

ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21ST AUGUST 2024

PRESENT: Cllr Hathway; Cllr Hayden; Cllr Reeves; Cllr Zorab; Cllr Hathway; Cllr Brown; Cllr Hoogesteger

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr R Coulson (Assistant Clerk); Cllr Cooke & Cllr Mitchell as members of the public; 10 Members of the Public.

01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies from Cllr Lunnon.

RESOLVED to accept the reasons given.

02. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

02.01. There were no declarations of interest

02.02. There were no requests for dispensation for disclosable pecuniary interests.

02.03. There were no requests for dispensation.

03. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items for exclusion.

04. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members of the public agreed to speak as their application was discussed.

05. RECOMMENDATIONS OF ST CUTHBERT OUT PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE ON WEDNESDAY 31ST July 2024.

RESOLVED: The Committee resolved to accept the Minutes of the Planning Meeting of Wednesday 31st July 2024.

06. APPLICATIONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

All planning applications can be viewed in detail from www.mendip.gov.uk. Members of the Public are welcome to express their views at the Parish Council Planning Committee as well as direct to Mendip District Council.

No. & Officer	Detail	Dec. A/R/W
2024/0609/ HSE Kirsty Black	A roof replacement due to the delamination of the stone slate. Brookfield, Titlands Lane, Wookey Hole, Wells. 21/08/24 RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL	R

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed use of the incorrect type of slate to repair the existing delaminated slate is not acceptable given that the property is a Grade-II Listed Building. • As the property is a Grade-II Listed Building, the replacement material must be as close to an identical quality/origin as the existing old material. Additionally, the application is missing crucial details for the Planning Committee to make an accurate decision. We encourage the applicant to withdraw this application and reapply with the right documentation and with a commitment to use the appropriate slate for the repairs. 	
2024/0672/ LBC Kirsty Black	<p>Replace pendle slate roof, with Cardinal reproduction stone slates laid in diminishing courses.</p> <p>Brookfield, Titlands Lane, Wookey Hole, Wells. 21/08/24 RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the property is a Grade-II Listed Building, the replacement material must be as close to an identical quality/origin as the existing old material. Additionally, the application is missing crucial details for the Planning Committee to make an accurate decision. We encourage the applicant to withdraw this application and reapply with the right documentation and with a commitment to use the appropriate slate for the repairs. • The proposed use of the incorrect type of slate to repair the existing delaminated slate is not acceptable given that the property is a Grade-II Listed Building. 	R
2018/1780/ FUL Simon Trafford	<p>Residential Redevelopment of Redundant Farmyard with 7 Residential Dwellings (Revisions and Further information received on Monday 5th August).</p> <p>Middle Farm, Peace Close Lane, West Horrington, Wells. 21/08/24 RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area itself is already developed and adding further development will lead to over-development which was to be mitigated by the benefit of a newly constructed carpark. Without this positive development, the existing plans will only be a net negative to the area. • Developing this area further will only lead to further traffic congestion on these streets which are not designed for such high traffic levels and will lead to congestion. This will make the area less appealing to 	R

	<p>residents and lead to higher levels of exhaust emissions in the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of traffic generation from this development will lead to the area being less navigable and the lack of the previously offered car park will see far more on-street parking on a development which already experiences a large amount of this practice. • The original planning application was approved on the proviso of a car park being provided alongside the development as this would be of considerable community benefit. With the offer of a car park being withdrawn due to changing circumstances, this application is no longer a net benefit to the community and instead will lead to overdevelopment in the area. 	
<p>2024/1322/ OUT</p> <p>Ed Winter</p>	<p>Outline planning application for the erection of up to 78 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access point. All matters reserved except for means of access.</p> <p>Land At 353314 146683, Glencot Road, Wookey Hole, Wells. 21/08/24 RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL</p> <p>3. Design & appearance, impact on public visual amenity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) APPEARANCE: Development would have severe, irreversible impact on AONB and the overall prospect of Wells from all visible directions. • b) STATUS: As a site granted 'Green Gap in the Mendip Local Plan 2 this development should not be allowed to proceed as it would severely distort and despoil the view of this area between Wells and Wookey Hole. Somerset Local Plan affords this site protection to ensure space between Wells and surrounding villages, Wookey Hole and Haybridge. EN7 states that 'Development will not be permitted where it will have an adverse impact on the scenic value or integrity defined on the proposals map.' • c) OVER-DEVELOPMENT: The visual effect from the south, with other recent developments, would be a sea of rooves stretching to the tree line of Arthurs Point, and ruin the visual splendour of this backdrop to the AONB. <p>4. Layout & density of building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both layout and density were considered an inappropriate development so close to the AONB, already swamped with new developments. 	<p>R</p>

