

MEETING AW.06:0809
DATE 15:10:08

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held in the Henhayes Centre, off South Street, Crewkerne on **Wednesday, 15th October 2008**.

(5.45 p.m. – 10.40 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Kim Turner (In the Chair)

Simon Bending	Ros Roderigo
Michael Best	Dan Shortland
David Bulmer	Angie Singleton
Geoff Clarke	Andrew Turpin
Jenny Kenton	Linda Vijeh
Robin Munday	Martin Wale
Ric Pallister	

Also Present:

Peter Seib

Officers:

Mark Pollock	Corporate Director – Economic Vitality
Andrew Gillespie	Head of Area Development (West)
Nigel Collins	Transport Strategy Officer
Adrian Noon	Major Applications Co-ordinator – Development Control
Andrew Gunn	Deputy Team Leader – Development Control
Louisa Brown	Planner
Greg Venn	Conservation Officer
Robert Archer	Principal Landscape Officer
Gerard Tucker	Economic Development Team Leader
Angela Watson	Assistant Solicitor
Andrew Blackburn	Committee Administrator

(Note: Where an executive or key decision is made, a reason will be noted immediately beneath the Committee's resolution.)

70. Minutes (Agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17th September 2008, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

71. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Nicci Court and Nigel Mermagen.

72. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 3)

Cllrs. Kim Turner and Geoff Clarke declared their personal and prejudicial interests in planning application no. 08/01643/FUL (Demolition of nos. 9-21 Bradfield Way and the erection of a new 63 unit sheltered accommodation with car parking, land opposite 24 & 25 Bradfield Way, Chard) as they had been appointed by the Council to the Board of South Somerset Homes who were the applicants.

Cllrs. David Bulmer, Jenny Kenton and Martin Wale declared their personal but non-prejudicial interests in planning application no. 08/01643/FUL (Demolition of nos. 9-21 Bradfield Way and the erection of a new 63 unit sheltered accommodation with car parking, land opposite 24 & 25 Bradfield Way, Chard) as comments had been submitted by Chard Town Council on which they also served as councillors.

Cllr. Mike Best declared his personal but non-prejudicial interest in planning application no. 08/03061/COU (The change of use of ground floor shops and first floor offices to dental surgery and dental cosmetic centre, 21 Market Street, Crewkerne) as comments had been submitted by Crewkerne Town Council on which he also served as a councillor.

73. Public Question Time (Agenda item 4)

No questions or comments were raised by members of the public, representatives of parish/town councils or county councillors.

74. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 5)

The Chairman referred to the Planning Tour held on 13th October 2008 and thanked members for attending. She commented that it had been a good day.

75. Update on Transport Issues in Area West (Agenda item 6)

The Transport Strategy Officer summarised the agenda report, which updated members on his current work programme including transport developments, issues and projects that either related specifically to Area West or where wider schemes were likely to impact on Area West. Members were also informed of the work that the Transport Strategy Officer was undertaking regarding the review of the District Council's Travel Plan.

The Transport Strategy Officer further mentioned the Local Transport Bill, which was going through Parliament but had yet to receive Royal Assent. He reported that, amongst other things, it would give flexibility on the size of vehicles that could be used for local transport services provided by Community Transport operators and on the remuneration of drivers.

In referring to the concessionary fares scheme, he particularly mentioned that the Scrutiny Committee had considered members' requests for an extension of the scheme in South Somerset to include acceptance of the pass for 24 hours. He reported that the Scrutiny Committee had asked him to carry out a full cost/benefit analysis and to consider the service implications of introducing a relaxation in timings for the existing scheme and to report back in August/September 2009. The Transport Strategy Officer informed members that he would be working closely with Cllr. Andrew Turpin when carrying out that assessment.

In mentioning the District Council's Travel Plan, the Transport Strategy Officer referred to it currently being reviewed and commented that it was important that the Council had a plan

that was deliverable and effective. As part of the review a questionnaire was being sent to all staff to evaluate how people currently got to work and to meetings and to ask about the various alternative options. Members were also asked to participate in completing the survey form and he indicated that it would be appreciated if as many members as possible would do so.

