

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee - West held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Tuesday, 19 November 2024 at 2.00 pm

**Present:**

Cllr Derek Perry (Chair)

Cllr Norman Cavill

Cllr Habib Farbahi

Cllr Ross Henley

Cllr Steven Pugsley

Cllr Gwil Wren

Cllr Caroline Ellis

Cllr Andy Hadley

Cllr Dawn Johnson

Cllr Rosemary Woods

**Other Members present remotely:**

Councillor Marcus Kravis

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

Apologies were received from Councillors Simon Coles, Dave Mansell, Tony Robins and Andy Sully.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Planning Committee - West held on Tuesday 15 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

**32 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3**

Councillor Norman Cavill declared an interest on item 10 and declared that he would leave the meeting prior to the item being discussed.

Councillors Andy Hadley and Rosemary Woods declared an interest that item 6 was in or may impact their respective division(s) and Councillor Rosemary Woods declared that she was a member of the Internal Drainage Board. Neither were pre-determined on the application.

**33 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4**

There were no public questions raised.

**34 Planning Application 30/24/0009 - West of Blagdon Hill Rd, Blagdon Hill - Agenda Item 9**

The Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a presentation. The officer explained that the application sought permission for the construction of one detached dwelling.

The Committee was addressed by 3 objectors to the proposal and their comments included: that the development did not follow the Linear settlements of the area; was outside of the settlement boundary; was inside the Blackdown Hills National Landscape; the increase in phosphates the development would cause; the scale of the development greatly impacted the Blackdown Hills in terms of traffic and reduced wildlife; it was 3 times the size of the footprint of nearby bungalows; and the lack of public transport service to the area also counted against the proposal.

Councillor Sarah Wakefield, spoke as a member who lived in the division and objected to the proposal. Her comments included that the development was on a large scale and a big development for the area.

The Committee were addressed by 3 supporters to the proposal and their comments included: that the development did not go against planning policies; the application was originally shown to be within the settlement boundary; that the bungalow would be screened and not in view from Blagdon Hill Road; the need for bungalows had increased in recent years; and the building of bungalows was at the lowest point for 80 years.

Members sought clarification on planning applications in the local area specifically the site to the North. The Planning Officer responded to the question and confirmed that the dwellings themselves lied to the Northeast.

Members raised concerns that approving the development would result in a loss of an area of protected national landscape. Members raised further concerns on the entrance and exit route onto the main road and the dangerous nature of the entry point due to the poor visibility. The Planning Officer clarified that policy SP1 identified Blagdon as a lower tier village that was appropriate for small scale development within settlement limits.

Members raised the objection of Pitminster Parish Council that it was outside settlement boundary and noted that this was an important point. It was also raised that the development was inside the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. Members also highlighted that Somerset Highways Authority had not objected.

It was raised by Planning Officers that refusing the application based on highways access, would not be recommended because Highways Authority had not objected to the development and so a refusal on this ground would be difficult to defend at appeal.

Members sought clarification on the development being within the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. The Planning Officer confirmed that the development being within the Blackdown Hills did not mean it could result in the application not being allowed.

Members queried the comparison between the recent Pitminster applications. The Planning Officer in response to this noted that the applications were separate and

determined on their own merits.

Councillor Ross Henley proposed, and Councillor Caroline Ellis seconded refusing the application:

Reason for refusal - that the development was outside the village settlement boundary and inside the Blackdown Hills National Landscape area and the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area and the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

**35 Planning Application 3/21/23/052 - Land South of Hopcott Road, Minehead - Agenda Item 8**

The Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a presentation. The officer explained that the application sought permission for outline planning with all matters reserved, except for access, for the erection of up to 60 No. dwellings with vehicular and pedestrian access, public open space, car parking and landscaping. The officer explained that the s106 agreement should also include a requirement to enter a s278 agreement.

The Committee was addressed by the Planning Agent and their comments included that there were no objections from Highways Authority, or Natural England. The agent also advised that there had been no objections to the proposed drainage scheme as part of the planning consultation.

