

**Minutes of a Zoom Virtual Meeting of the Planning Committee of  
Wrington Parish Council  
held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 23 February 2021**

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr B Taylor (Chair)	Cllr H Ward
	Cllr D Yamanaka	Cllr G Bigg
	Cllr L Samuel	Cllr J Steinbach
	Cllr P Neve	Cllr L Vaughn
	Cllr S Treweek	Cllr J Coffey
	J Bishop (Assistant Clerk)	

**In attendance:** Andrew Maltby (a representative from Deeley Freed) and three residents in relation to application 21/P/0019/OUT

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**1 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Public Participation**

Andrew Maltby (a representative from Deeley Freed) and three residents attended to hear the Council's discussions on the application for development at Gatcombe Farm (21/P/0019/OUT). Andrew Maltby did not wish to address the Council.

The first resident thought a decision on this application was difficult. There was a history of disruption and problems on the site but, at the same time, the site is remote and access to the village is difficult by foot which will mean a large number of people will use cars to access the village. He felt the housing would be quite dense and had queries over the figures for dwellings per hectare quoted in the application. He requested the Council ask NSC, if the application is approved, to impose four conditions:

- Appearance – although a reserved matter, development in the Green Belt has been justified on the grounds of appearance. Therefore, when the reserved matters application is submitted it must comply with the design and access statement of this current application.
- Pedestrian access comprises three elements:
  - The link from the site to West Hay Road – no lighting should be allowed on this path.
  - West Hay Road footway – the development management company should be made responsible for the management of the hedge.
  - Albury/Ladywell footpath – upgrading of this path should be conditioned and the work should be completed before any of the houses are occupied.
- Visibility - the landscaping should be in accordance with the master plan and not in accordance with the landscape drawings as there is disparity between the two. Furthermore the design needs to change to screen the big gable ends.

- Sustainability – the site will not be particularly sustainable and the developer should be required to use more sustainable techniques.

In conclusion, the resident said he would like the Council to request a reduction in the number of houses but he felt this would not succeed. On balance, if the above points could be conditioned, he felt this was the least worst option for the site and requested the Council ask NSC, if they are minded to approve the application, to impose the above conditions.

The second resident described the current condition of the site and outlined the history of decline over the last twenty five years with unacceptable activities leading to continual noise pollution and antisocial behaviour affecting neighbouring properties. She asked for the Council's support for the application:

- The site is a brown field site. Other recent applications in the village have been on green field sites but development on brown field sites should be prioritised wherever possible as per government guidelines.
- Is it an appropriate site? The site needs a major overhaul. It continually attracts criminal activity, it is a health and safety issue and serves no purpose to the community in its current state
- She believed it is a good application as not only does it start to satisfy the shortfall in housing in North Somerset but it does include some affordable housing and incorporates a couple of office units. The design of the housing fits the rural surroundings.
- She welcomed improvements to the Alburys/Ladywell footpath. She believes the footpath on West Hay Road is good but needs regular management with the pruning debris removed.

Finally, by supporting the application (even subject to the conditions suggested by the first resident), the resident believed it would bring to an end a state of affairs that have brought much anguish to neighbours of the site over the years. Furthermore, Wrighton should be in control of where houses are built, using brown field sites, particularly this run down one.

#### **4 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held 2 February 2021 reviewed and adopted as a true record. There were no matters arising.

#### **5 NSC Planning and Regulatory Committee**

The only items of direct relevance to the parish discussed at the meeting on 17 February were:-

- The Bristol Airport appeal which is scheduled to start on 22 July.
- An appeal against NSC's refusal of 20/P/0204/LDE (The Old Forge, Bristol Road, Felton, Wrighton).
- The Inquiry into the appeal on material change of use at Coles Garage, scheduled to start on 16 March.

The papers for the next meeting on 17 March are not yet available on NSC's website.

Councillors discussed whether NSC's Weekly List of Registered Applications included applications close to the parish boundary. It was agreed the Assistant Clerk should contact NSC to see whether these applications could be included in Wrington's list.

## 6 Decision Notices issued by NSC

A list of Decision Notices had been circulated prior to the meeting and these were noted. In summary:-

- 20/P/2367/FUL – Hi Field Lodge, Hi Field, School Road, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5NB – refused
- 20/P/3014/FUH - Old School House, Church Road, Redhill, Bristol, BS40 5SG - refused

It was also noted that 21/P/0317/TRCA (The Cottage, The Old Rectory, Broad Street, Wrington, BS40 5LD), 21/P/0145/TRCA (The Plough Inn, High Street, Wrington, BS40 5QA) and 21/P/0105/TRCA (18 The Cottages, Station Road, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5LH) had all been approved with this established after the meeting papers had been circulated. As decisions on 21/P/0317/TRCA and 21/P/0145/TRCA had been issued early, before the Council had been able to consider them, it was agreed the Assistant Clerk should contact NSC to complain about this.

## 7 Planning Applications

A list of planning applications, along with draft comments, had been circulated with the meeting papers.