The Transport Strategy Officer then responded to members' questions and comments during which a number of points were raised including the following:-

- reference was made to the 99 bus service and a member commented that since the change in operator, different buses were being used, which were not always low floor vehicles that were accessible by people who were disabled. The Transport Strategy Officer commented that he was aware that some changes had been made and understood that a suitable vehicle had been taken off another route. He agreed, however, to follow this matter up and let the member know the outcome;
- Cllr. Andrew Turpin expressed his view that the bus was at the forefront in countering current issues regarding the credit crunch, oil crisis and climate change. He indicated that he would be very willing to work with the Transport Strategy Officer in carrying out the assessment of an extension of the concessionary fares scheme. He felt that relaxing the scheme would enable people to more easily attend hospital appointments and assist voluntary workers to travel. He also commented that a relaxed scheme would only apply to the local area of South Somerset. In response to a comment from a member, the Transport Strategy Officer clarified that the national off peak times were from 9.30 a.m. until 11.00 p.m. Monday to Friday and all day at weekends, whilst within Somerset it was from 9.00 a.m. on weekdays;
- a member commented that, although not wanting to dampen expectations, the overall Government funding would not cover the full cost of the concessionary fares scheme. He referred to there being a shortfall, which could present a financial problem for the Council;
- reference was made to the public transport timetable and comment expressed that although a date was given for the commencement of the timetable, no end date was shown. The Transport Strategy Officer explained the process that bus operators had to follow if they wished to change a route, which involved giving 56 days notice to the Traffic Commissioners. Although a start date could be given for timetables it was difficult to give a definite end time. He mentioned that there needed to be some onus on the traveller to check with the service provider;
- reference was made to the Stop Line Way and to a project officer now being in place to help deliver the remaining sections of the route where progress had been slow. A member commented on the need to be proactive in completing this project and that it was anticipated that over 30,000 people would use it. Reference was also made to the need for accommodation and refreshments on the route;
- members were pleased that the review of the Council's Travel Plan was a priority and in response to a question, the Transport Strategy Officer reported that working with other organisations to achieve the critical mass necessary to deliver zonal travel planning was a key element but it was necessary first for the Council to complete its own Travel Plan;
- reference was made to there being no mention of a bus/rail interchange to Crewkerne Station and to whether that was being looked at. The difficulty of getting to the Council's Brympton Way offices without having to go into Yeovil and back out again was also mentioned. The Transport Strategy Officer reported that the issue of bus/train connections was one of the hardest issues to resolve in a rural area. He indicated that

Transporting Somerset were mindful of the issue but that it was not easy to resolve. He explained that the difficulty was one of the location of Crewkerne Station and the consequent lengthening of end to end journey times should the nearest service take in the station. He also mentioned that a similar issue applied to diverting a current service to Brympton Way although it was possible that zonal travel planning may assist in that case;

- the Transport Strategy Officer informed members of the obligations of bus operators with regard to the punctuality of their services in relation to the published bus timetable;
- reference was made to the Slinky bus service, which provided a service for people who did not have access to their own vehicle or public transport. In response to a question, the Transport Strategy Officer explained what was acceptable in terms of meeting that prerequisite;
- reference was made by a member to residents of Chard and Tatworth being unable to access Axminster Station by public transport on Sundays and Bank Holidays. The Transport Strategy Officer reported that the lack of funding to pay for an enhanced service was the problem in that case;
- a member commented that although elderly people were being assisted with their travel he queried whether that was at the expense of young people accessing public transport, which could be expensive for them. Reference was made to a County ticket being available, which could be used anywhere in Somerset and was good value. The Transport Strategy Officer also referred to the Slinky bus service being available, which had no age barrier. He mentioned, however, that young people may not be aware of the service;
- it was queried whether the Slinky bus service could be extended to Crewkerne. The Transport Strategy Officer explained that when the service was originally set up, parishes where there was little or no public transport services were looked at and feedback indicated that people wanted to go to Chard or Ilminster. He indicated that although he was prepared to do some work to look at extending the accessibility of the service, he emphasised that the County Council did not have funds this year and were likely to have less next year. The Committee supported the comments of a member who suggested that Waitrose may be willing to make a contribution to a Slinky or similar bus service and asked the Transport Strategy Officer to further investigate that possibility.

