion of a Planning Obligation/Agreement, confirmation of approval of the Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment from Natural England, and the stated planning conditions. Delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Area Chair (South). Details of access are submitted for approval with all other matters (Layout, Scale, Appearance and Landscaping) reserved for later approval.

Voting: 6 in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions.

48 Planning application 20/02297/OUT - Land North Of Brewham Road, Bruton, Somerset. - Agenda Item 5

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

- Site location.

- An indicative masterplan
- Land use parameters and access
- Transport links
- Highways improvements plan

The application was recommended for approval subject to the prior completion of a Planning Obligation/Agreement and the stated planning conditions. Delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Area Chair (South).

She referred to the key considerations as detailed in the report being the principle of development, land use parameters, highways and planning balance.

The Planning officer advised that this application was deferred by the Somerset Council Planning Committee South on 23 July 2024 to allow further highway assessment, and confirmed that consultation with Highways had been undertaken, there are no objections to the scheme and that there are no reasonable grounds to refuse the application on highways safety.

She asked members to consider the tilted balance (presumption in favour of sustainable development) and that the scheme will make a significant contribution to the borough-wide housing shortfall, with 23 of the 65 dwellings being affordable housing.

Several members of the public addressed the committee in objection to the application. Their comments included:

- The roads going into to this development are far too narrow.
- Residents are extremely worried about the cumulative impact of this development.
- Bruton doesn't have a Bypass nearby, and the A road is inadequate and cannot cope with an increase in traffic which this development will bring.

A representative from Symphony Healthcare spoke in support of the application, telling members that the GP surgery in Bruton is 162% oversubscribed, and therefore this proposal is a much needed opportunity to improve healthcare provision in Bruton.

A representative of Bruton Town Council spoke in objection to the proposal, his comments included:

- Acknowledged there is a need for affordable housing and a new GP surgery in Bruton, but this proposal is not an appropriate solution.
- The town council would like to work with developers to propose an acceptable scheme.

The Division Member, Councillor Lucy Trimnell spoke to urge the committee to object to the application, her comments included:

- The location of the site and the GP surgery is not easily accessible and the impact on traffic will be unsafe for drivers and pedestrians.
- A GP surgery was promised in another application but was never delivered.

A representative from Claremont Planning then addressed the committee. She advised that:

- Bruton is a sustainable rural settlement and there is a need for more affordable and market housing.
- All technical assessments regarding access points and highways safety have been completed.
- The site has an alternative pedestrian route.
- The proposal fully complies with Local plan policies.

During discussion, the following points were made by Members:-

- The access proposals of the scheme are concerning, with local members referring to the nearby junction as 'crash corner'.
- The impact on the local highway network has not been fully considered
- There is no vehicular access between the housing site and the GP surgery.

At the conclusion of the debate, it was proposed by Councillor Seib and seconded by Councillor Patrick to defer the application for the following reasons:

- Lacking evidence of traffic analysis and adequacy of access to comply with SSDC Local Plan policy TA5.

When put to the vote, the proposal was carried by 5 in favour, 1 against and 4 abstentions.

Resolved

That planning application 20/02297/OUT to consider an outline application subject to the prior completion of a Planning Obligation/Agreement and the stated planning conditions. Delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Area Chair (South). at Land North Of Brewham Road, Bruton, Somerset be **DEFERRED** for the following reason:

The committee requested more evidence of traffic analysis and adequacy of access to comply with SSDC Local Plan policy TA5.

Voting: 5 in favour, 1 against, 4 abstentions.

49 Planning application 23/01470/OUT - Townsend Farm, Towns End, Stalbridge Road, Henstridge, Templecombe, Somerset, BA8 0RQ. - Agenda Item 6

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

- Site location.

- Access
- The principle of development
- Additional Off-site Highways Safety measures (agreed but not included in the published report)
- Statutory consultee responses

He referred members to the key considerations of this proposal being the principle of development, design and impact on character and appearance of area, impact on residential amenity, highways, transport, access and parking, hedgerows and trees, ecology and biodiversity, flood risk and surface water/foul drainage.

The application was recommended for approval subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 Planning Obligation/Agreement and the stated planning conditions. Delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Area Chair (South).

Several members of the public addressed the committee in objection to the application. Their comments included:

- The plan does not align with SSDC Local plan policy TA5 and the increase in traffic from this development adds increased risk to pedestrian safety, particularly for walkers travelling to and from the local school.
- The proposed development does not align with SSDC Local Plan policy SD1 Sustainable development due to the lack of retail, employment and other services and facilities in Henstridge.
- The cumulative impact of this development, along with other recent developments in the area will put a huge strain on education and healthcare providers. The local school is currently at capacity.
- The proposed development will worsen flooding in the area, particularly on the A357 which floods frequently, and can be 3 feet deep at the entrance to this site.

A representative of Henstridge Parish Council referred to the objections as detailed in the agenda report, with the main concern being the increase in traffic and highways safety.

The Division Members, Councillor Nicola Clark spoke in objection to the development, calling it another major development in a rural community that cannot support it, in a location where pedestrian safety is a serious concern. Councillor Hayward Bert also spoke in objection to the proposal, echoing the concerns he had heard regarding safety and flooding.

In response to the concerns heard by members of the public and other speakers in attendance today, the planning and highways officers in attendance advised that:

- The scheme presented has been fully assessed and an independent Stage 1 Road Safety Audit undertaken. The assessments have highlighted the fact that there is no adverse safety comments made.
- Regarding flood risk, the LLFA are satisfied that surface water issues can be addressed with a mixture of measures of surface water storage and rain water harvesting.

Members debated the application with mixed views about the planning considerations and objections before them. A councillor made a proposal to refuse the application, which was seconded, however when taken to the vote the proposal fell with 5 members voting against it. At the conclusion of the debate, the officer's recommendation to approve the application was proposed by Councillor Seib and seconded by Councillor Patrick. When put to the vote, the proposal was carried by 5 in favour, 4 against and 1 abstention.

Resolved

That planning application 23/01470/OUT to consider an outline application with all matters reserved save for access, for up to 52 dwellings, with associated access, infrastructure and open space at Townsend Farm, Towns End, Stalbridge Road, Henstridge, Templecombe, Somerset, BA8 0RQ be **APPROVED** subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 Planning Obligation/Agreement and the stated planning conditions. Delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Area Chair (South).

Voting: 5 in favour, 4 against, 1 abstention.

(The meeting ended at 2.00 pm)

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CHAIR