

MEETING
DATE 15.09.21

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West (Informal)** held at the **Virtual Meeting using Zoom meeting software on Wednesday 15 September 2021.**

(5.30 - 7.30 pm)

Present:

Councillor Jason Baker (Chairman)

Mike Best	Sue Osborne
Dave Bulmer (until 6.30pm)	Robin Pailthorpe
Martin Carnell	Oliver Patrick
Ben Hodgson	Garry Shortland
Val Keitch	Martin Wale
Tricia O'Brien	

Officers

Jo Morris	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Dan Bennett	Property and Development Project Manager
Anna Matthews	Chard High Street HAZ Project Manager
Kirsty Larkins	Director (Service Delivery)
John Hammond	Specialist - Principal Planner

28. To approve as a correct record minutes from previous meetings (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 17th March, 19th May and 21st July were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

29. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Hamilton, Jenny Kenton, Paul Maxwell and Linda Vjeh.

30. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

31. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public present at the meeting.

32. Date and Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda Item 5)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Area West Committee would be held on Wednesday 20th October 2021 at 5.30pm and would be a virtual meeting using Zoom on-line meeting software.

33. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reminded everyone present that in order to enable members to continue holding remote, virtual meetings, Full Council had agreed in April to amend part of the Council's Constitution to allow its remote meetings to function as consultative meetings and delegate decisions to the Chief Executive (or the relevant Director in the Chief Executive's absence) in consultation with those meetings.

This was extended at Full Council on 8 July 2021 for a further 6 months.

34. Chard Regeneration - Leisure Centre Update (Agenda Item 7)

The Property and Development Project Manager introduced the report and informed members that the Leisure Centre was very close to being complete. The Leisure Centre would shortly be handed over to the Operator to begin their training and at the end of the month a formal opening date would be announced. He was pleased to inform members that the Leisure Centre was on track for completion in line with the contract timescales and agreed budget particularly bearing in mind the challenges brought about by the Covid pandemic and Brexit.

In response to member questions, the Property and Development Project Manager informed members that:-

- In relation to the proposed demolition of Building 11 and health and safety, the contractors were proposing to erect scaffolding around the building and materials would be taken down inside the building. The building would be used to contain the rubble and the height of the building would be gradually lowered. The houses in the surrounding area would be protected by the scaffold and additional measures would be looked at to control dust. The adjoining neighbours would be kept well informed of the works taking place.
- Area West members would be invited to visit the Leisure Centre with a date to be scheduled for September.
- Negotiations with the Post Office were ongoing and a new access to the site from Silver Street was currently being explored.
- Holyrood Lace Mill and Boden Mill were being looked at as two separate projects.

Cllr Mike Best commented that he had visited the Leisure Centre and was very impressed with the building, it was going to be a real asset to Chard and he looked forward to the whole complex being completed and open for business for members of the public to enjoy.

The Chairman thanked the Property and Development Project Manager for his update.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

35. Chard Regeneration Scheme Update (Agenda Item 8)

The Chard High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Project Manager informed members that technical approval of the Public Realm Scheme by Somerset County Council was due imminently. The tender process had concluded for the construction contractor and Alun Griffiths (Contractors) Ltd had been appointed with the current design team being appointed as technical advisors during the construction phase.

The Chard HSHAZ Project Manager said that good progress had been made and the work linked to the Leisure Centre was on track to be completed in time for the opening. She referred to the market conditions at the current time and the long lead times for some materials and said that as this had been identified early the contractors were already working with the suppliers.

With regard to the building grants programme, members were informed that there had been a small delay in launching the programme primarily due to the capacity to support the Public Realm Scheme over the past few months. The Chard HSHAZ Project Manager advised that a conservation accredited architect was appointed in August and had already completed a visual assessment of conditions of all of the shortlisted properties. A valuation assessment by a Quantity Surveyor would be made in the next few weeks. Work on a new shopfront design guide was due to start with a consultation exercise due to be undertaken.

The Chard HSHAZ Project Manager concluded her report by informing members about the Heritage Open days taking place as part of the community engagement work.

In response to members' comments and questions, the Chard HSHAZ Project Manager informed members of the following:

- With regard to Building Grants, there was a short list of properties across the town centre that was submitted to Historic England as part of the bid for High Street Heritage Action Zone. The list of properties was available on the Chard Regeneration website.
- The bus stop currently located outside The Guildhall would be moving a few metres further up the road.
- As Manor Courthouse and Chard School were both on the heritage at risk register and not commercial premises they would not be eligible under the High Street Heritage Action Zone grant scheme but as part of her work she is able to provide support to the building owners so that they could access other funding, and is encouraging opportunities for public access.
- She would be happy to provide a report on data from the footfall counters as part of the regular updates to Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Chard HSHAZ Project Manager for her report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

36. Area West Forward Plan (Agenda Item 9)

In response to a comment raised by a member regarding a date for the Historic Buildings at Risk and S106 obligations reports, the Director – Service Delivery said that it had not been possible to bring forward an Historic Buildings at Risk report within the preferred timescales as hoped due to resourcing issues and change in staff but officers were looking at how a report could be provided to members.

