

# Public Agenda Pack



Minutes of a Meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee held in the Sedgemoor Room, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR, on Thursday, 6 February 2025 at 2.00 pm

## **Present:**

Cllr Tony Lock (Chair)

Cllr Mike Caswell

Cllr Philip Ham

Cllr Martin Lovell (In place of Cllr Andy Soughton)

Cllr Martin Wale

Cllr Barry Clarke

Cllr Andy Kendall

Cllr Matthew Martin

Cllr Gwil Wren

## **Other Members present remotely:**

Cllr Simon Coles

Cllr Leigh Redman

Cllr Sarah Wakefield

Cllr Sue Osborne

Cllr Mike Rigby

## **50 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1**

Apologies were received from Councillors Michael Dunk, Wes Read and Andy Soughton, who was substituted by Councillor Martin Lovell.

## **51 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2**

An additional interest was declared by Councillor Barry Clarke on Agenda Item 4 – Callow Rock Quarry – SCC/4100/2024, he had been a previous employee of the quarry, but had been advised he was permitted to take part in the debate.

## **52 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 3**

The following had requested to speak under Public Question Time:-

- David Orr – Nutrient Neutrality Mitigation
- David Hiscox – Phosphates

All submissions for Public Question Time and Public Speakers for each application are detailed in Annex A to the minutes.

## **53 Callow Rock Quarry - SCC/4100/2024 - Agenda Item 4**

The Principal Planning Officer for Development and Planning, Colin Arnold, introduced the report and application. His presentation covered: the details of the

application, relevant legislation; and highlighted the impacts on the local amenity, ecology and protected species and on the living conditions of neighbours, in particular the noise levels.

The Committee were addressed by a representative from Shipham Parish Council and the applicant, details of their submissions are contained in Annex A of the minutes.

During the debate, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried where the nearest residential property was located in relation to the site.  
*The Principal Planning Officer for Development and Planning advised it was located quite some considerable distance away from the site.*
- Councillors agreed that the starting time should be aligned with the other part of the quarry and that the proposed amendment to this part had not produced an additional noise pollution or traffic.
- Councillors highlighted that the nearest Site of Scientific Interest was Cheddar Woods and that they had not received any submission from them, which gave councillors some reassurance on the application.
- Councillors requested assurance that the noise survey had been carried out properly as stated in the application.  
*The Principal Planning Officer for Development and Planning advised that the survey had been carried out over a year and been signed off by officers from Environmental Health.*
- Councillors highlighted the 15m screen bund, detailed in the report, which had improved the noise pollution in the area.

Councillor Mike Caswell proposed the officer's recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Barry Clarke.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Strategic Planning Committee resolved that planning permission be granted subject to conditions and subject to the variation of the legal agreement as outlined within the report.

(Vote – Unanimous For)

#### **54 Brookhayes Farm, Cossington - SCC/4107/2024 - Agenda Item 5**

The Principal Planning Officer for Development and Planning, Colin Arnold, introduced the report and application. His presentation covered: the details of the application; relevant legislation; and highlighted the main issues for consideration, which included: principle of development, visual impact, impact on sewer, flood risk, material inaccuracies and environmental impact assessment.

The Committee were addressed by the agent, details of their submission are contained in Annex A of the minutes.

During the debate, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors made reference to the Mapperton Ridge case which was similar to the site at Brookhayes Farm. They queried what the main differences on the sites were and wanted assurance on the nuances on each site.

*The Principal Planning Officer for Development and Planning advised the key differences were the scale of the material used on the sites.*

- Councillors queried why the local division member had requested for the application to come to committee.

Councillor Barry Clarke proposed the officer's recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Philip Ham.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Strategic Planning Committee resolved that planning permission be Granted.

(Vote – Unanimous For)

*Meeting adjourned at 2.55pm.*

*Meeting restarted at 3.00pm.*

## **55 Quarterly Report on Planning Service Performance - Agenda Item 6**

The Head of Planning, Alison Blom-Cooper, introduced the report and gave a short presentation on the performance figures for Quarter 2 (July to September) of 2024-25, along with an update on the National Planning Policy Framework.