The Chairman thanked the Transport Strategy Officer for his report, the details of which were noted.

NOTED.

*(Nigel Collins, Transport Strategy Officer – (01935) 462591)
(nigel.collins@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

76. Sport, Arts and Leisure – Service Update (Agenda item 7)

The Chairman informed members that the Head of Sport, Arts and Leisure had apologised for being unable to attend the meeting to present his report as he was unwell and had asked that consideration of the report be deferred until the next meeting.

RESOLVED: that consideration of the Sport, Arts and Leisure Service Update report be deferred until the Committee's meeting to be held on 19th November 2008.

*(Steve Joel, Head of Sport, Arts and Leisure – (01935) 462278)
(steve.joel@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

77. Reports from Members on Outside Organisations (Agenda Item 8)

This item had been placed on the agenda to give an opportunity for members who represented the Council on outside organisations to report items of significance to the Committee.

Cllr. Angie Singleton referred to ACCESS (Association of Crewkerne Community Education and Sport Services) having been disbanded and to some of its activities having been incorporated as part of the ABCD (A Better Crewkerne and District) Trust. She also indicated that the Trust was taking forward the project to produce the Crewkerne Community Plan. She further commented that the ownership of the Crewkerne Heritage Centre had been transferred to the Heritage Centre Trustees and the same conditions of grant that applied to ACCESS would continue under this new arrangement.

NOTED.

78. Feedback on Planning Applications Referred to the Regulation Committee (Agenda item 9)

There was no feedback to report as there were no planning applications that had been referred recently to the Regulation Committee.

NOTED.

*(David Norris, Development Control Team Leader (North/West) – (01935) 462382)
(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

79. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 10)

The Committee noted the details contained in the agenda report, which informed members of planning appeals lodged, dismissed and allowed.

NOTED.

*(David Norris, Development Control Team Leader (North/West) – (01935) 462382)
(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

80. Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda item 12)

The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held at Swanmead Community School, Ditton Street, Ilminster on Wednesday, 19th November 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

NOTED.

*(Andrew Blackburn, Committee Administrator – (01460) 260441)
(andrew.blackburn@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

81. Planning Applications (Agenda item 11)

The Committee considered the applications set out in the schedule attached to the agenda and the Planning Officers gave further information at the meeting and, where appropriate, advised members of letters received as a result of consultations since the agenda had been prepared.

(Copies of all letters reported may be inspected in the planning applications files, which constitute the background papers for this item).

07/05331/LBC (Pages 1-5) – Repositioning of staircase, internal alterations to bathroom, re-open window and reinstate mullions (GR 341961/112596), Tetts Farm, West Street, Hinton St. George – Mr. S. Grant.

The Major Applications Co-ordinator summarised, with the aid of slides and photographs, the details of the application as set out in the agenda report. He indicated that although the Council for British Archaeology had objected to the loss of the staircase, English Heritage had considered that the loss of the staircase would be outweighed by the benefit in returning the room to the form that represented the more significant earlier phases of the house. The Conservation Officer had also found the plans as amended, and referred to in the agenda report, to be acceptable. The Major Applications Co-ordinator confirmed that the recommendation was one of approval but as a statutory consultee (Council for British Archaeology) had objected to the application, it was referred to the Committee. If members were minded to approve the application it would need to be referred to the Secretary of State (Government Office for the South West).

In response to a question from a member, the Major Applications Co-ordinator and Conservation Officer explained the position with regard to the assessment of the historical significance of various changes that may have been made to a building over time and also with particular reference to the building subject of this application. The Conservation Officer indicated that on balance, having looked at the building, he was of the view that the staircase was not of such merit that it could not be removed and that its removal would reinstate the historic room form of the kitchen.

Reference was made by a member to the original doors in the building and asked how they were to be treated. The Conservation Officer commented that if plans did not show the removal of the doors then they should remain. He mentioned, however, that a condition could be included on any permission requiring a door schedule to be submitted.