- **21/P/0019/OUT - Gatcombe Farm Industrial Estate, West Hay Road, Wrington, BS40 5GF**

Cllr Taylor explained that seven Councillors had contributed to the draft comment that had previously been circulated and proposed to work through the points that required further discussion/agreement:

- Councillors discussed the parking arrangements and how these related to current planning policy. Councillors considered whether, by removing cars from the central area it would create a car-free public space that would enable neighbours to interact more freely. It was agreed to retain *'It is disappointing to see almost all car parking is placed outside the houses, that no consideration has been given to placing car parking away from the dwellings that, while allowing access to the houses for delivery and essential needs (eg for disabled residents), could also create a predominantly traffic free environment for the dwellings. A less rigid layout of the dwellings would also give a less regimented feel.'* on page 2.
- Also on page 2 (Design Development) Cllr Taylor read out Cllr Yamanaka's suggestion that, in view of the poor access, there should be less than 38 houses on the site. Cllr Taylor proposed that the sentence *'This Council would also like to see the number of dwellings reduced in view of the poor access to the site'* be added at the end of the first paragraph. The meeting agreed to this as well as a request for a higher proportion of affordable housing.
- Transport Assessment – Cllr Taylor thanked Cllr Treweek for her work on this section. It was agreed to incorporate the section as drafted. Cllr Taylor introduced Cllr Yamanaka's comments that the developer might not

be aware of the footpath from Yeomans Orchard to Home Close and the school. Also, she would like to see more consideration given to a pavement along the end of West Hay Road and up Chapel Hill, even if only a ghost pavement. It was agreed to add the sentence *'The applicant may not be aware of the footpath between Yeomans Orchard and Home Close and the existence of the rear school entrance at the junction of Home Close and Orchard Close. Use of this public footpath is by far the quickest way to walk to the school from Gatcombe Farm'*.

- The Conclusion - Cllr Taylor asked if Councillors agreed with a sentence suggested by Cllr Steinbach *'Until those fundamental concerns have been fully addressed and resolved, this Council maintains objections to this Application.'* Cllr Steinbach explained he had suggested this due to concerns relating to drainage and traffic generation/pedestrian safety. In relation to pedestrian access Councillors discussed how this could be improved and whether it would be possible to incorporate this into the Council's forthcoming 20mph safety scheme (although this latter point would not be part of the Council's comment on the application). It was agreed to suggest that, if approved, it should be conditioned that the management company should be responsible for the maintenance of the West Hay Road footpath. Councillors returned to discussing whether they objected to the application or not. Cllr Taylor suggested the sentence *'Until those fundamental concerns have been fully addressed and resolved, this Council maintains objections to this Application.'* be replaced with *'Until those fundamental concerns have been fully addressed and resolved this Council reserves its position regarding this application.'*

Subject to the above it was agreed to submit the comment as drafted.

*Andrew Maltby and the three residents left the meeting*

- **21/P/0145/TRCA - Plough Inn, High Street, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5QA and 21/P/0317/TRCA - The Cottage, The Old Rectory, Broad Street, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5LD**

As already discussed (see item 6) Decision Notices had already been issued on these applications. It was agreed to submit no objection comments as drafted.

- **21/P/0154/FUL - Land East Of Vosper Lodge, Red Hill, Redhill**

Councillors discussed the history of applications on site. It was agreed to submit the objection as drafted.

- **20/P/3033/FUH – Hortswood, Long Lane, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5SP**

Councillors felt the proposal would not impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It was agreed to submit a comment of no objection as drafted.

[The comments submitted to North Somerset Council are attached at the end of these Minutes]

## 8 Other Planning Issues

- **Update on Bristol Airport Ltd's appeal (APP/D0121/W/20/3259234) against NSC's refusal of 18/P/5118/OUT**  
Cllr Steinbach explained the PCAA had submitted its Statement of Case to the Planning Inspectorate. North Somerset Council had also submitted a detailed Statement of Case and a full update would be available at the next full Parish Council meeting.
- **NALC consultation on 'Right to Regenerate' (the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government consultation on proposals to reform of Strand 2 (land owned by a local authority or certain other public bodies) of the Right to Contest under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.**  
It was agreed there was no need to comment on this consultation.
- **Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Neighbourhood Plan**  
Cllr Bigg volunteered to look at this consultation.
- **North Somerset updated Creating Sustainable Buildings and Places Supplementary Planning Document**  
Cllr Neve had already volunteered to look at this.
- **Hinkley Point C Connection Project – Development Control Orders, formal submission to discharge the following requirements: 21/P/0202/DCM, 21/P/0251/DCM, 21/P/0257/DCM, 21/P/0266/DCM, 21/P/0290/DCM, 21/P/0291/DCM, 21/P/0292/DCO, 21/P/0302/DCM and 21/P/0349/DCM**  
These were noted

Returning to the subject of the Gatcombe Farm application, transport issues and the Council's 20mph safety scheme it was agreed Cllr Yamanaka could discuss the possibilities with Cllr Steve Hogg and the Highways Officer.

The Meeting was closed at 7.45pm

**Chairman**

## WRINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

### Comments submitted to North Somerset Council following a Virtual Planning Committee Meeting on 23 February 2021

#### **Application 21/P/0145/TRCA - Plough Inn, High Street, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5QA**

The trees to be subjected to pollarding or felling are specified in the drawing submitted with the application, but there has been no reason offered as to why there is a need to fell the ash tree designated as T4. Equally, the extent of the pollarding proposed to the other trees (T1, T2, T3 and T5) has not been specified and nor is there any evidence that guidance has been sought from an arborialist as to the extent proposed.

In the circumstances therefore, this Council offers no objections in principle, but will leave the extent of the work proposed to be agreed with the Tree Officer by whom this Council will be guided.

#### **Application 21/P/0154/FUL - Land East Of Vosper Lodge, Red Hill, Redhill**

For the sake of clarity, the building proposed for conversion is otherwise referred to as Scars Farm Barns, Redhill and has been subject of several previous planning applications, the latest being 16/P/2135/F (creation of a new access track to serve Vosper Lodge – a neighbouring property) and 14/P/1917/CUPA (change of use from an agricultural building and land to a single dwelling, various associated works with access via track off Row of Ashes Lane (across fields to north-east.)). Both the above applications were refused.

