



ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL : PLANNING APPLICATION COMMENTS

Application Ref No:	2023/1515
Address:	Land At 353038 145483, Gypsy Lane, Wells.
Date of response:	21/08/2024

Please explain below the main grounds on which you consider the application should be either refused or approved:			
Material Considerations	approval	neutral	refusal
1. Overshadowing			
Comments:			
2. Overlooking, loss of privacy or overbearing nature of proposal			
Comments:			
3. Design & appearance, impact on public visual amenity			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>d) ‘Stranded’ neighbourhood: without clear connectivity with a proposed development to the east, the site would be remote and isolated as a neighbourhood.</p> <p>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>			
4. Layout & density of building			
Comments:			
5. Effect on listed buildings and/or conservation areas			
Comments:			
6. Loss of trees			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>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.</p>			
7. Loss of ecological habitats			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>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</p>			

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			
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Comments:

: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)

9. Inadequate parking & servicing			
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Comments:

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.

10. Noise, smells or disturbance from the scheme			
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Comments:

11. Flood Risk			
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Comments:

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.

12. Other reason – please explain			
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Comments:

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).

13.			
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There were no justified material planning reasons to recommend refusal.

2. OVERALL RECOMMENDATION	REFUSAL
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If the Planning Officer disagrees with the Parish Council recommendations, St Cuthbert (Out) PC insist that the application id deferred to the Planning Board East.	
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