Members queried why no further detail had been included and asked for clarification over the drainage scheme and despite not being in the flood zone, the impact that the development could have on properties within the flood zone along with it being challenged within deliverability.

The Planning Officer confirmed that it would not be challenged within deliverability and the site was included within the 5-year housing land supply.

Members raised concerns with the access route in particular the steep hill and the various junctions within the area. The Planning Officer confirmed that there had been no objection from the Highway Authority.

It was proposed by Councillor Derek Perry to approve the application in accordance with the officer recommendation and an additional s106 head of term relating to the need for a s278 agreement, this was seconded by Councillor Steven Pugsley.

To grant permission subject to the conditions detailed within the officer's report and an additional s106 head of term relating to the need for a s278 agreement.

(Voting: 8 For, 2 Against)

**36 Planning Application 38/23/0377 - Rochester Rd, Taunton - Agenda Item 10**

The Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a presentation. The officer explained that the application sought permission for the erection of 2 No. apartments in place of an approved community facility building at Rochester Road,

Taunton.

Members were pleased to see that the Council would get more affordable housing within the area. Members raised concerns whether the investigation into placing a community use in the building, as originally approved, had been properly explored.

The Planning Officer in response to this question confirmed that the Town Council had commented on the application and did not object to the community use being replaced by affordable housing.

Members sought clarification on if permission was granted today, could the applicant choose to secure a community use if one became possible, or would that option be closed off.

The Planning Officer in response to the question, clarified that the applicant could decide what to implement, as both permissions would exist until one of them was specifically implemented by virtue of the use happening.

It was proposed by Councillor Norman Cavill to propose the officer's recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Steven Pugsley.

To grant permission subject to the conditions detailed within the officer's report.

(Voting: 7 For, 3 Against)

**37 Planning Application 38/24/0352 - Firepool - North Boulevard - Agenda Item 6**

The Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a presentation. The officer explained that the application sought permission for amendments to surfacing materials for the Northern Boulevard forming the Northern Gateway into the Firepool site.

Members were pleased to note the samples that were on show. Members sought clarification on the materials and the performance of the new material compared to the proposed. The Planning Officer confirmed that it had a similar level of performance and the stone itself came from Portugal. Members were pleased to note the improvements of Taunton High Street.

It was proposed by Councillor Steven Pugsley to propose the officer's recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Habib Farbahi.

To grant permission subject to the conditions detailed within the officer's report.

(Voting For, Unanimous)

**38 Planning Application 38/24/0353- Firepool - South Boulevard - Agenda Item 7**

The Planning Officer introduced the application with the aid of a presentation. The officer explained that the application sought permission for amendments to surfacing materials for the Southern Boulevard forming the Southern Gateway into the Firepool site.

It was proposed by Councillor Steven Pugsley to propose the officer's recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Habib Farbahi.

To grant permission subject to the conditions detailed within the officer's report.

(Voting For, Unanimous)

**39 Planning Application 14/21/0047 - Monkton Heathfield - Agenda Item 5**

Councillor Norman Cavill left the room as a result of earlier declared interest.

The Planning Officer presented an update on the application with the aid of a presentation. The Planning Officer confirmed that the application was for outline planning permission with all matters reserved, except for access, comprising up to 1,450 dwellings, up to 4.91 hectares of land for strategic employment uses, up to 8 hectares of land for a through school, mixed use district centre including mobility hub, community facilities, green infrastructure, drainage works, and associated works, on land at Walford Cross, Monkton Heathfield.

Members sought clarification over profit levels and the rising of profit and viability over the years. The Planning Officer confirmed that the current level was 15-20% and was reasonable. Members asked questions regarding the phosphate solutions for the area. The Planning Officer confirmed that there was a green wedge of land that would be developed as wetland to mitigate phosphates.

Members noted officers will continue working with the applicant towards a committee date of Spring 2025.

The Members noted the update.

**(The meeting ended at 4.47 pm)**

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**CHAIR**