

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 10th June, 2015, 2.00 pm

Councillor Rob Appleyard - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Jasper Martin Becker - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Neil Butters (In place of Councillor Paul Crossley) - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Matthew Davies - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Sally Davis - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Eleanor Jackson - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Les Kew - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Caroline Roberts - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor Brian Simmons (In place of Councillor Bryan Organ) - Bath & North East Somerset Council
Councillor David Veale - Bath & North East Somerset Council

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor Sally Davis be elected as Chairman of the Committee

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the Agenda

3 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN (IF DESIRED)

A Vice Chairman was not required

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Paul Crossley and Bryan Organ whose respective substitutes were Councillors Neil Butters and Brian Simmons

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was none

6 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none

7 **ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS**

The Committee noted that there were a number of people wishing to make statements on planning applications and that they would be able to do so when reaching their respective items in Report 10

8 **ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS AND CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

There was none

9 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 29th April 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

10 **PLANS LIST - APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION ETC FOR DETERMINATION BY THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered

- The report of the Group Manager – Development Management on two applications for planning permission
- An Update Report by the Group Manager on these applications, a copy of the Report being attached as *Appendix 1* to the Minutes
- Oral statements by members of the public etc. on these applications, the Speakers List being attached as *Appendix 2* to these Minutes

RESOLVED that, in accordance with their delegated powers, the applications be determined as set out in the Decisions List attached as *Appendix 3* to these Minutes

Item 1 Site of demolished canal cottages, Tow Path, Kennet and Avon Canal, Bathwick, Bath – Erection of two storey dwelling with single storey annexe on site of demolished canal cottage row and outbuildings – The Case Officer reported on this application and her recommendation to refuse permission. She summarised a recent e-mail from the Agent sent to Members regarding a response to the Officer's report. The Update Report provided further information submitted by the applicant's agent.

The public speakers made their statements against and in favour of the proposal.

Councillor Jasper Becker (Ward Member on the Committee) stated that he supported the principle of development of the site. This was an interesting design although other designs could be considered. Councillor Les Kew agreed with the Officer's recommendation and considered that the proposal would not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area – it was an innovative design but in the wrong location. He therefore moved that the application be refused as per the Officer recommendation. The motion was seconded by Councillor Rob Appleyard who

considered that the design was not pleasing and that the site was inappropriate.

Members debated the motion. The access to the site by disabled people and emergency vehicles was queried to which the Group Manager responded to the effect that provision was available for such access. After a brief discussion, the motion was put to the vote and was carried, 9 voting in favour and 1 against.

Item 2 Parcel 2900, Greenhouse Lane, Nempnett Thrubwell – Installation of a solar park with an output of approximately 4.76MW on land associated with Howgrove Farm – The Case Officer reported on the application and his recommendation to grant permission subject to conditions. He referred to some of the conditions that would need to be amended. The Update Report referred to further conditions to be added. An objection had been received from Winford Parish Council as it was close to their Parish boundary. He stated that there was a target of 110MW for renewable energy (Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy).

The public speakers made their statements against and in favour of the development.

Councillor Les Kew read out the comments of the Ward Councillor Vic Pritchard who was unable to attend the meeting and who considered that the application should be refused. Councillor Kew then made his own comments on the proposal. He considered that the proposed use of this green field site was wrong and would mean the loss of agricultural land – other sites and buildings could be used as alternatives. The target of 110MW in the Core Strategy was based on a period of 20 years which had only just begun. The access to the site was poor and there were numerous policy constraints against the proposal. He disagreed with the Officer's statement in the Report that the application did not need to be referred to the Secretary of State. There were numerous objections to the proposed use which did not suit this location on a green field site. He moved that the recommendation be overturned and that permission be refused based on a rewording of the Officer's conclusion set out in the report, namely, that the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, although the proposal provides a range of benefits such as contributing towards meeting renewable energy targets, restoring historic field boundaries, ecological enhancement, job creation and farm diversification, it does not clearly outweigh the harm to the openness of the Green Belt and the wider landscape character. It is therefore considered that very special circumstances do not exist which justify the proposed development in the Green Belt. The motion was seconded by Councillor Brian Simmons.

Members debated the motion and asked questions for clarification. Various issues were raised including renewable energy, loss of agricultural land, Green Belt, alternative locations and visual impact. The Officers responded to these issues. The Group Manager stated that very special circumstances were required in the Green Belt but the NPPF referred to environmental benefits that should be considered and the need to outweigh any harm. In addition to consideration of the size of the site and the area covered by solar panels, there was a need to support renewable energy with the Government giving target outputs to be achieved by local authorities. The land could still be used for grazing in and around solar panels. A 25 year temporary permission was being proposed after which the land would return to agricultural use.

Some Members expressed arguments in favour of the proposal in that the benefits of the proposal would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The location was not prominent and it was not easy to access the site or the area in which it was situated. Solar panels were preferable to wind turbines and other alternative sites were not suitable. One Member felt that the site was still visible from some locations and that arable land should be retained as much as possible. The Group Manager stated that over time there would inevitably be a change to the landscape in attempting to meet a target of 110MW and that the issue of visibility was not in itself a strong enough reason to refuse permission.

The motion to refuse was put to the vote and was carried, 6 voting in favour and 4 against.

11 ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Group Manager – Development Management took Members through this report highlighting the progress since the last report and the planned improvements for the coming year.

Members asked questions about various aspects of the report to which the Group Manager responded. Councillor Neil Butters requested that the Development Management Team be congratulated on the high quality of work undertaken over the last year which was seconded by Councillor Rob Appleyard. Councillor Les Kew also congratulated the Divisional Director of Planning on the work undertaken in the first year since her appointment including the appointment of other officers in the Team and the good customer satisfaction that had been achieved. There was, however, still some room for improvement. Councillor Eleanor Jackson considered that the Officers be congratulated on the diligence exercised by officers on enforcement matters.

The Committee endorsed the sentiments expressed by Members and noted the report.

12 NEW PLANNING APPEALS LODGED, DECISIONS RECEIVED AND DATES OF FORTHCOMING HEARINGS/INQUIRIES

Councillor Les Kew queried why so many applications on agricultural barns seemed to be refused. The Group Manager – Development Management responded referring to the National Planning Policy Guidance which he would forward to Councillor Kew.

The report was noted.

The meeting ended at 3.40pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services