The site proposed for development sits within Green Belt and is outside of any settlement boundary. Reference in the Design and Access Statement (page 11) to Policy SA2 of North Somerset's Site Allocations Plan is therefore inadmissible, since that policy document specifies that *"extension of a residential curtilage...into the countryside...of a dwelling located **within a settlement boundary** will be permitted provided..."*

The Design and Access statement maintains in several paragraphs that application 16/P/2135/F was given consent by North Somerset Council, but in fact the application was refused. In the Delegated Report, the Planning Officer states *"The applicant states that the track is to serve the existing building [i.e. Vosper Lodge, whose owner submitted the application]. However the track would also serve an existing agricultural building [i.e. Scars Farm Barns, the subject of the current application from owner JB Pearce Ltd.]. Based on the previous planning history, it would appear that the building is a disused agricultural building."* It goes on to refer to NSC's Policy DM51, but concludes that the applicant has not demonstrated that the proposed track is necessary to agricultural purposes and is therefore contrary to Policy DM51. The Decision Notice itself recites three grounds upon which the application failed and was therefore refused;-

1. Inappropriate development within Green Belt, contrary to Policies CS6, DM12 and DM51.

2. Unsafe access on to the highway contrary to Policies CS11 and DM24
3. Loss of biodiversity and harmful impact upon the rural character of the area contrary to Policies CS5, CS12, DM10, DM32 and Biodiversity and Trees SPD.

A previous application (14/P/1917/CUPA) by Mr Pearce seeking permission for prior approval for the change of use from an agricultural building and land to a single dwelling plus associated operational development comprising insertion of windows and doors on all elevations and replacing roof to west elevation, access via track off Row of Ashes Lane (across fields to north-east) was also refused for a multitude of reasons set out in the Decision Notice dated 30 October 2014.

The current site plans submitted, deliberately fail to identify where the 'driveway' to the property emerges, but in Section 2 Page 9 the Design and Access Statement states that *"The proposal is no longer reliant upon access from Row of Ashes Lane. The proposed development will utilise the access approved under application reference 16/P/2135/F"*. As pointed out above however, that application was refused, not approved and in this Council's view, the reasons for refusal (Point 2 of the Decision Notice) remain extant.

Furthermore, that section goes on to state, in relation to application 14/P/1917/CUPA, *"The unmade track is unsuitable for day-to-day use and its resurfacing ....would constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt."* Nevertheless, it would appear that resurfacing did proceed without planning permission and in contravention of Policy DM12.

Policy DM45 sets out the parameters for the conversion or re-use of rural buildings to residential use. It sets out six criteria which are to be met prior to permission being granted, including the following:-

- *The buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.* The Design and Access Statement page 9 states that the building is currently used for agricultural purposes in connection with a live/agricultural trade business, but is not specific. The appendices substantiating this contention are not available to view as part of the planning application. In addition, it is noted in the Decision Notice relating to application 14/P/1917/CUPA, that the barn was derelict prior to a previous application in 2006, with no roof and partially collapsed walls. It would appear to have been rebuilt subsequently, but only partially so. As, Point 5 of the Decision Notice 30 October 2014 points out therefore, between then and now, the western part of the barn has been rebuilt. It is also proposed to insert a first floor storey to facilitate a total of 5 bedrooms, doubling the existing Gross Floor Area to 270m<sup>2</sup>.
- *The building is not in an isolated location remote from a settlement with a range of services and facilities or where those services and facilities would be poor".* The small settlement of Redhill has no shops, the nearest facilities being in Wrington, there is a poor bus service to reach those facilities which would be counterincentive to using public transport, so private cars would be the choice.

The contents of the Ecological Survey have also been noted, and this Council has no objections to the re-provisioning of bat roost in part of the former pig pen, subject to appropriate licensing and supervision by a qualified person.

Overall, this Council considers that the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt, it is based upon the interpretation that the previous planning application 16/P/2135/F was approved, whereas it was refused, but the Council remains seriously concerned that the vehicular access proposed to the A38 constitutes a real and serious risk to safety on the busy A38 which, at the point of access/egress is subject to a speed limit of 50mph. The Council therefore objects to this application.

**Application 21/P/0317/TRCA - The Cottage, The Old Rectory, Broad Street, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5LD**

In view of the condition of the tree to be felled, this Council offers no objections to the proposed works and welcomes the applicant's intention to replace the felled tree with another, more appropriate species.

**Application 20/P/3033/FUH – Hortswood, Long Lane, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5SP**

The site in question sits within the Green Belt and outside of any settlement boundary. It is also washed over by Zone B of the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC.

The proposed workshop sits within the curtilage of the existing cottage and is subservient to the main building and aesthetically compatible with its rural location. The proposal therefore accords with North Somerset Council's Policy DM12.

In view of the existing development at the adjoining Hortswood Farm business complex, the proposed workshop will have no adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and low visual impact to the site and its surrounding land. Bearing in mind the site's inclusion within Zone B of the Bats SAC referred to above, it would be appropriate to ensure that there will be no obtrusive lighting installed in the new building.

The Council therefore offers no objection to the proposals submitted.

By way of footnote however, it is noted that the site address on the application form is 'Hortswood', whereas the development proposals refer to 'Hortswood Cottage'. This is presumed to be an oversight on the part of the applicant.



**Application 21/P/0019/OUT - Gatcombe Farm Industrial Estate, West Hay Road, Wrington, BS40 5GF**

The history of the development and subsequent drift into dereliction of this former mushroom farm site is already well documented and further set out within the Application documentation submitted in support of this Outline Planning Application, seeking now to re-generate the site and to build 38 new houses (Class C3) and provide 2 new buildings totalling 450m<sup>2</sup> of office space (Class E) together with various associated ancillary works, reserving 'Appearance' for future approval.

For some years, the site has been the subject of complaints from residents and Enforcement Proceedings by North Somerset Council, all of which has resulted in the site becoming a 'blot on the landscape' and contributing very negatively to the impact upon the Green Belt in which it sits. It is therefore not surprising that re-development of the site was inevitable and this Application attempts to put forward proposals which are intended to turn a negative impact into a more positive one. Recognising that the site lies outside of the settlement boundary, the site has already been 'developed' notwithstanding its Green Belt position and this is acknowledged in the permissions granted pursuant to Planning Application 17/P/5342/FUL. It is therefore contented that this proposal for re-development accords with the parameters of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Para 145(g) and also meets the criteria set out in North Somerset Council's (NSC) Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, notably DM12.