Cllr. Simon Bending, ward member, commented that he had looked at the building with the Hinton St. George Parish Council who took a keen interest. He felt that this was a stunning building in the centre of the village and the work that had been done had been carried out very well. He also expressed his surprise at the comments made by the

Council for British Archaeology. He indicated his support for the officer's recommendation of approval.

During the ensuing discussion, other members indicated that they found the proposals to be acceptable and that they were content to support the officer's recommendation of approval. It was also agreed that an additional condition requiring a door schedule to be submitted should be included in any permission. It was noted that the application would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State (Government Office for the South West).

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) that the application be referred to the Secretary of State (Government Office for the South West);
 - (2) that, in the event that the Secretary of State does not wish to intervene, Listed Building Consent be granted subject to conditions 1-7 as set out in the agenda report and the inclusion of an additional condition requiring a door schedule to be submitted;
 - (3) that the wording of the additional condition be delegated to the Head of Development and Building Control in consultation with the Area Chairman and ward member.

(Resolution passed without dissent).

08/03061/COU (Pages 6-9) – The change of use of ground floor shops and first floor offices to dental surgery and dental cosmetic centre (GR 344125/109651), 21 Market Street, Crewkerne – Dr. S. Davis.

The Planner summarised, with the aid of slides and photographs, the details of the application as set out in the agenda report. She reported that the application related to a Grade II listed building comprising three retail units, two of which were unoccupied. She also mentioned that this application related only to the change of use and that a note would be included on any permission informing the applicant of the need to apply for other relevant permissions or consents. The Planner explained that although the site was in the primary shopping area of the town, it was not in the primary shopping frontage. A plan of the town centre was shown to indicate both those areas together with the Conservation Area. A plan was shown of the current uses within this part of the town centre, which also indicated vacant premises.

In referring to the Crewkerne Town Council's comments, the Planner indicated that they had been misquoted in the agenda report. She clarified that they had recommended refusal of the application on the grounds of the loss of three retail units in the primary shopping area. Whilst the Town Council was supportive of a dental practice coming into the town centre, it was considered that it could be located elsewhere other than Market Street. The Town Council also anticipated a greater demand for retail units as soon as the Waitrose supermarket opened.

The Economic Development Team Leader indicated that he had no objection to the application and clarified his comments in the agenda report, which related to earlier discussions on two separate buildings and not just the one subject of this application. He also reported that he had carried out further research into the number of vacant premises in the town and informed members in detail of the results of that research. He further mentioned that these premises had been on the market since March 2008 and only one enquiry, which was from the applicant, had come forward. Reference was made to six full time jobs and two part time jobs being created if the dental practice were to be approved. He mentioned the number of people it was anticipated would visit the practice and that from an economic point of view he felt that this was a good use of the premises, which were not situated within the primary shopping frontage. He also expected that there

would be some additional spend in the town centre by those people visiting the practice thereby supporting the local economy. He felt that there were sufficient vacant retail units in the town to satisfy demand.

The Major Applications Co-ordinator commented that although the jobs created were welcome, members should consider the application in terms of the impact that the loss of this retail unit would have on the vitality and viability of the town centre. On that basis it was not considered that the proposals would be harmful and the recommendation was one of approval subject to conditions.

The officers then answered members' questions on points of detail. Points addressed included clarification of the weight that should be attached to the emerging Local Development Framework, it being noted that the current Local Plan covered the period up to 2011. It was indicated that as the new Local Development Framework came nearer to adoption and the relevant part went through the consultation procedure it would gain additional weight. However, given that the Local Development Framework was in the early stages of the process, no weight could be given to it at present. This application, therefore, needed to be considered in terms of policy MC4 of the current Local Plan. In response to a further question, the Major Applications Co-ordinator accepted that this location, being outside the primary shopping frontage but within the town centre, could be argued to be a secondary shopping area. In response to a question, the Committee noted the advice of the Legal Officer that the viability or need for another dentist was not a material planning consideration in this particular instance. Other points addressed included the identification of other towns in South Somerset where there were shop front dental practices and clarification that the survey of vacant premises had been based only on whether visually they were currently empty.

