

MINUTES OF THE HYBRID ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 19TH JULY 2021 COMMENCING AT 6.30PM IN
HORTON VILLAGE HALL.

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Public Forum

- A) No members of the public were in attendance at the meeting in the Village Hall. Approximately 12 members were in attendance at the meeting via Zoom.
- B) Cllr Linda Vijeh was not in attendance at the meeting. Please see the attached report (**Appendix 1**) written by Cllr Linda Vijeh for SCC/SSDC Councillor Monthly Report.

3273 PRESENT Cllrs Ann Winter – Chair, Ray Buckler – Vice-Chair, Barry Mosley, Jon Tipping, Julie Layzell, Richard Clifford, and Ann Richards.

3274 APOLOGIES Cllrs David Johnson and Pippa Woodman.

3275 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST None.

3276 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING Minutes of the meeting held in May were unable to be fully drafted by the clerk due to technical issues.

Action: Clerk to complete May's minutes and list on September's agenda for approval.

3277 PLANNING APPLICATION(S) – TO APPROVE PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE

A) 20/03277/FUL – LAND NORTH OF BROADWAY HILL, BROADWAY HILL, HORTON TA19 9QU - CONSTRUCTION OF 50 DWELLINGS AND FORMATION OF VEHICULAR ACCESS

Please refer to **Appendix 2** for a full copy of the parish council's response to the planning application. A copy of the letter was previously circulated to all Cllrs before the meeting. Cllrs approved, seconded, and unanimously agreed on the contents of the letter.

Action: Clerk to forward a copy of the comments to South Somerset District Council.

3278 TO APPOINT REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE UNDERMENTIONED

1. Village Hall – Cllr Ann Winter
2. Playing Field – Cllr Ray Buckler
3. Footpath Working Party – Vacant – Unallocated
4. Area West – Cllr Julie Layzell
5. Police Liaison Officer – Cllr Ann Richards
6. Horton Charities – Cllr Ann Winter

3279 PLAYING FIELD UPDATE

- 1) A) General report on the playing field.
 - All the equipment is fixed and in good working order.
 - Bins are being emptied regularly.
 - The grass is being maintained well.
- B) Submission of 2021 field contracts for grass and perimeter.
 - The arrangements with the contractors are working well and have signed a maintenance contract for 2021. Submitting contract on the same basis for 2022.
- C) Agreement for 2022 years contracts - tender or renewal again? As above
- D) Next steps for the approval and installation of the planned equipment:
 - 1) Parish to adopt the funds raised by Horton Play Field Project.
 - Clerk to receive cheque for approximately £11,000 from all funds raised by HPFP.
 - 2) Accept the grant plans/procedure from SSDC and Clarks.
 - Noted

- 3) Understand this project is funded ex-vat, with the Parish paying the 20% VAT then re-claiming from the invoices.
 - Noted. Clerk to submit VAT reclaim when needed.
- 4) Approve, appoint and contract with GB Sport to deliver and install
- 5) Unnaimously approved by the Council. Equipment to be installed this year i.e. 2021.
- 6) Look at ways to add/finance the final item - pathway around the field and equipment
 - The project is a couple thousand short of its total budget needed. It was unanimously agreed during the meeting that the parish council would fund the shortfall to pay for the footpath however, other grant opportunities may be available as and when the project is underway. GB Sport has agreed that the footpath can be retrospectively installed. It has been advised that the park will have to be closed for approximately 3-4 days to install the footpath. To date, the total parish council financial commitment is £7,600.

3280 SPEEDING ISSUES AROUND VILLAGE – SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE – UPDATE – No update. Pitminster Council has a SID for sale for £995. Clerk to enquire as to whether this is still available. Discussion around highway training required, Clerk to find out what highways course is needed.

Action: Clerk to email Pitminster Council and Somerset County Council.

3281 SUGGS LANE FLOODING/SEWAGE ISSUES – UPDATE – No update received.

3282 A358 TAUNTON TO SOUTHFIELDS DUALLING SCHEME – PROJECT UPDATE Cllr Layzell took part in three online community forum meetings with Highways England (HE), one a general group of parish representatives, one on walking, cycling and horse riding and one with Broadway PC, with Cllr Buckler and Cllr Mosley too. HE is currently looking at potential design changes following the forums. The A358 group put forward suggested alternatives to resolve the connectivity issues along the route, with the expert help of one particular parish (Beercrocombe). HE is designing the 'expressway' to a new design guide standard (GD300) which doesn't permit slip roads but, as pointed out, to accord with the standard, the roundabouts should have 'grade separation' if they join major roads. However, there are only minor changes to the roundabouts at either end of the A358, so HE is not being consistent in what design standard they apply at the moment. They admit that congestion is likely to continue at either end, which questions the whole point of it without more works to the roundabouts. There are serious concerns within the parish group of the loss of connectivity between settlements and the A358 itself and the inevitable increase in traffic on local minor roads as a result and the safety issues arising from it.