There have already been several Pre-Application Meetings between the developers and NSC, details of which are contained within the submitted documentation, (and summarised in the Design and Access Statement pages 10 and 11) wherein constructive comments and negotiations between the parties have enabled the proposals to reach a Planning Performance Agreement, leading to this formal Outline Planning Application. After having read the documentation for this Application, there can be little doubt that the proposals would contribute to a more positive aspect to this site and that, by working with the topography of the site, a definite improvement can be achieved both to the visual amenity of the site itself and to the benefit of the existing residents in the various dwellings already close by the site who have had to endure the very poor standard of well-being and quality of life enjoyment previously imposed upon them by the activities on site.

The proposals now put forward have been set out very clearly, but there are however, several matters which this Council would wish to comment upon and these are set out in the following paragraphs below.

**Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), November 2020**

This document contains several errors which detract from its overall quality.

**Para 2.1.7** refers to *"This study area has been discussed and agreed with South Gloucestershire Council in Summer 2019 prior to the assessment being completed."* Presumably this should refer to North Somerset Council.

**Para 3.2.4** states *"Bristol airport is located to the south."* If referring to the city of Bristol then this is correct, but in relation to the site, the airport lies to the north-east.

**Para 3.3.9** This Council does not recognise Thatchway Farmhouse on the map, which it is claimed runs to the east of the site, nor Bow Bridge claimed to be further to the east. The property Urchinwood Manor lies south-west of the site, not to the east of the site. Also Barley Wood Parks and Gardens etc. lies to the east of the site, not the west.

**Para 3.3.10** states *"The site lies approximately 800m North East of the Conservation Area of Wrington."* The site is actually north-west of the Wrington Conservation Area.

**Para 3.3.11** It would appear that PRoW AX30/51/10 is more realistically approximately 100m to both north and west of the site and provides some open aspects over the site.

**Para 3.4.1** states “*The Site is located North East of Wrington along a ridge edge..*” The site is in fact north-west of Wrington.

**Para 3.4.2** claims that “*The Site boundary to the South and West is a tall mature mixed species hedge (approximately 7m) with occasional trees...*” This statement is very misleading. There is indeed a hedge, including trees, forming the site boundary to the west (identified on the Tree Constraints Plan as H9). Nowhere does that hedge appear to be 7m high – indeed highlighted in that hedge is Tree T15, a sycamore of 10m height, but the remainder of that hedge is unlikely to be 7m high. Further to the north is Group G22 said to comprise hazel extending to 5m in height which, were the hedge 7m, that tree would not stand out. Further highlighted in that hedgerow are various trees. The western boundary hedge identified as H9 is described merely as ‘western boundary hedge’. In the south-western corner of the site, Groups G4 and G5 are said to contain (G4) 3 trees – hazel, elm and ash with heights of 9m and (G5) 2 trees – elm and hazel of 8m height. Other trees contained in the boundary hedging are T1 (sycamore -14m.), T7 (wild cherry – 6m) and T15 (sycamore – 10m). All the above information is contained within the Tree Constraints Plan and Tree Survey.

**Para 4.2.2** sets out the developers’ intentions to enhance the existing mature site boundaries (“*The existing mature site boundaries are proposed to be predominantly retained, with high levels of enhancement proposed for the Western boundary*”.) from which this Council takes some comfort and ties in with the mitigation recommendations set out in the Design and Access Statement, Page 3.

### **Design and Access Statement**

**Ecology** The recognised opportunity to enhance habitat and ecology potential on site whilst taking the development forward is welcomed (Page 8) and should be carried forward in conjunction with the appropriate guidance for species involved (see also Clarke Webb Ecology reports.). Retention and respect of the existing hedgerows is vitally important for the continuing provision of foraging areas for the bat roosts already extant nearby.

This Council notes however that the Tree Constraints document and the accompanying Tree Survey appear to conflict with the Masterplan proposed. The Tree Survey highlights trees currently on site coded T8, T10, T13 and T14 as to be retained (only Trees T6, T7, G11 and G12 are highlighted for removal) whereas the Masterplan appears to ignore the trees to be retained. The ‘retained’ trees are classed as ‘early mature’ and ‘semi-mature’ and will continue to provide sound ecological habitat as well as promoting biodiversity and this Council would suggest they be so retained and the Masterplan redrawn to accommodate their retention and protection during construction works.

**Design Development** As part of the development strategy, the developer was required to satisfy NSC as to site layout, design, quantum of design, house types/tenures and visual/landscape impact, together with a footpath link to Wrington. The footpath aspect will be covered later in this document.

At this stage the mix of housing types was proposed totalling 38 dwellings and included 3 affordable housing social rent units. Also on the site was to be provided 450m<sup>2</sup> of office accommodation. (See Plan on page 11) This Council is disappointed that a higher ratio of affordable housing could not be incorporated within the proposals and would ask that this aspect be revisited. This Council would also like to see the number of dwellings reduced, in view of the poor access to the site.

The site layout has nothing to distinguish it from any other medium sized, speculative development or to make it in any way distinctive and unique. The site layout is an unimaginative suburban type arrangement of 3 straight cul- de -sacs with similarly straight building lines rather than a more rurally appropriate, less regimented layout. This is yet another development designed around roads first and people second.

As the site is a little way outside the main village settlement lines it is *de facto* a small separate neighbourhood that would benefit from being designed as a much more integrated community in its own right rather than yet another “commuter estate”.

