

Minutes, Meeting of Bicknoller Parish Council
Wednesday 13th September 2023, commencing at 7pm at the Village Hall

(IN THE FORMAT TO BE PRESENTED TO THE NEXT MEETING FOR APPROVAL)

PRESENT:

Councillors C Warren, M Andersen, G Withers, D Leggetter

IN ATTENDANCE:

C Morrison-Jones (Parish Clerk)

SC Cllr M Kravis

1 x member of the public arrived at 19.57

PARISH FORUM:

No parishioners present

Cllr M Kravis gave his report :

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllrs M Rawle and A Harrison and SC Cllr C Lawrence

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 12th and 15th JULY, 10th AUGUST and 2nd SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLUTION: Councillors resolved to approve the minutes of the above Parish Council meetings as a true record, and they were signed by the Chairman

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED BY THE BELOW AGENDA ITEMS

None

5. COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION

Greg Withers was co-opted onto the council at the meeting held on 10th August 2023 bringing the number of Members on the council to six. There is still one vacancy on the PC to be filled by co-option. Any interested parties should contact the clerk of Chairman for further information.

At this point agenda item 8.1 was brought forward in the running order of the meeting and considered by councillors

8. PLANNING

8.1. To consider application 3/01/23/005

Erection of 4 No. dwellings and associated development

Byways, 19 Church Lane, Bicknoller, TA4 4EL

Councillors discussed this application at length and considered that the current application did not address many of the concerns raised regarding the previous applications on the site.

RESOLUTION: To Object and submit the following response to the Planning Officer

Whilst it was acknowledged that there is some variation in the design and density of the proposed housing compared to previous applications, the Parish Council's concerns remain broadly the same as to its objections to previous applications concerning the site and resolved to OBJECT to this application for the reasons listed below:

In 1979 permission was refused for the erection of two dwellings on the whole field and that an appeal was 'dismissed having regard to the proposed access in that scheme direct to Church Lane' [see document T/APP/H3320/A/93/219352/P7, dated 12 May 1993 dismissing application 3/01/92/023].

If the access was not suitable for two dwellings, then it cannot be so for four dwellings.

The Parish Council felt that refusals of the previous planning applications (3/01/18/005 and 3/01/20/003) had not been overcome as, even though there are fewer houses, the development will still cover most of the field. The housing is still too dense for a rural village. Refusal 2 (03/01/18/003) states 'The proposed development by virtue of its position the edge of the village and its intended scale will result in harm to the visual appearance and character of this part of the village and the wider AONB in which the village is situated. The proposed development will be visible from close to and from the nearby high land to the east. The development will harm the setting, character and appearance of the village in the landscape as well the wider character and beauty of the area thereby undermining its statutory purpose and designation. The proposal is considered to be contrary to the Local plan policies SV1, NH5 and NH14 as well as paragraphs 7, 115 and 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) On this occasion there are no overriding matters of public interest that warrant approval of this major development in a nationally designated landscape'.

Siting and Appearance.

WSC2016 POLICY SC1: HIERARCHY OF SETTLEMENTS states:

4. Development within or in close proximity (within 50 metres) to the contiguous built-up area of Minehead/Alcombe, Watchet, Williton and primary and secondary villages will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that:

In 4.a. 'It is well related to existing essential services and social facilities within the settlement'

In 4.b 'There is safe and easy pedestrian access to the essential services and social facilities within the settlement'

In 4c. 'It respects the historic environment and complements the character of the existing settlement'

In 4d. 'It does not generate significant additional traffic movements over minor roads to and from the national primary and country highway route network E. It does not harm the amenity of the area or the adjoining land uses. Development elsewhere in the open countryside will be considered under Policy OC1'

Bicknoller is a relatively small village in a rural location that offers some basic local services, such as village hall, community shop and Church. Whilst they are not particularly far from the appeal site, the routes to these services and social facilities are narrow in parts, lack footways and/or street lightening. The limited range of the services and facilities that Bicknoller offers would conceivably necessitate regular access to essential services and facilities further afield. A bus route runs along the A358 providing a regular service to larger settlements, such as Taunton, Minehead and Williton. The closest bus stop to this site would involve walking or cycling along the narrow, unlit Church Lane. Although the distances between the site and the services/facilities in Bicknoller or to the A358 are not long, the nature of the routes would be a deterrent to walking along them on foot, particularly during darker winter months or in inclement weather. The location would limit opportunities to regularly access services and facilities by sustainable transport modes. The majority of journeys to schools, supermarkets and employment would be taken by private car trips. Therefore the site does not offer a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to whether there would be safe and easy pedestrian access to services and facilities. This is in conflict with Policies SD1, SC1 and TR2 of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, Revised February 2019 that seeks to ensure development is sustainable and provides a safe built environment, with accessible services, and is located to maximise the attractiveness of modes of transport other than by the private car. Safe access on a blind bend is not conducive to 4.b.