The Major Applications Co-ordinator confirmed that the issue with this application was whether the proposals would harm the vitality and viability of the town centre and reported that policy MC4 specifically identified the proposed use as a valid use in a shopping area if it were not a primary shopping frontage.

The representative of Crewkerne Town Council, Mrs. V. Chard, in mentioning the survey of empty shops referred to one in Falkland Square being under contract. She also mentioned that the Town Council was concerned about the loss of office suites as well as retail units. She further commented that the treatment of shop windows was of concern and felt that any use of blinds in the main shopping street was not attractive. Reference was also made to there being limited parking near the site and to other dentists having their own parking areas. She reiterated that the loss of three small shop units, or one larger, in the primary shopping area was not acceptable to the Town Council. She suggested that perhaps the use of the first and second floors with a reception below may be a better idea as it would leave two shop units available.

The applicant, Dr. S. Davis, explained the nature of the dental practice and indicated the wide catchment area it would serve in addition to the people of Crewkerne. With regard to the comments about the loss of retail use, he indicated that the practice would be selling items and was therefore retail. In response to the concerns mentioned about the treatment of shop windows he indicated that the practice would not be hiding behind curtains but would have an exciting frontage to attract people into the premises. He referred to having been in Crewkerne for 30 years and to changes having occurred in that time. He commented that the investment was long term and referred to wanting to work with the Council to benefit the people of Crewkerne. In response to a comment from a member, he mentioned that other premises in Church Street were not as suitable.

The Major Applications Co-ordinator confirmed that any internal alterations or changes to the shop front would need listed building consent. Furthermore, the further grant of

planning permission would be necessary for shop front alterations and advertisement consent might be needed for new signage.

Cllr. Angie Singleton, ward member, expressed her view that the issue with this application was the loss of the retail units, which she could not support. She commented that if the experience of Dorchester, which also had a Waitrose store, was followed as an example, retailers would be looking to come to Crewkerne. She commented on the premises that were vacant in the town centre at present and on their current status. She also referred to various policy issues regarding the status of the primary shopping area/frontage with particular reference to the Local Plan and emerging Local Development Framework.

Cllr. Mike Best, also a ward member, commented that he had lived in Crewkerne for many years and to the town having had many shops. He felt, however, that the main shopping area now comprised more banks, estate agents and other similar businesses. He was of the view that the loss of these three retail units in the shopping area would reduce the opportunity to maintain a mix of shopping to keep people in the town rather than going elsewhere.

Cllr. Geoff Clarke, also a ward member, indicated that he could support the application. He expressed his view that there was considerable scope for the redevelopment of shopping facilities in the town. He also commented that people attended dentists by appointment and therefore there would be a guaranteed footfall. Although supporting the proposals, he felt that the design and colour of the windows should be submitted for approval at the appropriate time.

During the ensuing discussion, varying views were expressed by members. The majority of members, however, were of the view that the application should be approved as recommended by the officers, comment being expressed that the site was not in the primary shopping frontage, that the proposals could be seen as being a retail use and that the proposals would bring people into Crewkerne which would help to support the viability of the town.

RESOLVED: that planning permission be granted subject to condition 1 as set out in the agenda report and to a note informing the applicant of the need to apply for other relevant permissions or consents before making any alterations to the building.

(10 in favour, 3 against)

08/02686/FUL (Pages 10-31) – Proposed demolition of agricultural buildings and erection 20 holiday lodges and 1 administration lodge with associated access, car parking and landscaping works (Revised Application) (GR 338367/109592), London Loge Farm, Windwhistle, Cricket St. Thomas – Cricket St. Thomas Estate.

The Deputy Development Control Team Leader summarised the details of the application as set out in the agenda report. He indicated that the proposals would involve the removal of various existing farm buildings and the erection of 20 holiday lodges and 1 administration lodge along with associated access and landscaping works. He also referred to the applicants looking for other sources of income for the estate.

The Deputy Development Control Team Leader reported that the key issues to be taken into account included the impact on the landscape in visual terms and its impact on the character of the landscape. He referred to concerns having been raised by the Council's Principal Landscape Officer, English Heritage and Garden History Society, details of which were set out in the agenda report. The Highway Authority had no objections to the scheme. He further referred to the scale and number of the lodges and the need to consider whether they were appropriate to this sensitive area. He also reported that the

Economic Development Team Leader, Agricultural Development Officer, Tourism Officer and adjoining local parishes had indicated their support for the application.