The layout splits the housing into three distinct pockets that have little connection to each other apart from the main spine access road. This is further reinforced by what appears to be proposed tree planting between the gardens of the three blocks. There are no pedestrian only routes to connect the blocks, only the pavement alongside the spine road. There is also no separated pedestrian and cycle access within the residential area as has been provided from West Hay Road to the bottom of the site.

It is disappointing to see almost all car parking is placed outside the houses, that no consideration has been given to placing car parking away from the dwellings that, while allowing access to the houses for delivery and essential needs (eg for disabled residents), could also create a predominantly traffic free environment for the dwellings. A less rigid layout of the dwellings would also give a less regimented feel.

**Sustainability** The Council welcomes the proposals to maximise energy gain from solar sources, the provision of electric vehicle charging points on all houses and the proposals for use of a SuDS drainage system (See also below).

It is disappointing however to see the strategy appears to be designed only to comply with minimum policy requirements on energy and low carbon design. In light of current knowledge and the recent declaration of a climate emergency by both North Somerset and Wrington Parish Councils it would be hoped that the developers would seek to go further than this. The provision of PV suitable roofs pitches is only found on under 50% of the dwellings. This could have been much higher and preferably on 100%.

It is also disappointing to see that Pre-Application Sustainability guidance only proposes compliance with the minimum level required of energy from on-site renewables. A higher aspiration would have been welcome as the additional cost of fitting more is relatively low and a higher percentage could also be achieved by more energy efficient fabric design.

### **Adapting to Climate Change**

Thermal mass and cross ventilation alone are unreliable and inadequate measures to deal with potential overheating risks in current climate conditions and will be even less effective with higher summer temperatures due to climate change. This issue is becoming a serious concern in many new dwellings due to poor assessment and so should be given much greater consideration. To seek to achieve greater levels of sustainable transport, reduced primacy for cars and increased suitability for cycling and walking plus provision of secure communal/visitor storage for cycles and electric cycle charging facilities would be welcome. Bike storage at the back of long garages does not give the easiest access and as such may create some level of disincentive to use bikes.

There has been some attempt to change the normal 'car first' hierarchy on the spur roads serving each of the blocks however it is not clear that in reality this will reduce the primacy of cars. If some completely car free public shared spaces had been created this would not be the case and would provide better opportunities for community cohesion through shared activities in common linked traffic free spaces.

Providing 2 or 3 car parking spaces at each house reinforces the expectation of high car use and also enables it. If fewer spaces were provided at each house, e.g. one each, and other parking provided along with visitor spaces - of which there are only 2 identified for the whole site - then car use may well be less encouraged.

### **Energy and Sustainability Statement**

Several of the statements in the sustainable energy strategy are at odds with the technical specification details and consequent performance assessments as given in the statement. These are dealt with in more detail below.

The first 2 paragraphs succinctly summarise the key elements of demand reduction using passive and active design measures prior to the use of renewable generation technologies. It also states

that it is possible to exceed Building Regulations requirements through such demand reduction alone.

Using a robust 'fabric first' approach with the objective of achieving not just slightly better but much better performance than that required by the regulations would result in dwellings that are more energy efficient, cheaper to run, more comfortable BY DEFAULT and for the whole life of the buildings. In fact it is possible through a good fabric first approach and without any renewable generation to produce a dwelling with lower energy demands and carbon emissions than will be achieved by meeting Building regulations and fitting renewables to meet the North Somerset Council's 15% requirement.

**In para 4** it states that *"At the earliest stage, the buildings have been designed using a fabric first approach as to initially minimise energy and resulting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Particular attention will be paid to thermal envelope and a high level of insulation will be specified to all thermal elements to minimise heat losses"*

Details of U values (a measure of insulation values) for the opaque element insulations and thermal bridging do not bear this out as the specifications given are not significantly better than those required to just meet regulations and the fabric performance only just exceeds the carbon emissions requirement by little over 2%. There are no details regarding the Fabric Energy Efficiency standard which must also be met under part L1A of the approved document for energy and fuel requirements for new domestic dwellings, and so we are unable to comment on this, however by default it cannot be much better than minimum required standards.

**Para 5 states** *"...the developer will have more flexibility to design the dwellings to maximise passive solar gains where possible"*. The developer does indeed have this flexibility and there is good orientation in many of the dwellings with regard to clear open aspects to the South to help benefit from winter solar gain, however the proposed tree planting between the houses will reduce this after a very few years as they will create additional shading. There is also a consequent risk of summer overheating unless a clear shading and mitigation strategy is employed. This is a growing problem in large numbers of new developments and will only increase with further summer warming. The tree planting will not help mitigate this due to the high angle of the summer sun, but careful selection of which species of tree is planted and in which location, can minimise the overall negative impacts.

**Para 7 states** *"...heat loss will occur due to air infiltration. (in lay terms, "leakiness"). Good construction detailing and the use of best practice will minimise the amount of air infiltration.. Extra attention to detail will be paid, with adequate sealing to all junctions in the thermal envelope, service penetrations and window casements. This will ensure an air test target of 5m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> at 50Pa (Q50) or better is achieved"*. This also appears not to have been borne out by the construction details. Air tightness of 5.0m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> is far from exceptional and can at best be described as average. As dwellings become better insulated and achieve lower heat losses through the fabric elements then heat losses due to air exfiltration/infiltration become a major problem. To put this into context, the Passivhaus standard specifies a Maximum value of 0.6 air changes (N50) which closely approximates to a Q50\* figure of 0.60 – 0.70 m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> ie 9 times better than proposed. (\*Note to readers: Q50 is the UK Building Regulations standard for measuring air permeability. It measures the volume of air (in m<sup>3</sup>) passing through the building envelope (m<sup>2</sup>) per hour at a pressure of 50 Pascals. Other methods use N50 which is the volume of air changes (m<sup>3</sup>) for the whole volume of the building (m<sup>3</sup>) per hour, also at a pressure of 50 Pascals. Fortuitously due to the methods of calculation these two figures are usually very similar.)