The presentation included information on the following:-

- Planning applications received.
- Major, minor and other applications determined within national targets.
- Two year rolling figures for Minerals and Waste.
- Pre-application enquiries.
- Appeal decisions.
- Enforcement cases on hand and resolved/closed.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested clarification on land supplies and the impact the new Local Plan would have on the figures for across Somerset.
- Concern was raised on the report on the Council Restructure being taken to the Special Full Council on 12 February 2025, which detailed a reduction in the workforce within the Planning Service. The Chair of the Committee urged all members to raise their concerns at the meeting to highlight the plea for the Planning Service and proposed an additional recommendation:-  
The Strategic Planning Committee raised serious concerns on the Planning Department and the direction of the service due to the emerging changes as a result of the Council's Restructure Programme'.
- Councillors highlighted the number of appeals and requested a breakdown of how many were on officer decisions and how many were on committee decisions.
- Concern was raised on the level of legal support required for applications and that they would be facing the same reduction in workforce as part of the Council's Restructure Programme.
- Councillors requested an update on when the planning systems would be joined up, as currently working on 5 legacy systems.

*The Service Manager for Resources, Integration, Minerals and Waste advised that they were building a business case for the new joint system,*

*however, this would take approximately 3 years due to the detailed process required.*

- Concern was raised on the level of enforcement cases and whether it would impact on certificates of lawful use.

Councillor Tony Lock proposed the officer's recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Martin Wale.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Strategic Planning Committee resolved that the Strategic Planning Committee noted the Update Report; and raised serious concerns on the Planning Department and the direction of the service due to the emerging changes as a result of the Council's Restructure Programme.

**(The meeting ended at 3.55 pm)**

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**CHAIR**

## Strategic Planning Committee – 6 February 2025 – Public Questions

Annexe A – Public Questions	
Name of person submitting	Question
David Orr	<p>Dear Strategic Planning Committee,</p> <p>The Government awarded this Council £9.6m to provide nutrient neutrality mitigation.</p> <p>There were well-founded technical doubts about whether Salinity Solutions reverse osmosis was feasible in the field and whether fine mesh filters would block and require costly flushing and cleaning.</p> <p>Some £3m were allocated to Salinity Solutions subject to the pilot trial being successful and, I believe a progress report is overdue.</p> <p>In the quarterly report, I cannot find any progress reports on the £9.6m grant and, more importantly, whether the technically challenging and risky trial of reverse osmosis with Salinity Solutions has been successful or not (awarded to Salinity Solutions without open tender with other suppliers who could supply batch-based reverse osmosis).</p> <p><b>Question 1a</b> - When will the Salinity Solutions trial results be reported to this committee?</p> <p><b>Question 1b</b> - How much of the £9.6m of funding has been spent to date with Salinity Solutions?</p> <p><b>Question 1c</b> - If the Salinity Solutions trial has proved to be unsuccessful, has the trial been stopped; where will the remaining funding be redirected; will the government allow an extension of time for this council to do that?</p> <p>Regards, David Orr</p> <p><b>Response from Lead Officer: Head of Planning, Alison Blom-Cooper</b></p>

## Strategic Planning Committee – 6 February 2025 – Public Questions

### Full written response

Please note that £3m has not been allocated to Salinity Solutions. The attached report includes the Local Nutrient Mitigation Funding allocations approved by Executive on 4<sup>th</sup> November. The full report can be accessed here <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s37910/LNMF%20Report.pdf> but for ease of reference the table is copied below. The £3m allocation relates to the delivery of ‘temporary/bridging credits’ from a range of potential measures and not solely Salinity Solutions.

**Table 2: Revised allocations from Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund**

Project	Allocation
Project one: supply of temporary/bridging credits including Salinity Solutions (subject to the outcome of the trial), Miscanthus and other potential opportunities to increase supply of temporary/bridging credits between 2024-2030	£3,000,000
Project two: call for sites subject to the ongoing site assessment process and negotiation with landowners.	£5,600,000
Project three: Council housing stock septic tank upgrades	£1,000,000
<b>Total capital cost</b>	<b>£9,600,000</b>

#### Question 1a -

An update report on the Salinity Solutions trial and other phosphate related matters will be provided to the Strategic Planning Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

#### Question 1b -

At the current time none of the £9.6m capital grant funding has been spent on Salinity Solutions. To date Nutrient Mitigation revenue grant, awarded from Government as part of our successful funding bid, has been utilised to support the trial. An update report on the Salinity Solutions trial and other phosphate related matters will be provided to the Strategic Planning Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