The Deputy Development Control Team Leader, with the aid of slides and photographs, referred to the design of the proposed buildings, layout of the site, access to the site and views of the site generally and of its surroundings including the Windwhistle Ridge. He further referred to a letter from the applicant's agent that members would also have received. He also reported that he had arrived at his recommendation after much consideration, which was, on balance, one of refusal for the reasons set out in the agenda report.

The Committee then noted the comments of the Principal Landscape Officer who explained his concerns with regard to the possible impact of the proposals upon the local landscape character and upon the historic park and garden, details of which were set out in the agenda report.

The officers responded to members' questions and comments on points of detail. Points addressed included details regarding the existing nearby masts including their height, the need to ensure that the development did not become permanent residential accommodation and the prevention of further expansion if permission were granted, whether the proposals met policies with regard to sustainability, the status and character of the lodges in relation to the core of the estate, layout and landscaping of the site and the number of jobs that would be created by the proposals.

The Committee noted the comments of the applicant, Mr. S. Taylor, who indicated that the estate was farming less intensively and that there was a need to find alternative long term income. He commented that the proposals would create employment and benefit other local businesses. He explained the reasons why he was of the view that the proposals would provide a visual improvement to the locality and referred to the high quality of development that would be provided. He further commented that any reduction in the number of lodges would risk the viability of the project. He referred to aspects of parkland restoration including public access and to being custodians of the countryside and commented that if the estate was not allowed to thrive financially it could be threatened.

The applicant's agent, Mr. A. Preston, commented that having looked at the officer's report, he felt the positives outweighed the negatives. He explained why he felt that the proposals satisfied planning policies and referred to benefits that the proposals would bring including the creation of employment and benefits for other local businesses as well as for the estate itself. He indicated that vehicle movements would be no higher than the existing use and that the large farm buildings would be replaced with the lodges. He mentioned that the proposed landscape planting would restrict views of the development and also bring back landscape features to this part of the estate. With regard to the scale of the development, he mentioned that 20 lodges were necessary to make the scheme viable and had been accepted by the Agricultural Development Officer. He referred to the site being located near to similar groups of leisure facilities. He referred to the ugly sprawl of existing agricultural buildings and to the proposals restoring elements of the historic parkland. He felt that the proposals would have many benefits without any real harm.

Cllr. Robin Munday, ward member, commented that the majority of large estates were obliged to diversify as, had they not done so, many may have failed. He mentioned, however, that occasionally, to succeed, there was a price to pay. He felt that this applied to the Cricket St. Thomas estate where he felt that some change had to take place so as to support the continued availability of the park as it had been known over the years. He was of the view that the introduction of a good quality tourist venture was one of the less harmful options and indicated his support in principle for this scheme. He mentioned,

however, that care needed to be taken with the development and referred to a blend of units being proposed with a considerable landscaping scheme to reduce any impact on the park as a whole. He indicated that pre-application consultations had taken place with regard to the scheme. He referred to there being no objections from surrounding parishes and no major objections from the Highway Authority with only one individual person objecting whose comments were at odds with the advice received from the Highway Authority. He also mentioned that the Landscape Officer had conceded that the landscape proposals were an enhancement that provided a degree of reinstatement of the woodland character in the upper park. In referring to the comments of the Conservation Manager who had described the lodges as houses and bungalows, Cllr. Munday expressed his view that the structures had to be of a size and style to satisfy the expectations of visitors who would occupy them and he did not feel that these were out of line. He also expressed his view on the number of visitors that the scheme would bring to the area each year and on the number of jobs that would be created. Reference was made to English Heritage not having raised major objections but having offered advice, which he felt could be covered by conditions. He also felt that the views of the Garden History Society and of the CPRE would not achieve the objectives of retaining the park.