For a naturally ventilated building a value of 3m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> would be a more credible objective.

It is a major missed opportunity not to design to a far better airtightness level and to fit mechanical heat recovery ventilation. The much lower heat loss would then greatly reduce the heat and fuel needed to maintain good internal temperatures, and minimise the costs of running.

**Para 8 states** *"Natural ventilation will be used to provide fresh air to the dwelling to minimise energy demand for a mechanical ventilation plant"* For information, a mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery unit when combined with good airtightness of around 1.0m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> will prevent the loss of approximately 15 times more energy than it consumes. Intermittent extract ventilation fans

which will inevitably be required instead both consume energy and help to waste it by removing warm internal air to the outside that is then replaced by incoming cold air.

Para 8 also states *“All units fenestrations will be equipped with trickle vents and operable windows in order to prevent overheating during the hottest summer months”* This is a seriously inadequate strategy for mitigating overheating.

Without a robust shading strategy for all glazing on the facades, other than north facing, the overheating risk is very high. Good shading prevents most of the solar radiation passing into the home and causing large temperature rises, but most importantly is a passive measure so that it requires no occupant action to be effective. Ventilation can purge some heat but unless it is automated it still requires occupants to actively manage it.

Opening windows when residents are at home can provide sufficient cross ventilation to help counter daytime overheating in some cases but this requires occupants to understand how cross and stack ventilation works and is completely useless when the occupants are away from home. Similarly trickle vents may provide a small degree of mitigation when properties are empty, however in reality most trickle vents are left untouched for the majority of the year and provide relatively minimal ventilation flows. They are also often left open in the winter leading to greater heat loss.

**Para 9** *“The SAP calculation contains an overheating analysis to ensure that the risk is appropriately mitigated in the dwellings. The analysis demonstrates that all dwellings achieve a compliant level of overheating risk”.*

Although SAP is the official method for calculating energy performance of new dwellings it is not, nor was ever, intended to be a design tool. The SAP overheating method compared to other methods of calculation is simple and crude and is absolutely reliant on accurate input data which is often not the case. As such it is prone to delivering overoptimistic results especially from overstated ventilation rates and should not be relied on as a robust method to assess overheating risk. Overheating should be assessed using either a more reliable method such as PHPP (Passivhaus Planning Package) or dynamic computer modelling.

#### **Page 7 – Building Specifications Tables**

These are not in any way exceptional in terms of energy efficiency and carbon emissions reductions and as stated above only just ensure the dwellings meet Building Regulations minimum standards.

U values of all elements are typical of current practice to meet Regulations, but not nearly good enough to be described as low energy / low carbon.

On checking, some of the claimed insulation values appear to be incorrect. For example, a U value of 0.110 is claimed for the first roof make listed (insulated at joist level), whereas calculation of this detail showed it to be 0.149; significantly worse. All U values and the accredited details for the reduction of thermal bridging need to be robust, reliable and correct.

The most worrying item, and at odds with any claims to low carbon design, is the specification of gas boilers for all houses. This locks the occupants of these houses into using fossil fuelled heating for a likely minimum period of 15 to 20 years and ensures that the heating and hot water systems will be producing significant and avoidable carbon emissions during that time.

The UK government has already announced their intention to ban the fitting of gas boilers from 2025 in under 4 years' time. To be specifying them for new developments yet to be built is both short sighted and dismissive of the need to combat climate change.

**Page 11** shows the forecast emissions reduction calculation mentioned above showing an overall improvement of merely 2.15%. The house building industry has been clearly shown to have a widely acknowledged performance gap (shortfall of actual building performance relative to predicted) of between 50% and 150%. As such this small margin of improvement over the required minimum is likely to be unrealistic.

#### **7.0 Renewables Feasibility – page 17 Ground Source Heat Pumps.**

This technology is rejected due to a) the cost of the equipment, b) the cost of the installation and c) the area of ground required to supply sufficient heat without ground freezing.

While there is some merit in the capital cost argument and maybe also with regard to installation costs the argument with regard to available ground area is less convincing. A more robust “fabric first” approach would deliver significant space heat demand reductions and that in turn would

reduce the size of the heat pump and the ground loop areas needed to meet demand. It is quite possible that this could then be accommodated within the site, serving small heat pumps supplying low carbon heat to all houses.

Demand results shown on page 10 show the space heat demand of the sampled dwellings to be approximately double that of the hot water. With a better fabric specification this could easily be reduced overall by 25% - 30%. This would reduce total predicted emissions from the predicted 73 tonnes by 18- 20 tonnes per annum.

#### **Page 18 Renewables Summary**

The choice of PV as the most effective renewable option in order to meet the requirement for 10% on site generation is obvious. The proposed size of the arrays however is clearly driven again by the need to just meet this requirement rather than addressing the best options for residents and for reducing emissions. A typical array for a 3-4 bedroomed home would be 3 to 4kW rather than the 1.5 kW proposed. (NB this is also limited by the network operators).

As the cost of the inverter and installation is a significant part of the total system cost, the extra cost of fitting additional panels is not great and yet could more than double the amount of low carbon electricity generation for the life of the system, usually 20 years minimum. This would increase the predicted savings of almost 25 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum to around 50 tonnes.

Some of the dwellings are not identified as having the most suitable roof orientations for PV, however fitting arrays to those, mostly SE facing, will still produce 85 – 90 % of an optimum array. This would further increase the total site emissions savings.