In addition, in the Flood Risk Assessment at paragraph 316 it states:

It is recommended that the Finished Floor Level (FFL) of the proposed dwellings are set 300 mm above existing ground levels. This will mean that the houses will be even more prominent in the landscape.

Due to the contours of the land to the north and east the plot is the channel for a large part of the runoff from the surrounding area. It is for that reason that the land is boggy and unsuitable.

Bicknoller is classified as a primary village where limited development is acceptable and where it can be demonstrated that the development will contribute to the wider sustainability benefits of the area. Limited development is defined as individual schemes of

up to 10 houses providing about a 10% increase in the total number of dwellings over the Plan period (2016 to 2032) and is limited to about 30% in any five year period. At the start of the plan period, Bicknoller had 122 dwellings. This means that an additional 12 houses over the plan period can be approved/built. This also means that only 3.6 dwellings can be approved every 5 years.

Since September 2018, the following dwellings have been approved:

Erection of 1 No. dwelling and detached garage, Chilcombe House (3/01/20/016 and 3/01/21/005), Certificate for a Lawful Development a dwellinghouse at Dairy House (3/01/20/019), change of use of agricultural building to 1 No. dwelling house (Class C3) at Newton Farm (ABD/01/21/001 and 3/01/22/010), erection of 1 No. dwelling utilising the Class Q fallback position at Newton Farm (3/01/22/005). These already granted dwellings need to be taken into account within the 3.6 house figure in the Plan period and it needs to be acknowledged that this figure has already been exceeded prior to the submission of this current application.

Appearance and siting were discussed in relation to WSC2016 and the current Village Design statement.

WSC2016, POLICY SV1: DEVELOPMENT AT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY VILLAGES

Development at primary and secondary villages should be designed to form an integral, harmonious addition to the settlement's existing character.

WSC2016 states:

'New development should create a sense of place with a distinctive character, which clearly demonstrates how it has responded to its local context.'

Also, POLICY NH5: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PROTECTION

'Within the identified landscape character areas, as shown in figure 2, development should be located and designed in such a way as to minimise adverse impact on the quality and integrity of that local landscape character area.'

Some communities have produced Village Design Statements which help to define the character of the locality and identify important local features.

Parish Councillors agreed that the village design statement should be referred to when considering this application:

<https://www.bicknoller.com/wpcontent/uploads/2011/06/Village-Design-Statement.pdf>

7.3 Any future development in the village should be critically examined to ensure the protection of the local environment and to avoid the destruction of wildlife.

7.6 Developments which involve the removal of field hedges and banks, the felling of mature indigenous trees, or the piping of natural watercourses should be resisted

7.12 Any new development/alteration should have regard to the (mainly) low density of buildings in the parish, and consequently the need for adequate space to be provided between buildings

7.13 In the light of 7.12 above, each planning application for a new development must state the size of the plot, the Percentage of the plot being built upon, and the distance to the closest boundary

7.14 In the light of 7.12 above, each planning application which changes the external dimensions of an existing building, must state the percentage of the plot that will be built upon and the distance to the closest boundary if the application is successful

7.16 The height and pitch of roofs should be in sympathy with surrounding buildings (4)

7.17 Developments/alterations should not interfere with existing culverts, streams, flood plains or land drainage. They should also be able to cope with the overflowing, or temporary, watercourses which result from extreme weather conditions. This is of benefit to both properties and wildlife.

7.18 Preserve the natural, winding character of parish lanes whilst ensuring that they can be safely negotiated

Parish Councillors did not think that the proposal reflected these design statement items or policy statements in WSC2016 at all.

The drainage of water on site and the nature of the ground was a concern and how development would have negative consequences.

POLICY CC6: WATER MANAGEMENT:

'Development that would have an adverse impact on: • the availability and use of existing water resources; • the existing water table level • accessibility to existing watercourses for maintenance and, • areas at risk of flooding by tidal, fluvial and/or surface water run-off Will only be permitted if adequate and environmentally acceptable measures are incorporated that provide suitable protection and mitigation both on-site and through displacement to adjoining land.'

West Somerset District Council letter reference Eng/DCT/BMR/P14 dated 25 November 1994 states:

'The site, in contrast to the other part of the same field is very marshy and acts as a water carrier for the higher ground to the watercourse on the western boundary of the site. I, therefore, consider it inappropriate to develop this area.'

'Marshy/wetland habitats are becoming increasingly rare and, therefore, development on them should be resisted.'