The A358 group parishes have generally sent individual responses to HE but Horton PC has not done this, instead has given support to what the group is doing and the work and input into the response from the group to HE.

3283 ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION Cllr Layzell volunteered to take this role. Clerk to forward all emails from SSDC to Cllr Layzell as and when they are received.

3284 VERGE CUTTING – PUDDLEBRIDGE It was suggested by Cllr Johnson that the roadside verges in Puddlebridge (between the church and Puddlebridge) should be left to turn into a wildlife habitat. Cllrs Buckler and Mosley will speak to the people that carry out the maintenance and request that they are no longer cut.

3285 DEFIBRILLATOR Clerk received notification from the ambulance stating that the defibrillator had recently been taken from the bus shelter and used. Upon inspection, the defibrillator had been removed from the cabinet but was not used. The defibrillator has now been returned to the cabinet. It was recommended that the Clerk tries to find a company that can test the defibrillator to carry out a service to ensure it is in full working order.

Action: Clerk to enquiry with ambulance service regarding defibrillator service companies.

3286 FINANCE

A) To Approve Financial Statement - Unanimously Approved

B) Proposal – To approve payment of the following cheques:

1. C Duff – Wages and expenses - Cheque No. 000784 - £600.38 – Unanimously Approved.
2. G B Sport & Leisure – Playing Field - Cheque No. 000785 - £388.80 – Unanimously Approved.
3. SALC – Affiliation Fees - Cheque No. 000786 - £230.92 – Unanimously Approved.
4. Horton Village Hall – Hall Hire - Cheque No. 000788 - £275.00 – Unanimously Approved.

3287 CLERKS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE None.

3288 ANY OTHER MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIRMAN

1. Cllr Richards raised concerns about the use of the general refuse bin located next to the bus stop and dog walkers using this bin to dispose of dog waste and the unpleasant smells generated from this. It was requested that the Clerk contacts SSDC to request the bin in moved to a different location.

Action: Clerk to email SSDC.

2. Concerns were raised over the number of people continuing to park on the double yellow lines outside of the Five Dials Pub.

Action: Clerk to contact SCC to request traffic warden visits the area.

3289 DATE OF NEXT BI-MONTHLY MEETING: Monday 20th September 2021 at 6.30 pm. St Peters Church

APPENDIX 1 - ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT – JUNE 2021

SCC

In recent weeks the County Council has confirmed plans to [invest £10m on public health initiatives](#) and [£6m on economic development](#) to kickstart Somerset's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID UPDATE

Coronavirus infection rates: As of 25th June, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 20,982 (up from 20,455 on 28th May) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 799. The rate per 100,000 stands at 47.1 (5.5) for Somerset (South Somerset 20.8 (3.6)). The number of total deaths across the County is currently 19% below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 1.0 and 1.5.

Even those who have had both vaccinations, it is vitally important to remember, to observe Hands-Face-Space and to ventilate indoor areas at all times.

Road map out of lockdown: The final stage out of lockdown is anticipated to be July 19th (subject to a July 5th review) but is subject to Government assessment of four key criteria:

- the vaccine deployment programme continues successfully
- evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated
- infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
- the assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new variants

The Government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact and to reopen remaining premises, including nightclubs. The easing of restrictions on large events, performances and live events such as weddings will also be subject to the analysis of the outcomes from certain pilot events.

Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline: A single phone number continues to be available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. **0300 790 6275**, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

Vaccination programme roll-out: Somerset continues to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing over 700,000 doses (both 1st and 2nd) delivered.

The take up rates of both doses is very high: 80+ (96%), especially amongst older age groups. 75-79 (100%), 70-74 (98.3%), 65-69 (90.4%), 60-64 (95.2%), 55-59 (91.7%).