#### **Conclusions**

*“The developer has considered all sustainable solutions and has reduced the energy demand and resultant carbon dioxide emissions of the development above and beyond the requirements of the Building Regulations part L.*

*This report has shown how the proposed development has been designed using a “fabric first” approach utilising the principles of passive design. Furthermore the implementation of sustainable design features such as the high efficiency boiler coupled with advanced heating controls as well as high efficiency lighting throughout”*

It is technically theoretically true that this proposal passes Part L requirements but only by a very small margin of 2.15 %, and yet this may easily be lost in changes to the proposed specification. The proposal does not use a fabric first approach. It merely proposes a fabric specification that barely passes minimum Part L requirements. A true “fabric first” approach would make much more significant reduction in energy use than this proposal is predicted to deliver

With regard to the “Principles of passive design” it does little more than recognise that these exist. Other than noting the benefits of winter solar thermal gain it fails completely to employ all the other tools of passive design including higher levels of insulation, more efficient building form, optimised glazing patterns and low energy low carbon energy systems.

The last sentence in this paragraph appears to be incomplete and makes little sense however the claim that a gas boiler, even with advanced controls (almost standard practice anyway), is “sustainable features” is not true.

#### **Design Proposals**

The illustrative design proposals put forward, together with the site plan, acknowledge the importance of the relative ridge heights of dwellings and their contribution in retaining the visual amenity of the site post-development. In the view of this Council it is vital that the best use is made of the existing topography and that a sympathetic visual aspect is maintained by careful arrangement of ridge heights. The Council notes however that ‘Appearance’ is proposed to be a ‘Reserved Matter’ should this Application be approved. It would seem more logical to agree Appearance prior to approval in order that development does not stray from the constraints set out above and by the site topography.

**Boundary Treatments.**

There is reference here to *“The surfaced pathway from West Hay Road features a 2m clear width with low level lighting.”* There is guidance laid down in the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC Supplementary Planning Document as to what is acceptable in terms of lighting. It must be borne in mind that the site sits within Zone A of that SAC and is therefore very sensitive to light levels. Elsewhere in this village (Cox’s Green development) levels of lighting have been severely conditioned so that on that site, no footways are to carry illumination and also that there is to be no street lighting on site. This Council would wish to see this very sensitive site similarly conditioned, notwithstanding the proposed Lighting Strategy referred to on page 27. (See also page 26 – Pedestrian Access and bullet points contained within the heading ‘Ecology’ on page 29 of the Design and Access Statement.)

**Open Space Design**

The Council welcomes the intention to retain the majority of the existing space in order to preserve the ecology already in situ, however it is again somewhat proscriptive and limited in concept. Orchards certainly appear to be beneficial amenities however are they what the residents will most want and who will maintain them? Future occupants may well have other needs and better uses for parts of this space, e.g. for community gardening and food growing other than just apples. Children may prefer more informal play areas than those with fixed “equipment” shown on the proposals. This all adds up to an imposed green area that may well be completely inappropriate to the needs of the residents.

Whilst noting that there is a ‘Landscape and Ecology Management Plan’, the Council would need to be assured as to how the maintenance is to be funded in perpetuity and also what contingency plan is in place in the event the ‘management company’ becomes insolvent or fails in any way rendering it unable to fulfil its commitments. There is also the matter of the maintenance and replacement of play equipment to be similarly addressed. (See also paragraph 5.24 of the Planning Supporting Statement.)

**SuDS Strategy**

The Council welcomes any proposal which will improve the current drainage from the site and the widespread utilisation of permeable surfaces where possible, but is not qualified to comment upon the efficacy of the technical proposals put forward.

It is however of the utmost importance, prior to any permissions being granted for this site, to ensure by independent verification that the existing systems for the disposal of both foul water and surface water, are able to accommodate further volumes produced from the site being developed in the manner proposed. There has been no confirmation from Wessex Water for instance, that the scheme will be able to be accommodated by the existing sewer system from West Hay Road, or the sewage farm to the west of Westward Close, Wrington. Equally, there is a history of surface water from the existing site not being able to flow into and be coped with by the gullies along West Hay Road at a rate sufficient to avoid large areas of flooding on the road and to the south of the roadway, in residents’ gardens.

(The document ‘SuDS – Proof of Concept Part1, Page 2 states *“There are no public sewers on site; however, there are public sewers on West Hay Road – to the south of the site.”* This statement gives little comfort to this Council. The number of dwellings and units proposed will increase substantially the output of foul sewage to be accommodated.)

**Planning Support Document**

Paragraphs 5.26 and 5.27 refer to improvements to the existing footpath linking Alburys with Ladywell in order to enable easier and safer pedestrian access to the village facilities. The applicant is also committed to funding of £25,000 towards improving this footpath by way of Section 106 Unilateral Undertaking. The Council wishes to express concerns regarding these statements and also the way forward (see below – Appendix 6).

## Transport Assessment

**Bus Details Para 2.15 and Appendix 5** It should be noted that the current operator's contract expires on 31 March 2021 and that the contract is currently out for tender, with the possibility that the little used service may be discontinued. The current timetable cites only a maximum of 5 trips westbound Monday to Saturday with maximum 5 trips eastbound. No Sunday service is available. There are periods when only 4 trips daily operate.

**Para 3.6** sets out the proposals relating to the footpath linking the development to West Hay Road and the village and rightly acknowledges that improvements need to be made, this Council considers that the proposals do not go far enough to provide adequate, safe, your-round pedestrian access between the site and the village. The existing footway on the north side of West Hay Road is acknowledged as 'narrow' (Transport Plan Appendix 15), is cited as being 1.3m wide in Appendix 1 of the Transport Plan (pre-application stage), but is actually between 1.1m and 1.4m wide along its length. For a 50m stretch east of the access road from West Hay Road, the footway is only 1.1m wide, which is considered inadequate for a wheelchair user, a pushchair or a parent walking alongside a child or even two adults walking alongside each other. When hedge maintenance is not undertaken, overgrowth inhibits the useable width of footway even further, leaving pedestrians needing to step off the footway into the highway in order to pass.

There could be a case made for the proposed 'Management Company' to undertake hedgerow maintenance along this stretch of the highway in perpetuity by means of a planning condition or contract.

