

165. Planning Applications (agenda item 14)

07/05685/FUL - The erection of 13 houses and garages together with access road and parking area at former Highways Depot, Etsome Terrace, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6LY

(Under the new Code of Conduct, Councillors Jill Beale and Tony Canvin, having both earlier declared personal and prejudicial interests, addressed the Committee and then left the room and did not return until after the decision was made.)

Councillor Tony Canvin said that the application was unique within South Somerset. The Town Council had purchased the site in 2003 for a reduced sum on the basis that it was used for community purposes. Half of the site was now a memorial garden with car parking and the remaining half could be sold provided the money gained was used for the benefit of the local community. The developer who had successfully tendered, had already provided £15,000 of play equipment at a nearby play area, and, in the circumstances, the Town Council felt that he had discharged his obligation to provide a financial contribution towards leisure and recreation facilities within the district. He emphasised that the total receipts of the sale would be used to benefit the residents and surrounding area of Somerton. Councillor Beale concurred with this.

The Planning Officer advised that the application also provided drop-off parking for the adjacent primary school and the main item for consideration was the financial contribution towards leisure and recreation facilities, which was normally a standard condition in such a development.

Mr R Calderwood, Clerk to the Town Council, whilst acknowledging the District Council's policy of contributions being sought from developers towards leisure and recreation facilities across the district, asked that this situation be viewed uniquely and sympathetically. He said that if contributions were sought then the Town Council would have to bear the cost from a reduced offer price from the developer.

Members briefly discussed the application and whilst it was acknowledged that planning gain contributions were important districtwide, the unique circumstances arising in terms of the Town Council's involvement as well as Somerton providing recreational facilities that served a wider public and the contribution already made by the developer to local play facilities made this case an exception to policy. It was proposed and seconded to grant permission minus Condition 19 and on being put to the vote, was carried (Voting: 5 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions).

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to Conditions 1 to 18 contained in the officer's report.

(Voting: 5 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)