



ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL : PLANNING APPLICATION COMMENTS

Application Ref No:	2023/1087/OUT
Address:	New House Farm, Haybridge Hill, Haybridge, Wells.
Date of response:	12 th July 2023

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			REFUSE
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Lack of privacy: Acute concerns for the lack of privacy for houses with shorter gardens (#32-28 Elm Close) – the proximity of new buildings would be overbearing.</p> <p>Development saturation: Universal concerns that Elm Close is to be engulfed in development: Potential impact of Gladman development (2019/1381/OTS) and a consultation regarding a development of 48 houses off Gypsy Lane (March 2023) means possible development on both sides of Elm Close, sandwiched between possibly 3 developments. Further, lane south of Burcott Lane (and opposite these latter 2 developments) between Martins Close, Keward, & the sewage works is allocated for building in the future.</p> <p>Outside current settlement boundaries – there appears to be no legitimacy under current plans that the land of New House Farm is included in any development allocation.</p>			
3. Design & appearance, impact on public visual amenity			REFUSE
<p>Comments:</p> <p>House design: The illustrative masterplan shows uninteresting, bland and monotonous housing styles that do not reflect the vernacular buildings of Elm Close. It further extends the sprawl of ugly developments further west. A more diverse style of development should be promoted.</p> <p>Public Visual Amenity: Within a 1km radius of the entrance to New House Farm, there have been 4 major developments (624 dwellings), and a further 3 proposed developments in recent years, drastically affecting the public visual amenity of the entire North Ward, the hamlet of Haybridge and the western landscape beyond the city boundaries of Wells.</p> <p>GREEN GAP: The Green Gap around Wells is accepted in Local Plans 1 and 2, and endorsed by government inspectors. The site is distinct from the built up areas of Wells, being that it is a large field and so visually relates well to the rural areas that appear to encircle much of this small city of Wells. To allow the development would be to urbanise a valuable & protected green boundary between wells and surrounding settlements, including Haybridge. A key aspect of this site is that it is an undeveloped open field, which forms a visually pleasing rural landscape setting to Wells. As such, the fact that it is adjacent to the edge of Wells does not weigh in favour of the development as this rural setting would be diminished. Being west of the A371 also means the potential for even further extension into open countryside will have a precedent if this application was allowed to proceed.</p>			
4. Layout & density of building			REFUSE
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The proximity of the southern edge of the development to gardens of properties 28-32 Elm Close caused alarm. A resident noted that a new building could be within 17m from their lounge.</p> <p>Public Right of Way: this is currently reported as blocked and so misleading to promote this as a means of access on the site layout.</p> <p>Amenities on the layout: There were no charging points for electric vehicles, recycling points or cycle ways on the illustrated masterplan.</p>			
5. Effect on listed buildings and/or conservation areas			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The farm house is a key feature, of modern historical interest and should not be demolished.</p>			