- 5. Effect on listed buildings and/or conservation areas**
- **The development's proximity to the AONB and the site itself would undermine both of these measures which are designed to protect and preserve certain areas from the creep of, and damage from, excessive housing development.**
- 6. Loss of trees**
- **WILDLIFE HAVEN: The development suggests a breach to a mature hedgerow that is over 50 years old, which represents some shelter for large amounts of wildlife and is a feature that is much needed in the light of other destroyed hedges and homes for wildlife in the vicinity.**
- 7. Loss of ecological habitats**
- **a) BATS: The presence of a nationally rare greater horseshoe bat population roost in Wookey Hole Caves has been acknowledged (BGS, 2017.) Bats' echolocation instincts require landscape features to access their foraging areas and afford them protection, these being jeopardised by the proposed development. In addition, Bats roost in the nearby quarry and in the old Lime Kilns in Lime Kiln Lane also close to the proposed site. Bats require a 4mile radius from known nesting sites to be able to successfully feed and thrive; this development is less than 2km from their known nests. Light from current developments, let alone further development closer to their roost, is highly likely to impact on their existence.**
 - **b) NATIVE WILDLIFE: Shelter & food sources of woods around Arthurs Point offers homes and feeding sites to diverse wildlife such as badgers, hedgehogs and wild deer. The surrounding fields then become an animal thoroughfare which is already severely curtailed by developments to the south of Wookey Hole Road.**

8. Access, highways safety or traffic generation

- a) **TRAFFIC VOLUME** – the local CSW group have data that prove the applicants’ statistics on the volume of traffic are grossly underestimated.
- b) **SAFETY:** The width of the Wookey Hole Road where the entrance is proposed is insufficiently wide to cope with current traffic demands.
- c) **TRAFFIC GENERATION:** Wookey Hole Road and Glencot road is used as a rat-run for drivers avoiding the traffic light density on Wells, to get to either Ash Lane & the A39 from Cheddar and the A371, via Haybridge.

9. Inadequate parking & servicing

- a) **PARKING:** presence of on-road parking (& site vehicles) on the Wookey Hole Road on the south side by both the Bishops Green and Priory Field developments already leads to regular near misses where vehicles have insufficient space to pass each other and regularly have to cross the road’s central white lines
- b) **WIDER PARKING ISSUES:** Wells has a shortage of parking facilities. The introduction of a further 90 dwellings can only exacerbate the parking problems within the city and discourage people from supporting their local high street.
- c) **SEASONAL ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC:** the weight of seasonal tourist traffic going to Wookey Hole Caves, which can reportedly lead to queues from the village tailing back to the proposed site adds to a burgeoning traffic crisis.
- d) **BUS ACCESS:** Existing bus routes do not facilitate people travelling to major employment centres for typical working hours, therefore public transport use is heavily restricted.

10. Noise, smells or disturbance from the scheme

- **NEIGHBOURING BUSINESSES:** The site abuts industrial businesses, St Cuthbert's Paper Mill, Station Garage, L A Moore Reclamation and Pyrocore Pyrolysis facility. The local noise and operations of these businesses could be a source of anxiety for residents in the new development as well as building works being a potential disruption to these businesses.
- **Waste-Water:** Water-way pollution due to raw sewage is a hot-button issue at the moment given the high level of “Overflow” that has occurred from waste

management companies in the past few years. Higher levels of testing and awareness have revealed how much damage is being done to our rivers by the practice. Installing 78 new houses into the area will overwhelm our already over-taxed pumping and sewage management system and will likely lead to raw sewage making its way into our water-ways. This will create not only a severe public health hazard but will also lead to noxious smells for any properties near our rivers. Combine this with our river's propensity for flooding when heavy rainfall occurs and this will lead to residents being unable to avoid effluent damaging their homes and property.

11. Flood Risk

- **a) LYING WATER:** Wookey Hole Road and Glencott Road already have shown to hold flood water on both sides of the road.
- **b) RUN OFF** from the proposed development, the lack of natural absorption opposite in new developments and the impact on houses in these developments would lead to exacerbated flooding and water-lying problems.
- **c) CLIMATE RELATED RAINFALL:** SCO PC has already experienced a huge amount of rainfall in the last few years related to ongoing Climate Change. Every year, this has gotten progressively more common and surface water flooding is now a very common occurrence all around our Parish. Given much of the Parish's land is located on topographically low ground, our risk of river flooding due to water washing off of surrounding hills is exceptionally high. This flooding often happens quickly and with little time to prep affected properties. The rivers downstream of the planned development are already very liable to burst their banks when heavy rain occurs and adding a new development will only exacerbate this in addition to the sites risk of surface water flooding.