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UPDATE

The Secretary of State for Local Government is expected to make his decision on which of the two proposals will shape Somerset's future this coming month, before the Parliamentary summer recess on 22nd July. This will be based on three key tests:

1. any proposal must improve local government in the county
2. have a credible geography between 300–600,000 population
3. command a good deal of local support in the round

The decision will also include a clear timetable for moving to the new structure(s) including: • The process that current councils will follow to prepare for any change.

- Elections of councillors for a shadow executive(s) in May 2022.
- The new council(s) 'vesting', or starting work, in May 2023.

Both the Stronger Somerset and One Somerset teams have been working on detailed implementation plans for several months and continue to do so.

One Somerset have announced the creation of a series of consultative groups, to work in partnership with key stakeholders over the next 18 months to help shape future public services. Interested individuals and organisations are invited to express their interest in becoming involved in one of the consultative groups, by contacting onesomerset@somerset.gov.uk or write to: One Somerset, County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY.

There remains some controversy over the formal recognition of the poll held by the Stronger Somerset group in relation to the official consultation process.

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOMERSET POLL

The results of the poll conducted by the four districts, on behalf of the Stronger Somerset bid, have now been published. In addition, enquiries relating to the cost of the poll has received the following response. Figures do not include officer time spent on the exercise.

COST ELEMENT	£	COMMENTS
CIVICA CONTRACT		
Civica's Fees	£14,820	Civica's costs total £314,825 across the four district councils. Each council has a separate contract with Civica for delivery of the poll within its area.
Printing costs	£12,320	
Postage and mail processing	£65,210	
	£92,350	
LEGAL ADVICE		The cost of legal fees totals £8,150. Each council picks up part of the cost in line with its percentage share of the total electorate in all four districts. SSDC's share is 30.27%.
Sharpe Prichard	£954	
James Goudie QC	£999	
Bevan Brittan	£515	
	£2,467	
TOTAL COST FOR SSDC	£94,817	NB: we are expecting one more invoice from James Goudie QC for further advice received regarding the leaflet

One council for Somerset ("One Somerset" – the plan for a single council proposed by Somerset County Council)	11,872	
Two councils for Somerset: Eastern Somerset and Western Somerset ("Stronger Somerset" the plan for two councils for Somerset – an Eastern and a Western Somerset council – proposed by South Somerset District Council and the other district councils of Somerset)	24,114	ELECTED

Number of eligible voters		132,435
Votes cast by post:	24,796	
Votes cast online:	11,360	
Total number of votes cast:		36,156
Turnout:		27.3%
Number of votes found to be invalid:		170
Total number of valid votes to be counted:		35,986

Notes:

The breakdown in the number of votes found to be invalid is as follows:

145	Blank Papers
24	Spoilt Papers
1	Rejected – Unverifiable due to missing security numbers

A further 13 attempted duplicate votes were submitted, were rejected, and are not included in the above calculations.

Expected timetable in England

Date	Action
2 March 2020	The electorate to be used for the review is that at this date
8 June 2021	Publication of initial proposals
8 June to 2 August 2021	Initial consultation period (8 weeks)
March 2022	Secondary consultation period, including public hearings (6 weeks)
September 2022	Publication of revised proposals
September 2022	Final consultation period (4 weeks)
June 2023 (no later than 1 July 2023)	Final proposals submitted to the Speaker
2nd half of 2023	Order in Council bringing new constituencies into place

ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REVIEW

The boundary review, long overdue, is currently underway to more accurately reflect current population figures. Whilst no decision has yet been taken, timetable for this is set out below.

The current recommendation is for the Yeovil constituency to be slightly reduced in size.

SSDC CEO

Following the departure of the CEO at the end of this month, the person appointed to take over the helm, an internal appointment, has decided not to take up the post. Given the likely changes to local government structure, it has been decided to appoint an interim CEO.

The post has now been advertised, with a number of applications received, and interviews due to take place on the 5th July.

In the meantime, Nicola Hix, Director of Strategy and Support Services, has authorisation to take delegated decisions, but has not been appointed as Deputy CEO.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (DSFRS)

At this month's AGM, Sara Randall-Johnson was re-appointed Chair of the authority.

I have been appointed to the Audit & Governance Committee and the Appeals Committee.

It was reported that DSFRS were a key partner in the planning and delivery of a multi-agency response to the recent G7 Summit in Cornwall.

Forum meetings held this month gained agreement for the four key strategic priorities.