#### Question 1c -

An update report on the Salinity Solutions trial and other phosphate related matters will be provided to the Strategic Planning Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

## Strategic Planning Committee – 6 February 2025 – Public Questions

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 7</p>	<p>My question is related to planning decision delays following resolution to approve at planning committees.</p> <p>I work in the area of providing phosphate credits for Somerset developments and our credit schemes have resulted in many smaller applications being approved, the process is generally working well and I would like to thank the efforts of the council in addressing the phosphates issue. But, and I realise that these are challenging times for everyone involved in the planning decision process at Somerset Council, I would like to highlight the continued problems applicants of larger developments are facing after gaining a resolution to approve at planning committee meetings. We have three large applications that have been stuck waiting for the s106 process to be completed despite having resolutions to approve between four and eleven months ago.</p> <p>These are large applications with a total of 129 houses of which 44 will be affordable.</p> <p><b>Question 2a</b> - I hope that members of this committee are aware of this problem with delays following resolutions to approve and please could I have an update on steps being taken to address the current delay in dealing with s106 agreements?</p> <p><b>Question 2b</b> - Finally who would be the contact at the council to highlight individual applications that appear to be delayed?</p> <p>Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.</p> <p>Many thanks, David Hiscox</p> <p><b>Response from Lead Officer: Head of Planning, Alison Blom-Cooper</b></p>
<p><b>Full written response</b></p>	<p>(a) The legal service has apologised for the delay in the Standard S106 agreement for the credit schemes but are now working hard to ensure that agreements can be concluded as soon as possible. The service has brought in external support to assist with this.</p> <p>(b) –If there are individual applications where a section 106 agreement appears to be delayed, the Head of Legal, Jill Byron <a href="mailto:jill.byron@somerset.gov.uk">jill.byron@somerset.gov.uk</a> should be advised.</p>

## Strategic Planning Committee – 6 February 2025 – Public Questions

<p>John Penny (in lieu of Matthew Cuthbert)</p> <p>Page 8</p>	<p><b>Callow Rock Quarry Applicant</b></p> <p>Good morning/afternoon and thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the committee.</p> <p>Under the currently approved planning permission for Callow Quarry, the majority of the site operates on a 6 am start time during the week. The only exception to this is the northern extension area, which has a start time of 7am.</p> <p>This application seeks to modify this so that the start time of the northern extension during weekdays moves forward by an hour to 6 am.</p> <p>This is the only matter that the application proposes to modify, it does not propose to increase vehicle movements, increase output or modify the working methods of the site which would lead to other amenity factors such as dust and explosive vibrations.</p> <p>A key reason for this proposal is that the northern extension extraction has progressed to depths of 15 metres plus from the original ground level. This has created a sufficient level of screening in the quarry walls and significant depth drop which was not present during the start.</p> <p>The condition on the planning permission originally contained part c), which would allow the modification of the working hours in the northern extension.</p> <p>It is our understanding that the condition was worded in this manner, so that a delayed start time would be enforced when the northern extension was at ground level with limited screening, which could then be modified later once the quarry depth had been sunk and screening created, which has now occurred.</p> <p>This would then bring it in alignment with the start time for the rest of the site.</p> <p>There are a number of benefits to the site for this proposal; o This would provide flexibility, as the site extracts from the northern extension and bottom area, with this bottom area to be depleted in the future. The additional hour will allow for the throughput of aggregate for local and regional building materials to be maintained by making up for the loss of supply from the bottom area. This will avoid a future situation where the full pit is opened, but there is an undefined boundary between start up times in the pit. This will bring alignment across the site for start-up times.</p>
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## Strategic Planning Committee – 6 February 2025 – Public Questions