With regard to the S106 Obligations report, officers were working towards collating all the S106 information together with the CIL information onto one computer system and the aim was to publish reports on the Council's website. A Joint Scrutiny and Audit Task and Finish Group was also being set up to review this work. A report on the new system was likely to be presented to Full Council in the New Year.

Members noted that reports on the new Unitary Authority would initially be taken to District Executive and Full Council.

RESOLVED: That the Area West Forward Plan be noted.

37. Planning Appeals (Agenda Item 10)

Members noted the details of planning appeals that had been received, dismissed and allowed.

38. Schedule of Planning Applications to be Considered (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman announced that he would be taking Planning Application No. 20/02249/OUT prior to Planning Application No. 20/02247/OUT.

39. Planning Application 20/02247/OUT - Land to the North of Fore Street, Tatworth (Agenda Item 12)

Application Proposal: Outline application with all matters reserved matters, except for access, for up to 13 dwellings

This application was taken after Planning Application No: 20/02249/OUT.

It was proposed and seconded to defer the application to a future meeting of the Area West Committee as members felt that there was an opportunity to deliver a highway benefit to the local road network through a negotiated solution that could be achieved within the two applications within the applicant's control.

A vote was taken to defer the application which was approved by 9 votes in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: That Planning Application 20/02247/OUT be **DEFERRED** to a future meeting of the Area West Committee as members felt that there was an opportunity to deliver a highway benefit to the local road network through a negotiated solution that could be achieved

within the two applications within the applicant's control.

(Voting: 9 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)

40. Planning Application 20/02249/OUT - Land to the North of Fore Street, Tatworth (Agenda Item 13)

Application Proposal: Outline application with all matters reserved, except for access, for up to 35 dwellings

This application was taken prior to Planning Application No. 20/02247/OUT.

The Specialist - Principal Planner outlined the application and pointed out that both application sites on the agenda were in the same ownership and were submitted by the same developer. The application site was a field located within Tatworth and was generally bounded by existing housing and located outside of the Conservation Area. Due to the site topography, there would be a need to manage the height of any dwellings on site. The proposed housing would not dominate the landscape and was a mix of single storey properties, one and a half storey properties and two storey properties. The Specialist – Principal Planner informed members that there was a bungalow situated between the two sites with its own separate access. The scheme was proposing a relatively low density and landscaped site with suggestions for open space on the higher ground. It was proposed that the landscape boundary would be managed by a management company and the trees and hedges maintained outside of residential curtilages. The two applications proposed two accesses onto Fore Street and a pedestrian link to the rear of the site.

The Specialist – Principal Planner outlined the key considerations which were principal of development, highway issues, landscape impact, residential amenity, ecology and heritage. He recommended that the application be approved subject to conditions as outlined in the agenda.

In response to various questions raised, the Specialist – Principal Planner informed members of the following:

- The Highway Authority had confirmed that they did not have an objection to the scheme and had not requested details of any traffic surveys to be provided.
- The site was not affected by the phosphate issue.
- The scheme was establishing the access into the site but Somerset County Council were reserving their position on a number of points about internal layout.
- The Highway Authority did not object to two accesses but their preference would be for one access.
- The Applicant's perspective was that the hedge and ditch that ran between the two application sites was an important ecological feature and therefore if a road was taken across that there would be a break in ecology.
- Each of the cul-de-sacs would have its own turning head with scope to deliver an in/out system.
- Power providers were not consulted as part of the application process as they had a duty to provide power to meet the needs of the towns and villages. As part of the reserved matters process the applicant would look at infrastructure connections and what the infrastructure providers require as it was their duty to service new developments.

- The site was just as affected by the lack of a five year housing supply and the tilted balance despite it not being affected by the phosphates issue.
- The application would lead to a level of growth of about 12% and was consistent with the level of growth experienced by a number of the larger villages within the district.

A representative from Tatworth and Forton Parish Council addressed the Committee in objection to the application. He said that the Parish Council had recommended refusal on the grounds that the access to these large number of houses would generate an increase in traffic. He also referred to the application sites being inhabited by wildlife and a suitable analysis was essential before any development took place.