Children and parents attending the local primary school will be tempted to use either High Street or Chapel Hill/Yeomans Orchard/Home Close to reach the school. The applicant may not be aware of the public footpath between Yeomans Orchard and Home Close. Use of this public footpath is by far the quickest way to walk to the school from Gatcombe Farm. Neither High Street nor Chapel Hill (until after passing the Chapel itself) has footways and it is doubtful whether such could be constructed or would be acceptable within the Conservation Area. The only viable solution will be via the PRoW between Alburys and Ladywell which extends the journey considerably (See also our comments under 'Appendix 6' below). It seems that further consideration needs to be given to overcoming or mitigating the apparent hazards set out above.

There appears to be no means of traffic management to be applied at the point where access from the site meets West Hay Road. Although the junction sits within the 30mph zone, the local Community Speedwatch team regularly clocks vehicles travelling in both directions along this stretch of road at speeds well in excess of the limit. The traffic projections quoted seem to be very low (morning peak ~0.3/hr per house) whereas this Council would suggest that would be unrealistic given the site's location. It is therefore recommended strongly that it may be appropriate to extend the 30mph limit further to the west to afford some form of protection to users of the access road (including farm vehicles, delivery vehicles and residents).

Bearing in mind the narrowness of the access road to the site, and notwithstanding the proposed 'passing place' at the point where the access road turns west to the site, any vehicle attempting to access it from West Hay Road, would need to wait (on West Hay Road) until any exiting vehicle from the site has completed the section from the 'passing place' on site to the highway. This would involve waiting on the highway since there is no 'passing bay' available at the southern end in which the waiting vehicle could park safely, off the highway, until the exiting vehicle has completed its



traverse. Local residents have already confirmed that there have been a number of minor accidents at this location, although no injuries have been sustained and none of the accidents has been reported to the police.

### Development Proposals

**Paragraph 3.2 iii** refers again to a 2m wide footpath from West Hay Road to the site as including a sealed surface and lighting. This Council considers that a permeable surface would fit better with the concept of sustainable drainage set out elsewhere and the matter of footpath lighting has been commented upon under 'Boundary Treatments' previously in this document.

**Paragraph 3.2.v** refers again to 'a Management Company' upon which comment has been made above under the heading 'Open Space Design'.

**Paragraph 3.2 viii** refers to the proposed enhancements to the Alburys/Ladywell footpath and is considered in detail below (Appendix 6).

**Appendix 6** This section provides details of the draft Unilateral Undertaking whereby the developer provides £25,000 of funding to improve the pedestrian access to the village via the Alburys/Ladywell existing footpath, AX30/1/30 and AX30/1/60. However, in the opening recitation under section 1(2), it refers to *"The Council is the Local Planning Authority for the purposes of the Act for the City of Bristol within which the Land is situated"* Clearly the site is within North Somerset and this should be amended.

This is absolutely a crucial part of the planning considerations to be assessed, since it will facilitate pedestrian access to the village from the development site and without which would place the proposed development in potential jeopardy as it sits outside the Settlement Boundary. In view of this, this Council considers it is vital that the improvements are in place prior to any completion or occupation of the new properties.

The footpath is well-used by residents and other walkers. At its north end it is accessed via a kissing gate and there is an adjacent wooden gate which is latch locked and spring loaded in order to enable pushchairs, shopping trolleys etc. to access the footpath and animals in the field to the west to be contained safely. This Council would not wish to see animal or highway safety compromised by the gate being left open by careless pedestrians, but there may be an opportunity to leave the characteristic kissing gate in place. (There are many other kissing gates installed in other footpaths within the Parish and to retain it would be in keeping with the village vernacular.) At the southern end of the footpath a similar arrangement is already in place, whereas in the middle, some 30m or so to the south of the northern access, a single wooden spring loaded and latch fastening gateway is in place.

As the central part of the footway traverses a green field, the use of tarmac as a permanent surface would be inappropriate and would not sit well with the rurality of the village vernacular. Such would also be detrimental to the field's current ability to absorb surface water. This Council would therefore seek that a permeable surface (eg plasticised matting with gravel infilling) be retained which would improve the surface quality of the footway, and protect the surface drainage qualities of the field itself. A similar approach could be considered for the southernmost section running north from Ladywell, and the northern most section, but other materials may be available which will do the same job. Guidance from the Footpaths Officer at NSC should be sought.

It must be borne in mind that any changes to the surface in the green field to the west of the footpath will need to be agreed with the landowner and until that agreement and permission have been obtained, no such work may commence. The Parish Council would also reserve the right to be consulted on any proposals.

Given the pre-commencement work to be undertaken prior to any work to improve the footpath being able to begin, it is this Council's view that all the necessary permissions and detailed proposals are agreed and set in place and that the work should be completed prior to any meaningful development, or occupation of any of the dwellings taking place at the Gatcombe Farm site, and that

an appropriate condition should be imposed to this effect by NSC, should planning consent be granted.

The Council is also concerned to ensure that the footpath proposed to the west of the entrance trackway, affording pedestrian access from West Hay Road to the site, is assured and constructed prior to any occupation of the new dwellings, as, it is understood, the necessary land acquisition has not yet taken place and may be resisted by the landowner. Clearly this pedestrian access is crucial to the acceptability of the whole development proposal. An appropriate Planning Condition must be set in place should approval be forthcoming.

### **Conclusion**

Whilst in broad terms, this Council is inclined in principle to support the proposals to re-develop the Gatcombe Farm site from its current derelict and run-down situation to a mixture of housing and business occupation as applied for, there are several reservations set out in the preceding paragraphs of this document which this Council would wish to see addressed to its satisfaction before full approval can be forthcoming to support the proposals. Until those fundamental concerns have been fully addressed and resolved, this Council reserves its position relating to this Application. Accordingly, we would ask the developer and NSC to consider these reservations, comments and suggestions when assessing this application.