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 9</p>	<p>With the permission of the Mineral Planning Authority, the site undertook an annual trial period during 2023 – 2024 which allowed the collection of noise monitoring data through multiple seasonal times in the year.</p> <p>This information was compiled and formed into supporting documents appended to the application, which demonstrated that the proposed changes to operating times would still allow the quarry to operate within the proposed noise limits established through the permission. There is no proposal to change these limits.</p> <p>Following consultation and submitting of additional documents, there are no holding objections from the technical consultees in relation to this application.</p> <p>Additionally, we have noted the public consultees concerns regarding noise related to the application. Subsequently we have removed our initial proposal to operate from 6am on Saturdays so that the proposal is only week days as mentioned above.</p> <p>Now that the northern extension is established and sunk to a suitable depth, it is our belief that the planning condition can be modified to allow for alignment with the remaining operation, whilst remaining compliant with established noise limits.</p> <p>We therefore ask you to support your officer’s recommendation. Thank you for listening.</p>
<p><b>Cllr Neal Bisdee</b></p>	<p><b>Callow Rock Quarry Shipham Parish Council</b></p> <p>Shipham Parish Council object strongly to this application for a variation in the hours of operation for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The increase in nuisance to Shipham Parishioners in terms of increased noise and dust including disruption to sleep</li> <li>- The issue of increased light pollution and the effect on the bat population and being so close to the SSSI 3. The lack of engagement with the quarry and the local community.</li> </ul> <p>Additional Comments:-  <b>National Planning Policy Framework:</b>  15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment  180 e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible,</p>

## Strategic Planning Committee – 6 February 2025 – Public Questions

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 10</p>	<p>help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and</p> <p><b>Response:</b>          Extension of licence hours is contributing to unacceptable levels of noise pollution for residents in sensitive areas and beyond nearer the village          Complaints have been raised with the County council in respect to unacceptable noise in the the periods between 6am and 7am from the Northern extension          17. Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals          216. Planning policies should:          g) when developing noise limits, recognise that some noisy short-term activities, which may otherwise be regarded as unacceptable, are unavoidable to facilitate minerals extraction; and          217. When determining planning applications, great weight should be given to the benefits of mineral extraction, including to the economy<sup>75</sup>. In considering proposals for mineral extraction, minerals planning authorities should:          c) ensure that any unavoidable noise, dust and particle emissions and any blasting vibrations are controlled, mitigated or removed at source<sup>76</sup>, and establish appropriate noise limits for extraction in proximity to noise sensitive properties.</p> <p><b>Response:</b>          This is not short-term noise but prolonged in nature          The noise has not been sufficiently mitigated – not operating at sufficiently low operating level within the quarry site to satisfactorily mitigate noise          Impact character and environment within AONB</p> <p><b>Noise policy statement for England:</b>          “Noise exposure can cause annoyance and sleep disturbance both of which impact on quality of life.”          “It is also agreed by many experts that annoyance and sleep disturbance can give rise to adverse health effects”.</p> <p><b>Response:</b>          Noise between 6am and 7am is causing annoyance and sleep disturbance and impacting on quality of life for residents          Noise monitoring has not isolated or differentiated the quarry noise from ambient noise ‘as far as reasonably practical’ to establish empirical data on the level of noise at sensitive area</p>
<p><b>Charlotte Thorne – Greenslade Taylor</b></p>	<p><b>Brookhayes Farm Agent</b></p> <p>Dear Chairman, Members of the Committee</p>

## Strategic Planning Committee – 6 February 2025 – Public Questions

Hunt (in lieu of Robert Stone)

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the Application before you for the retention of inert material used to level an agricultural field to aid Health & Safety when using large and modern agricultural machinery.

The Applicant currently farms in the region of 199 hectares and keeps approximately 550 head of cattle including a herd of 270 milking cows. The field, prior to the works, had a steep gully at the edge which was dangerous when driving modern agricultural machinery and there had been a couple of near misses. The Applicant, both for his and his Contractors' safety, naively decided that he would level the field to make it safer for those working on it, given the type and size of modern machinery used today. Unfortunately he didn't realise he required planning permission to do this, but once he did, we have then prepared this retrospective Planning Application to retain the tipped material. This information has been provided to the Planning Officer in support of the Application and the Enforcement Officer who visited the site during the works. The Applicant has continued to tidy the site and finish the work to make the site safe and reduce any run-off and bring it back into agricultural production.

The ground has now grassed over, and overall I don't think anyone would notice that there has been any tipping of inert material so this has not had a detrimental impact on the local environment. The Applicant has carried out work to pull the material back from the trees next to the ditch and then used the existing topsoil from the land which was scraped back to cover the inert material. Nothing else was added and the land is back to a level agreed and documented.

We note there have been no objections from the Highways, Wessex Water, Cossington Parish Council, the Ecologist, Public Rights of Way or from Planning Team North. We therefore trust on the basis this is a small site that you will be happy to support this Application in front of you today. Thank you for your time.

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