12. Other reason – please explain

- **a) INFRASTRUCTURE:** is inadequate to support existing developments. Pressure on local services, Transport, Schools, Doctor surgeries and lack of additional parking facilities cited by majority of residents as a severe impediment to people's wellbeing, and not addressed by developers.

- **b) LOCATION:** this development is wholly within SCOPC. The boundary of Wells City Council is some 500m to the western edge of the site.
- **c) EMPLOYMENT:** with an absence of job-creation schemes and nearby sources of employment, it was believed that many future residents would be commuters to larger cities and thus damage further what is currently becoming a soulless, transitory environment instead of a community.
- **d) OVERDEVELOPMENT:** SCOPC has shouldered a disproportionate burden of development and the area along Wookey Hole Road has changed immeasurably.
- Gladman's main contention and is that its proposed site is an extension of Wells and all its references to MDC Local Plan parts 1 and 2 are to sections considering the City of Wells.
- The proposed site is, at its closest more than 500m away from the boundary of Wells. It is firmly within the boundary of the North Ward of St Cuthbert Out PC. Over the past few years, the North Ward has had permissions granted to build:
 - a. Wookey Hole Rd
 - i. Thales Site David Wilson 173 homes
 - ii. Bovis Alongside the Thales Site 200 homes
 - b. A371 Portway Persimmon/Taylor Wimpey 220 homes
 - c. B3139 Elm Close Gladman 100 homes.
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- 693 new homes imply a population increase of getting on for 2000 people.
- According to the 2011 census, the whole of SCO PC it had a population of 3,749, It is believed that the North Ward had a population of about 1000, implying a planned increase of 200%
- The Office of National Statistics predicted in 2016 that the population of the UK was to rise from 65.6 million in 2016 to 72.9 million in 2041, a growth of 11%. It is unreasonable to expect the North Ward to suffer such a disproportionate increase as that that has already been agreed.
- This proposal would add another 90 homes and 250 people to that total giving an increase of 225%
- Both the MDC Local Plans Part 1 and Part 2 show the proposed site as green gap. LP1 is now over 5 years old so its weighting might be reduced under the latest NPPF but LP2 is about to be accepted so that its weighting should be considerable, as was pointed out at the recent MDC Planning Board when considering the Elm Close Development.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e) LOCAL PLANS: Both Parts I and II do not facilitate or allow developments in this area but specifically prohibits it. (See Local Plan Part two on MDC website) • f) CLIMATE EMERGENCY: With the local political emphasis on this, the development itself, the associated reliance on car journeys and the legacy of non-environmentally progressive housing in neighbouring developments, contravenes this will to thoughtfully address the impact of humans on the environment and nature. • g) RESIDENT FRUSTRATION: given the heavy development of recent years, the imminent installation of a pyrolysis plant and disregard of local green spaces, residents were dismayed, distressed and frustrated that there seems no will to protect their community but plenty of will to acquiesce to developers, regardless. • h) INADEQUATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINK: The location of this site is not serviced by a sporadic bus service and would not allow residents easy access to further transport routes so additional vehicular movements causing additional pollution to the environment. • I) LACK OF PERSISTENT JOB CREATION: The stated benefit of job creation will not last beyond the development's construction, meaning the boost to job numbers will be temporary. In turn, the sudden influx of hundreds of new residents will only exacerbate the number of job-seekers in the area and will lead to an increase in mid-to-long distance commuting. This, naturally, will lead to even worse strain on the public transport links in the area and inflate the amount of traffic congestion the area suffers as people utilise cars to get to and from their work. • J) LACK OF PROPER RADIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: Radon gas has been detected on developments in the area in the past which are very close to the planned development. Radon gas presents a real threat to residents with prolonged exposure and no proper Radiological Assessment has been carried out and presented to the Planning Department to detect and manage this public health risk. 	
<p>2023/1515/ OUT</p> <p>Ed Winter</p>	<p>Outline application with all matters reserved except for access, up to 47no. dwellings (including affordable housing), open space, ecological mitigation, and supporting infrastructure.</p> <p>Land At 353038 145483, Gypsy Lane, Wells. 21/08/24 RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL</p>	