During the ensuing discussion, the majority of members expressed comments in support of the application. Comment was expressed that, although it was a dominant location, it was felt that the scheme was of high quality and that it would not cause demonstrable harm. Reference was made to the scheme being one of farm diversification, which would provide employment and be of benefit to other local tourism facilities. It was also commented that the scheme would bring back an element of the woodland character in this part of the estate. Further comment was expressed that Winsham Parish Council did not object to the scheme and that English Heritage did not have any major issues with it.

A member expressed his view that not enough emphasis was being placed on the importance of issues concerning sustainability in determining this application.

In response to comments about the proposals improving the appearance of the area because of the removal of the existing agricultural buildings, the Major Applications Co-ordinator cautioned members not to give too much weight to that aspect as he felt it could set a precedent for any future applications, which may be less suitable than these proposals.

The majority of members were of the view that the proposals would not be harmful to the landscape character of Windwhistle Ridge or the character of the historic park and garden and that the application should be granted. Members felt, however, that the inclusion of conditions on any permission would be particularly important in this case and that consideration of conditions appropriate to the proposals should be subject to a further report to the Committee. It was suggested that such conditions could include samples of materials, levels, restrictions on use including for holiday lets only, travel plan, landscaping scheme, external lighting and withdrawal of permitted development rights. The comments of a member that it would be desirable for a footpath to be provided so that people could walk to the nearby public house clear of the main road were noted and the officers were asked to explore that matter further.

- RESOLVED:** (1) that the Committee is minded to grant consent subject to the approval by the Committee of appropriate planning conditions with a view to granting formal permission;
- (2) that a further report be submitted to enable the Committee to consider and determine the conditions to be attached to the permission.

(12 in favour, 1 against)

08/01643/FUL (Pages 32 – 37) – Demolition of nos. 9-21 Bradfield Way and the erection of a new 63 unit sheltered accommodation with car parking (GR 332561/108278), land opposite 24 & 25 Bradfield Way, Chard – South Somerset Homes.

Cllr. Kim Turner, having declared her personal and prejudicial interest in this item, vacated the chair and left the meeting during its consideration and determination. Cllr. Robin Munday, Vice-Chairman, took the chair for this item.

Cllr. Geoff Clarke, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, also left the meeting during its consideration and determination.

The Major Applications Co-ordinator summarised, with the aid of slides and photographs, the details of the scheme as set out in the agenda report and clarified that 62 units of sheltered accommodation were to be provided under this proposal, which had been reduced from the original 63 units following amendments because of concerns about the impact of the development.

In updating members, the Major Applications Co-ordinator reported that he had received clarification from the Strategic Housing Officer regarding the appropriate affordable housing requirements for this scheme. He explained that the requirements should be based on the replacement of the existing 12 units that were to be demolished plus 35% of the net increase in dwellings on the site, which meant that there would be a requirement for 30 affordable housing units to be provided. The Major Applications Co-ordinator also clarified that as the Highway Authority had accepted the parking provision on the basis that the scheme was for the elderly an additional condition would need to be included on any permission relating to limiting the occupation of the flats to those persons aged 55 years or over. He informed members of the details of the condition as follows:-

“The elderly persons flats hereby permitted shall only be occupied where at least one member of the household is aged 55 years or over, provided always that this restriction shall not apply to the occupation of any of the flats by a surviving spouse under the specified age who continues to occupy a flat after the death of the other spouse who was of the specified age.”

In referring to the recommendation in the agenda report, which was one of approval, he emphasised that the grant of any permission should be subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 planning obligation with regard to providing the appropriate affordable housing requirement. It was noted that the word “prior” had been omitted from the wording in the agenda report. Any permission would also be subject to appropriate conditions, details of which were set out in the agenda, together with the additional condition referred to above.

The Major Applications Co-ordinator then answered members’ questions and comments on points of detail. Points addressed included clarification regarding the parking requirement, clarification of the provision of the statement of community involvement, design of the development and its relationship with adjoining dwellings, suitability of the development for people who were disabled, details of the affordable housing requirement, details of the Construction and Environmental Management Plan, management options with regard to care for residents, identification of the need for the scheme, the numbers of 1 and 2 bedroom units to be provided, provisions for visitors and details of amenity space.