The Committee was then addressed by the Highway Consultant and Agent and some of their comments included:

- Both proposals would incorporate suitable footways with crossing points to the southern side of Fore Street.
- Both points of access would provide a five and a half metre wide carriageway and six metre corner radius meeting the Highway Authority design requirements.
- Site lines in accordance with speed limits were achievable at both points of access with visibility exceeding the level required.
- The distance between the two proposed junctions was 106 metres which significantly exceeded requirements.
- A travel plan would be implemented to promote the use of sustainable motor transport.
- The developments would not have an unacceptable impact on the highway safety and the residual cumulative impact on the road network would not be severe.
- The sites had been brought forward separately to preserve the ditch and tree belt that ran between them which was a biodiversity and landscape feature.
- Both proposals would deliver a policy compliant 35% affordable housing provision helping to meet a demonstrated local need.
- The applications represented a modest infill development within the village bringing Tatworth's growth in line with similar size villages.
- The applications were readily deliverable and would make a sustainable contribution to South Somerset's housing requirements.
- Local amenities were within walking distance of both sites which would be connected to the existing footpath network and public right of way with a new crossing point.
- The applications would make contributions with regard to NHS services, education and open space and recreation.
- All existing hedgerow and boundary treatments where possible would be managed by a management company via a S106 agreement. Additional tree and shrub planting was also proposed. This would ensure that the sites were well maintained and contribute towards Tatworth's rural character.

Ward member, Councillor Martin Wale read a statement on behalf of his fellow ward member, Councillor Jenny Kenton, who was unable to attend the meeting. She stated that the combined impact of both applications on the area could not be ignored. As referred to in the comments submitted by the Ecology Officer, the site was full of biodiversity and the waterway was clear with the grassland ideal for barn owls foraging and slow worms and grass snakes present on the land. Reference was also made to the diverse species of wildflower and plants on the site, the presence of dormice nesting in Fore Street and the need to ensure they were not present on the site was of utmost importance. She also raised concerns over the potential surface water run-off from the site causing problems in the Lower Coombses area where properties had already

suffered during the recent flooding and the impact of the development on the bungalow situated between the two sites. Members noted that Cllr Jenny Kenton also supported the views expressed by Councillor Martin Wale.

Ward member, Councillor Martin Wale then proceeded to address the Committee. He commented that the presence of the main junction nearly opposite the entrance to the application had not been mentioned and this was the only way of accessing the village. He also pointed out that 10 metres from the proposed entrance was the 20mph safety zone for the area which was classed as a safe route to school and therefore not ideal for an increase in traffic. He was concerned that there would be two entrances on such a dangerous road with no footway. Reference was also made to the bungalow between the sites being overlooked and he felt that any properties on the northern side should be bungalows. He was of the view that if the application were to be approved there should be one entrance situated further down near the entrance outlined on the next application which was straighter with more vision and would be much safer.

During the discussion, members made a number of comments in objection to the application which included:

- Preference for one application site with less development;
- Concerns over the delivery of affordable housing;
- Concerns over the access arrangements;
- There was a need for housing including affordable housing but not at the expense of safety in the community;
- The road was very fast and dangerous;
- The local school was already at capacity and so were other schools in Chard so where would children from the new development go to school;
- Safety was paramount and a single access would be preferred;
- Unhappy with how the applications have been put forward and the road layout..

In response to the objections raised by members, the Specialist – Principal Planner commented that there were conditions attached to the application with regard to ecology and flooding and that the consultees were satisfied that there were no grounds for objection. He also referred to the submitted drawings which suggested the use of bungalows, chalets and two storey properties to reflect the impact on neighbours. With regard to road safety, members were informed that Somerset County Council had carried out a road safety audit and although would prefer one access did not object to two.

The Specialist – Principal Planner said that if the Committee were of the view that the scheme was acceptable on the site with one access, it may be possible for discussions to take place with the applicant regarding a solution. If the application was to be refused on the highways issues with County Highways having undertaken an audit there would be no grounds to defend an appeal. The applicant had indicated that if members had issues they would be prepared to look at the possibility of redesigning the access arrangements.

Councillor Martin Wale said that he could see no reason why the site could not be approved with one access further along near the proposed access for the next application. He did not feel there were many grounds to refuse the application on the amount of housing, layout or landscaping. He expressed his support for deferring the application to allow negotiations to be held with the applicant with a view to revising the access arrangements.

At the conclusion of the debate, it was proposed and seconded to defer the application to a future meeting of the Area West Committee as members felt that there was an opportunity to deliver a highway benefit to the local road network through a negotiated solution that could be achieved within the two applications within the applicant's control.

A vote was taken to defer the application which was approved by 9 votes in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: That Planning Application 20/02247/OUT be **DEFERRED** to a future meeting of the Area West Committee as members felt that there was an opportunity to deliver a highway benefit to the local road network through a negotiated solution that could be achieved within the two applications within the applicant's control.

(Voting: 9 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)

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Chairman

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Date