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| | <p>3. Design & appearance, impact on public visual amenity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) Green Gap & urban sprawl – the proposed development challenges the existence of the Green Gap, upheld by the Inspectorate, and would further allow for urban crawl into the parish’s rural countryside, 27 hectares of which has already been developed and a further 8.8ha subject to planning applications for large developments, all within a 1.2km radius of the site. • b) Local Plan: The Planning Authority recently endorsed the Local Plan II. CP1 ignores that Haybridge is a separate hamlet from the primary settlement of Wells. CP4 requires a specifically identified local need but is not referenced in the Design & Access Statement; there are allocated sites within Wells itself but this site is not allocated for development on the Local Plan adopted by Somerset Council. • c) Visual impact: the development would have an irreversibly negative impact on the distinctive landscape character as well as within the setting of the AONB, 1.5km to the north. The elevated landscapes and rolling topography provide frequent distant and panoramic views, Gypsy Lane being one such landscape, and is visible when approaching from Glastonbury direction: it characterises the identity of the parish, the setting of Wells and the lower area of the Mendip Hills. • d) ‘Stranded’ neighbourhood: without clear connectivity with a proposed development to the east, the site would be remote and isolated as a neighbourhood. • e) Engulfing Elm Close: residents face dual applications both to the north and south of Elm Close, and furthermore, have lost the countryside to the east to development and risk losing their sense of community and the green space around their homes. <p>6. Loss of trees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedgerows cannot be seen as an isolated issue to a development – they offer corridors, foraging routes, habitats and shelter as part of a network: the reference that they are only relevant at site level and can be mitigated against as an isolated problem is increasingly a flawed solution. Residents are increasingly aware that a development-by-development approach to hedgerows is damaging, not long-term thinking and irresponsible. | |
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7. Loss of Ecological Habitats

- a) wildlife corridor – as a ridgeline between the AONB and the Levels, Gypsy Lane is intrinsic to wildlife as a route from one to another and would be impacted by noise, rooflines, light and disruption of tranquillity, as they have been further to the east.
- b) Badger sets are reported on the site.
- c) Bats, of which 9 species were identified just 270m north, depend on established routes for survival and require protection.
- d) Biodiversity zero net gain: it was hard to identify how the development would be able to deliver this responsibility – the proposal was not sustainable to either the Committee or the attending residents.

8. Access, highways safety or traffic generation

- a) Access: the existing junction from Gypsy Lane onto Elm Close B3139 does not cater for two way access and cannot be considered suitable or practical, as the only point of access to the development as well as existing traffic flow. The proposal would lead to potentially traffic coming from 4 different directions, with the potential for vehicles bottle-necking back onto the B3139.
- b) Safety: the junction is also hazardous in vehicles, with evidential frequent speeding along the B3139, in both directions. Further, Gypsy Lane, for its width, has high traffic use both local traffic (tractors, horse movement boxes, delivery vans, residents in Burcott) and as a link between the A361 & A39. There is no footpath on either side of the road. Passing places are ad hoc and the walking route to schools and amenities via Burcott Lane has no footpath whatsoever.
- c) Traffic generation: Gypsy lane is already a high-use route, with between 250-400 traffic movements per day observed by a resident. It is probable too that the development would attract commuters who travel (in cars) further afield, again within a burgeoning infrastructure around the City of Wells. It is believed that the traffic study accompanying the application was out of date and didn't take into account the 943 new dwellings in the North Ward, north west of the City of Wells. (Please also see the [latest Speed Indicator Device report](#) for Elm Close for the period 14-21 August 2024)

	<p>9. Inadequate parking & servicing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) public transport: the development will inevitably become a car-based estate, as public transport provision is extremely limited, and between Wells & Wedmore. • b) Active Travel: Walking & cycling routes from the site along Burcott Lane to Wells is hazardous, footpath-less until Burcott Road and at least a 30 minute walk. The local amenities on Burcott Road have no parking. <p>11. Flood Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage / attenuation pond – there were concerns that this would pose a safety risk, being in the southern open space most likely to be used as play area. A stepped bank would not reduce the hazards, despite the pond not always being full. <p>12. Other reason – please explain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) Affordable housing – residents asked whether the allocated 19 dwellings would be affordable to local, low-income workers. • b) Contaminated Land/Radon – there was inadequate supporting data to demonstrate how the potential for Radon would be identified for the <1% homes exceeding action level. • c) Sewage provision – it was unclear how the development would deal with sewage, with the additional concern that the current sewage plant & water treatment works is already at capacity. • d) Community facilities: there was no provision for existing local residents (facilities, meeting place etc). The nearest community building in the parish is 2.2km (Coxley) or 3.7km (Easton). 	
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07. TO NOTE PLANNING PERMISSION DECISIONS BY SOMERSET COUNCIL

There were no comments regarding Decision Notices

08. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 11th September 2024 at Coxley Memorial Hall (Back Room) at 7pm.