- 1) **Prevention and Protection** - targeted prevention and protection activities to reduce risks in communities, Improving Health, Safety and wellbeing, supporting the local economy.
- 2) **Emergency response** - Operational resources to provide effective emergency response to meet local/national risks identified in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- 3) **Great place to work** – to be recognised as a great place to work, where staff feel valued, supported, safe and well trained to deliver a high performing fire and rescue service
- 4) **Open and Accountable** - using resources efficiently to deliver a high performing, sustainable service that demonstrates improving public value

SCC - Special Educational Needs Survey: Parents, carers, children, young people and practitioners are being asked to complete a short confidential survey to help shape services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Given the number of concerns recently raised with me in relation to the service, it is important for all of those involved to express their views.

The survey will close on Friday 9 July. www.somerset.gov.uk/360survey

SCC - Somerset levels – Climate: A new web-based app, has been created as part of the Adapting the Levels project to help local people turn individual ideas into plans for collective action, focusing particularly on the challenges of flooding and drought.

Draft pathways, created in conjunction with SCC, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Parish and Town councils, businesses and communities, are available to explore online. Everyone is invited to comment www.adaptingthelevels.co.uk

SCC - Children & Young People: A ten-year programme has been set up to deliver a new way of working to address the needs of the most complex children and young people who are cared for by SCC. 10 new small homes will be set up, linked to foster carers and therapeutic education to provide a collaborative service and a more stable home environment, with the opportunity to live with a family when they are ready and to provide all-encompassing support to meet individual needs.

SCC - Young Somerset: A new social enterprise shop, called Bold & Brave, which aims to help vulnerable young people boost their employability and life skills is to open in Taunton.

This is the result of collaboration between Young Somerset and sen.se (Special Educational Needs.Somerset Expertise) and will be based at 14 Riverside Place.

It will offer a platform for young people to develop products, learn about business, and gain work experience, including accredited training. They will also be part of a work placement programme, receiving mentoring and job coaching.

SSDC HOUSING BRIEFING

A member briefing was held in relation to the Accelerated Housing Delivery Programme and Affordable Housing. Those wishing for further information please contact me.

In relation to homeless provision, an update was received concerning some popular myths about homeless people. It should be noted that SSDC has no duty to house those who make themselves intentionally homeless, even if there are children involved. In order to obtain a place on the housing list it is necessary to have a connection with the area. In South Somerset there are currently 9 people on the homeless register, and 9,269 people on the Homefinder register at present; largely made up of those in housing but wishing to find alternative accommodation.

Of these, 4678 are wanting 1 bed accommodation; 2926 – 2 beds; 32 – needing 6 beds.

It is expected that post-Covid, there will be a significant increase in activity from Sept., once furlough and Universal Credit uplift ceases, in addition to an embargo on evictions at present. Households at risk are expected to triple, which includes those in private rented accommodation and those with mortgages.

SDDC have improved web access, to accommodate the way in which many people prefer to engage with the system and find out information. Additional staff have been recruited to take into account the anticipated increase in case load, in conjunction with extra support for food banks and the CAB.

PHOSPHATES UPDATE

I have received the following in response to queries raised in relation to the current position.

‘The types of applications caught up by the phosphate issue include outline and full applications that had been resolved to approve at the area committees and Regulation Committee, but where the issue of the decision was held up pending completion of a Section 106 Agreement and reserved matters applications which were under consideration but not determined at the time of the Natural England letter last August. Currently SSDC have outline, full and reserved matters applications for approx. 4,000 dwellings which are impacted by the need to find phosphate mitigation solutions.’

ILMINSTER PARKING/TRAFFIC

Ashcombe lane

In response to concerns raised relating to parking issues in the vicinity of Ashcombe Lane and Ashcombe Lodge, Ilminster TC has been in discussion with both the management of Ashcombe Court and with Mr Palmer. I have been advised that ITC is inclined to support the introduction of measures that might assist the situation. There appears to be no one scenario that would suit residents. In order for any changes to take place, Somerset Highways require consensus from residents about what and how issues will be addressed.

Ashcombe Court Management have agreed to send a document to all their residents to ascertain what action is wanted. Once this information is received ITC will decide on their approach to Highways. Without the support of at least 75% of the residents in an area it is unlikely that any changes will be introduced.

HIGHWAYS – ROAD CLOSURES

There has been some correspondence with Highways recently relating to extended road closures and accompanying signage, and the conduct of contractors towards motorists. This has been raised with Highways, and questions asked in relation to ensuring that contractual conditions are complied with, and the process involved in handling breaches.