POLICY NH14: NATIONALLY DESIGNATED LANDSCAPE AREAS

Within the identified landscape character areas, as shown in figure 2, development should be located and designed in such a way as to minimise adverse impact on the quality and integrity of that local landscape character area

'Applications for development should have regard to location, siting, orientation and landscaping to achieve high quality design and to ensure that the proposals conserve or enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and tranquillity of the AONB or the National Park and their settings. Development which would conflict with the achievement of the statutory purposes of the AONB or the National Park, or their settings or which would adversely affect the understanding or enjoyment of the national park's special qualities, will not be permitted.'

'Where development is considered to be necessary and acceptable, particular attention will be paid to the design taking account of; siting, scale, form, height, massing, detail and/or use of local materials as appropriate.1

Again, Parish Councillors did not think that the proposed development met these criteria,

This was also the stated opinion in document T/APP/H3320/A/95/248622/P8 dated 26 June 1995 section 7 dismissing an appeal on a planning refusal on the site:

'I am of the opinion that the partial development of OS419, outside the existing well defined limits of development on this side of the village, would be harmful to the appearance and character of the AONB'.

The development is contrary to Policy NH6 – as the site is a designated County Wildlife Site and insufficient ecological biodiversity enhancements are proposed. The ecological survey presented to support the application is considered by councillors to be an inaccurate representation of the wildlife present on site. For example, it states the presence of otters to be unlikely yet recently the body of an otter had been observed on an adjacent road proving a species presence in the vicinity.

We also refer you to comments made by Simon Briggs of Somerset Wildlife Trust and are appalled at the desegregation of the site caused by grazing.

On a practical matter, there is mains sewerage that runs through part of the site, regarding which a document within previous planning files states that no works should take place within 3m of the sewers.

Bicknoller Parish Council further confirm that they object to the development proposals and consider that they fail to meet West Somerset Local Plan Policies SC1, SC4, NH6, NH15 and SV1. The proposals also fail Paragraphs 7, 115 and 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

It is understood and accepted that new housing is needed; however, this proposal is not the correct way of providing it. Infill and smaller, sympathetic developments would preserve the character of the village and AONB.

*SC Cllr M Kravis left the meeting at this point
The agenda reverted to its scheduled running order*

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- The Coronation gate at the Church is in the process of being made by blacksmiths and is due to be installed on 19th October. The anticipated total cost of the project is £3500
- The posts supporting the noticeboard by the pub had rotted through and have been replaced by Cllrs Warren and Rawle.

7. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 7.1. Environment (DL)
Nothing additional to items covered under agenda item 11
- 7.2. Police Liaison & Neighbourhood Watch (AH)
Report circulated prior to the meeting
- 7.3. Rights of Way (CW)
A new kissing gate has been installed to replace the broken style that had been previously reported (Chilcombe Lane to the church)
- 7.4. Roads (MA)
Reported item 681354- church lane, vehicle into wall has been defined by Highways as a problem not big enough to require fixing yet
- 7.5. LCN meeting (MR)
No report
- 7.6. Quantock Hills & Farming (MR)
No report

8. PLANNING

- 8.1. Covered earlier in the meeting
- 8.2. To note the following decisions of Somerset Council:
i) Application 3/01/23/002. Installation of through floor lift. Woolston Grange, Woolston Lane
Granted, 18th August 2023
- 8.3. General Planning Updates
None

9. FINANCE

- 9.1. Approve bank reconciliation, 21.8.23
RESOLUTION: to approve the bank reconciliation, dated 21.8.23, of £16508.03.
Of this amount, £1,896.67 is held in earmarked reserves.
- 9.2. Income received
None
- 9.3. Payments to authorise
- | | | |
|------------------------|---------|--|
| C Morrison-Jones | £499.31 | Salary, expenses & reimbursements – July & August 2023 |
| Bicknoller Village Hal | £25.00 | September meeting room hire |
| HMRC | | no payment necessary as BPC in credit with HMRC |
| JPC Design | £25.00 | software maintenance |
| ICO | £35.00 | data protection registration (direct debit 23.9.23) |
| Cllr Warren | £36.12 | reimbursement for materials for noticeboard repairs |
- 9.4. Location of Parish Council Assets
CW reported that he had recovered the PC tools used by the volunteer group and that he would hold them in safe storage. MA has used the strimmer to trim the walkway along A358 from Church Lane to Chilcombe Lane

10. CONSIDER ADVERTISING IN BUS SHELTERS

Adverts were found in all 4 bus shelters without permission. Clerk contacted the advertiser and asked for them to be removed.

Following this, the PC had received a request for advertisements to be placed in the bus shelters in return for annual maintenance

RESOLUTION: not to allow as currently there is no advertising policy in place for BPC

11. **WOOLSTON MOOR**
Cutting / maintenance for autumn 2023
DL requested to gather the data necessary to report to the next meeting for a decision
12. **BICKWATCH COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**
No report
13. **ITEMS OF REPORT AND MATTERS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**
None
14. **DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**
Wednesday November 8th 2023

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.25