

WEMBDON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of a meeting of Wembdon Parish Council planning committee held virtually on 12th October 2020 that commenced at 7.00 pm when the following business was transacted.

Present: Cllrs P Major (Chairman), L Edwards, D Gliddon, P Major, M Phillips, A Reed and M Solomon.

19/20 To receive any apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr R Webber.

20/20 To receive declarations of any pecuniary interests on items relating to this agenda, which have not been previously declared in the Councillors register of interests.

There were no declarations.

21/20 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 7th September 2020.

It was resolved to approve the minutes (6 in favour, 1 abstention as not present at the previous meeting).

The Chairman signed the minutes as being a true record of the meeting.

22/20 To consider the following planning applications:

51/19/00003. Land at Cokerhurst Farm South of Wembdon Hill and North of Quantock Road, Bridgwater. Hybrid (full and outline) application. Full application for the erection of 238 dwellings, formation of two new means of access onto A39, pedestrian/cycle link onto Wembdon Hill, public open space, parking and landscaping. Outline application with all matters reserved for up to 437 dwellings, 500 sqm (A1 – A5) and/or community uses (D1), 2.2ha site for up to 2 Form Entry Primary School and bus gate/emergency access vis Inwood Road with associated infrastructure, landscaping and works.

The Chairman said that both the Local Planning Authority and the developers are aware of the possibility of an animal burial pit potentially containing animals infected by anthrax, but its location was not recorded, and soil investigations on site have failed to find

Signature of Chairman

it. As part of the application, the developers have submitted a third party Ground Investigation Report, dated March 2019, and a supplementary report dated May 2019. Both reports make reference to the possible existence of a burial pit and the actions to be taken to minimise the risk if a pit is discovered. These reports are available on SDC's Planning Portal. SDC's Planning Officer has recommended that if permission is granted, a condition be attached regarding soil contamination. (This is condition 8 on pages 41-43 of the Officer's report to the Development Committee).

The Chairman had previously circulated a draft of the statement that he proposed to read at the SDC development committee meeting on 13th October.

It was unanimously resolved to approve the statement which reads:

Good morning chairman, councillors and officers, I'm Peter Major, chairman of Wembdon Parish Council's Planning Committee.

Wembdon Parish Council is not objecting to this development per se, because we recognise its inclusion in the Sedgemoor Local Plan. Our objection is that it doesn't meet some of the sustainable transport needs of its future residents:

Although the bus gate at the end of Inwood Road forms part of the detailed application, the proposed bus service will clearly not be available for several years, because its route depends on the existence of the estate roads in the outline part of this application. So we can discount the proposed bus service at present.

*Residents wanting to get to shops, businesses and rail services in Bridgwater without using their cars **won't** be using the path to the north, connecting to Wembdon Hill – that will be a **very** long way round for them: They will want to use the route to be provided off the estate to the east, which currently leads to a muddy and uninviting public right of way, and an indirect pedestrian-only route to Homberg Way.*

*In the wake of COVID-19, walking and cycling have become more important, so **that** route needs to be **accessible, attractive and direct** – it needs to lead where people want to go. Money needs to be found to improve that route, and that money should come from the section 106 agreement.*

*Our understanding is that the proposed section 106 agreement contains a clause setting aside a financial contribution to be used for the improvement of local connectivity. Wembdon Parish Council would withdraw its objection to the development if the agreement were to include a statement that that contribution should be set aside, in the first instance, for the creation of a **direct and continuous** foot- and cycle path to join with the existing provision on Homberg Way.*

That connection would encourage future residents of this development to walk and cycle to employment and facilities in

Bridgwater. It would contribute positively to the provision of sustainable transport from this development, thereby meeting the requirements of the Local Plan and our future environment.

This is the opportunity to make sure that this development truly meets the needs of our cyclists and pedestrians – particularly the younger generation.

23/19/00002/DD. Land to the south of Quantock Road, Bridgwater. Hybrid (full and outline) application. Full application for the erection of 114 dwellings, formation of signal controlled access off Quantock Road with associated infrastructure, landscaping and open space (phase 1). Outline application with all matters reserved for the erection of up to 240 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure, landscaping and open space (phase 2).

It was unanimously resolved to object to the application and submit the following response:

Particularly in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent increase in walking and cycling, Wembdon Parish Council (WPC) reiterates its previous comments, in particular its contention that insufficient consideration has been given in this application to providing, by means of a section 106 agreement, sustainable and safe walking and cycling connections between the site and the local facilities to the east, despite the implication in the Travel Plan that the primary route from the site to local facilities would be along the A39 Quantock Road for both pedestrians and cyclists. WPC considers that insufficient weight has been given to:

•Somerset Future Transport Plan 2011-2026:

◦*SUS 4 Cycling: ... We will support the provision of appropriate and well connected cycle facilities.*

◦*SUS 5 Walking: We will help people make more trips on foot and help people see the benefits of walking.*

•Sedgemoor Core Strategy (September 2011):

◦*Policy D9: Proposals will ... Enhance the facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, those with reduced mobility and other users;*

◦*Policy D10: Development proposals that will have a significant transport impact should: ... Ensure provision is made for inclusive, safe and convenient access for pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists and users of public transport that address the needs of all;*

•Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011-2032:

◦ *Policy B16: Proposals that provide opportunities for cycling, walking and enhanced public transport both within the town [Bridgwater] and between key destinations including ... Minehead (A39 corridor) and the town's surrounding rural areas will be supported.*

Likewise, although the Travel Plan the existing public transport within the area, and the proposed bus route through the Cokerhurst Farm development (which is unlikely to be operating for several years), there has been no suggestion in the proposal that this development might finance any improvement to that provision.