The applicant’s representative, Mr. J. Petty, informed the Committee of the reasons and intentions of South Somerset Homes in putting forward this scheme. He referred to

several sheltered housing schemes for the elderly being outdated and therefore were being decommissioned. He mentioned that, if this application were approved, the residents of the existing sheltered accommodation would continue to be supported. He further indicated that future sheltered housing services would be provided by way of staff being deployed as required rather than by schemes having their own individual managers. Although there would be no resident care, an office would be manned at certain times. In referring to the proposed development he indicated that it was of modern design, which had been done purposefully, and felt that it was a development that Chard and South Somerset Homes could be proud of. He mentioned that the scheme would have full access for disabled residents and that the community areas had been designed to allow for people with dementia. He referred to there being 52 one bedroom and 10 two bedroom units of sheltered accommodation. Reference was made to the flats being of generous size and designed to meet furniture layouts and be wheelchair compliant. Substantial community facilities would also be provided, details of which he mentioned. In referring to the Section 106 planning obligation he indicated that South Somerset Homes were content to accept the requirement to provide 30 affordable homes. He indicated that the properties would be for rent and not shared ownership.

Cllr. David Bulmer, ward member, commented that although the increase from 11 dwellings to 62 was a large jump he was content with the principle of the increased numbers. He also referred to the need for the accommodation not being in question. He indicated, however, that he was concerned about potential disruption for local residents during construction works and indicated that he would like to be consulted with regard to the implementation of condition 2 regarding the submission of the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. He also expressed concerns about the limited parking provision, which he felt may present problems in the future because of the layout of the estate. In referring to the impact of the proposals on the streetscene he mentioned that the opposite side of the road was totally different but was satisfied with the relationship of the development with the existing properties. He did not feel that there were any planning reasons to refuse the application and indicated his support for the officer's recommendation. He reiterated, however, that he would like to be consulted regarding the implementation of condition 2.

During the ensuing discussion, varying views were expressed by members. Comment was expressed that national statistics had shown an increase in the needs of older people including those with dementia and debilitating illnesses in the future. Reference was made to this scheme being critical to meeting needs in Chard. It was also commented that the delivery of such schemes was driven by grant funding and to the type of scheme also being driven by finance. Mention was made of the design of the existing sheltered scheme being not now fit for purpose. Reference was made to how tenancies would be controlled and to only those people who met the criteria being able to take up a tenancy. The scheme would also have an element of affordable housing, which was a planning consideration. The view was expressed that there should have been a comment within the agenda report from the Council's Strategic Housing Team regarding the need for the development. A member also commented that having seen the photograph of the proposed development rather than just the plans, and heard from the applicant's representative, he felt that on balance he could support the application.

Although noting that the accommodation was for the elderly, who tended to have lower rates of car ownership, concerns were expressed by some members who questioned whether the limited parking provisions being made for the development, which amounted to 30 spaces, would be sufficient especially as some of those spaces could be utilised by care workers and other people who would visit the scheme. A member also expressed some concerns about the amenities for residents and the size of the units. It was also questioned whether it was right to have people with dementia all in one place.

In response to a comment from a member, the Major Applications Co-ordinator indicated that the Landscape Architect was content with the submitted landscaping scheme.

The majority of members indicated that they considered the proposals to be acceptable and were of the view that the application should be approved as recommended by the officers.

RESOLVED: (1) that planning permission be granted subject to:-

- (i) the prior completion of a Section 106 planning obligation(s) in a form acceptable to the Council's Solicitor(s) before the decision notice granting planning permission is issued, the said planning obligation to cover the delivery of 30 units of affordable housing;
- (ii) conditions 1-11 as set out in the agenda report and the inclusion of an additional condition as follows:-

The elderly persons' flats hereby permitted shall only be occupied where at least one member of the household is aged 55 years or over, provided always that this restriction shall not apply to the occupation of any of the flats by a surviving spouse under the specified age who continues to occupy a flat after the death of the other spouse who was of the specified age.

- (2) that the details of the Construction and Environmental Management Plan that is required to be submitted for approval under condition 2 be circulated to the ward member and Vice-Chairman prior to the discharge of that condition.

(7 in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions)

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Chairman