6. Loss of trees			REFUSE
Comments: Destruction of hedgerows are a source of refuge and food sources for wildlife and are integral to both landscape and biodiversity.			
7. Loss of ecological habitats			REFUSE
Comments: Biodiversity: the site is reported as having a wealth of wildlife including deer, badgers, foxes and there were multiple concerns from residents that any development at this site during a Climate Crisis and depletion of species in the UK was irresponsible, reckless and frustrating. Bats: the application was inadequate in solutions to protect the known bat population and their foraging routes; the area between the SSSIs at the former Wookey Station and the foraging route southwards would mean the incline up Haybridge Hill across the proposed site would become built-up and prohibitive to bats-retaining hedgerows is not a good enough solution to combat the urban fill between the hedges. 9 bat species were recorded within the site. Lighting: the plans for E3 lighting strategy further damages bat routes, as well as challenging the Dark Skies of the area of Wookey Hole through to Coxley. Despite the mitigation measures the developer promotes, the site <i>will</i> be disturbed and the ecological habitats challenged.			
8. Access, highways safety or traffic generation			REFUSE
Comments: Traffic Impact Assessment Plan: the plans submitted are out of date. They do not take into account increases in traffic volume of two new developments on Haybridge Hill east of the A371. Therefore its findings are not valid. Access to A371: the proposed site access is on a wide bend of the A371 and 130m from the access junction of the new estates east of the A371. It was also challenged whether the land across which access would go is owned by the farm or Somerset Council. A371 hazards: the road itself, and the crossing from Elm Close to Haybridge Hill, is notorious with no pedestrian crossing for 300m eastbound and none on the westbound A371; the speed limit changes to 40mph before the proposed entrance to the development and Elm Close / B3139 Speed Indicator Device has recorded an average of 41.09% of vehicles travelling over 35mph. Bus provision: the existing bus service is sponsored by the Parish Council and not a public service; furthermore the service hours do not facilitate work commutes or evening journeys. Car-based solutions: limited local facilities, by foot, are nearly 1km away on foot, on Burcott Road. The nearest supermarket, Tesco's, is a 1.5km walk, and the Somerset Farmers Market just under 2km on foot. It is unrealistic to see the proposed development as being anything but car-reliant and not meeting the objective of reducing growth in the use of private vehicles. Access to Glastonbury, Street and M5: weight of traffic in Wells is likely to encourage residents wanting access to the A39 to use alternative rat-runs, through Gypsy Lane, Burcott Lane & Coxley Wick. These are high-hedged, single lane agricultural routes with a blind hill and few passing places and are highly unsuitable.			
9. Inadequate parking & servicing			REFUSE
Comments: Drainage: there is a clear conflict between multiple dwellings and existing Wessex Water assets. Access to assets for maintenance, the 6m easement around main foul pipes which cannot be built on or trees planted conflicts with the applicant's plans. Wessex Water note that the capacity for the local water course to handle foul drainage following treatment is limited, and to use it would require future research and appraisal by the planners. The proposal does not expand on how Wessex Water would access the foul drainage assets for maintenance and repair for Elm Close residents, where these are close to the southern border of the site and northern end of gardens, with no road access from the south.			
10. Noise, smells or disturbance from the scheme			REFUSE
Comments:			
11. Flood Risk			REFUSE
Comments: Not sure if this comes under no.9			
12. Other reason – please explain			REFUSE
Comments: Infrastructure: there is no reference made, or efforts to demonstrate how, the development will contribute positively to the buckling infrastructure in the City of Wells: GP surgeries, dentists, school places, car parking, dog waste and litter bins and traffic volume are all current sources of anxiety for residents. Further			

employment options are limited, posing the danger that the development will become another sleeper settlement of commuters to larger cities.

New House Farm is not land allocated on Local Plans, last approved in December 2021. Housing allocation was questioned firstly because of the Local Plans (still live under Unitary Somerset Council), and secondly due to a fresh emphasis on building in areas where infrastructure has already expanded – larger towns such as Taunton, Bridgwater & Yeovil.

Development concentration: the North Ward of the parish has been excessively burdened with new, large-scale developments (David Wilson, Bovis, Taylor-Wimpey / Persimmon) leading to 624 dwellings and associated infrastructure burdens. Including the City of Wells, the figure is 1200 new homes in the last 5 years. Residents are increasingly distressed by ever-encroaching development and loss of countryside.

Community facilities: there are none in the entire North Ward and the nearest being in Coxley, more than 4km away by car. The applicant has made no effort to consider community facilities as a way to generate a sense of community in a ward impacted by new development.

Subsidence: the Geotech Risk Assessments were challenged for their addressing of subsidence issues. Where the first report looks at subsidence south of the farm, the second report does not include the whole site. The stability of the site soil and possibility of subsidence was a concern.

Soil pollution: The report of asbestos and hydrocarbons is reported as a 'level harmful to health': wider concerns remain about the suitability of the soil content and structure. There is also Radon evidence in the area.

Consultation distribution: the geography of the consultation was questionable. The 1,627 addresses are largely in urban sites within the City, skewing findings away from residents with a direct interest and becoming a more general, less relevant consultation.

Agricultural land is needed more than ever.

Affordable housing quota: residents stressed that this can change during the development's building and were sceptical of the measures used to assess 'affordable housing' and the developers' commitment to maintain this figure of 40%.

13.			
This application should be refused and if required go to the planning board to ensure refusal. This needs to be in bold and highlighted.			
2. OVERALL RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL	NEUTRAL	REFUSAL
3. Recommend that the decision be left to the Planning Officer following consultation responses. St Cuthbert (Out) PC request that this is deferred to the Planning Committee (East) if the Planning Officer approves the application.		<p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NO</p>	