WASTE COLLECTION/RECYCLING

I have received a number of complaints this month in relation to the non-collection of garden waste, which took some time to resolve. The roll out of the 're-cycle more' scheme has also caused some confusion amongst residents in relation to revised waste collection days, resulting in bins being put out on the wrong day. Some residents have also not yet received their 'blue bags'.

The delays to scheduled pick-up services, have been largely due to a national HGV driver shortage and other pressures, including continued heavy loads and traffic congestion hotspots. The situation has been made worse by Covid (resulting in an HGV driving test backlog) and drivers moving back to EU countries as a result of Brexit. Rubbish and paid-for garden waste collections have been prioritised to clear the backlog of recycling, including the temporary introduction of Saturday collections.

Somerset's recycling sites also take all kerbside materials and garden waste for recycling, except food waste, which can be double-bagged and put in the Energy from Waste (EFW) skip, as can black bag rubbish; bags may be opened to check for recyclables.

Locally there is also a more general shortage of agency staff, plus heavy holiday traffic and congestion and continued heavier than normal loads.

Concern has also been raised about the presence of a large number of waste bins at Wharf Lane/Silver Street which is restricting pedestrian access to the footpath.

Any problems can be reported to www.somersetwaste.gov.uk and also for the following:

- Request a new or replacement recycling container
- Report a missed collection
- Make a comment or complaint
- Request a garden waste bin or sacks
- Request a clinical, bulky or assisted collection
- Request removal of a rubbish or garden waste bin
- Request a recycling centre permit

ENVIRONMENT

Green Ilminster have been active recently, focusing on the natural environment in the town. There has been a good level of public engagement. One issue which emerged has been the use of herbicides by local authorities.

As a result, the council has been asked to consider:

- Use of herbicides amid concerns surrounding Roundup and similar products and their impact upon human health and biodiversity, where some local authorities are changing their "weed" management arrangements.
- The need to remove all "wild" living grasses and flowers from public areas, as currently, spraying is not selective, killing ferns on walls as well as small wildflowers.
- Staff training relating to biodiversity and climate emergencies, and helped to think "green".

FLOODING

In response to the recent flash flooding, which has caused significant devastation to a number of properties and businesses, particularly in the Chard area, action teams from SCC, SSDC and the police, were rapidly put into place to provide support to residents and businesses, with a help centre established at the Guildhall in Chard. Up to date information be found at <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/news/2021/6/south-somerset-district-council-establishes-help-and-information-centre-in-chard-following-floods/>

If you are aware of anyone who has been similarly affected by heavy rainfall, particularly the vulnerable, and who may need help, please SSDC know or urge them to contact us via the website or phone 01935 462462.

Highways, supported by SSDC, have cleared mud and debris from affected roads, but although all main routes are now clear significant damage has been caused to some local roads making them impassable. Crews are continuing to assess the widespread storm damage and plan repairs, but the situation is changeable and this is likely to increase. Drivers are urged to travel with caution on minor roads and to report defects or possible road closure sites to countyroads-south@somerset.gov.uk. If the problem is urgent or poses a danger to the public call the police on 101.

SSDC COMMUNICATION & IT

This month, the planned upgrade of the IT function at SSDC resulted in a number of problems experienced, lasting several days, by elected members and those wanting to access online sites. This has now been largely resolved, but I continue to receive complaints from local residents in terms of ease of access to several areas of operation, including planning and enforcement reporting.

Both elected members and members of the general public continue to contact me to raise concerns over the ongoing difficulty in being able to make contact with officers.

BUSES

The Somerset Bus Partnership continues to be active and have written to SCC, welcoming its decision to follow the Government's National Bus Strategy, and publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by the end of October 2021. The group has contacted local users and potential users. There is an expectation that this could be the start of a change in the way that local public transport could provide a shift away from car usage. It is intended that there be a collaborative process to develop plans, with opportunities for engagement and consultation with a range of interested parties and stakeholders. Initial plans need to be submitted within a tight timescale so at present the engagement process will need to reflect the time constraints. The Government has called for innovative ideas, particularly in rural areas, and the group is in touch with many local parish and town Councils to gather ideas to put forward. Contact tony.reese@mail.com

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND A358 DUALLING

The Community Forum Meeting held this month, attended by 8 parish councils, was Chaired by a newly appointed independent Chair, Sue Manns. An update on plans was received, and attendees were given the opportunity to put forward their own proposed amendments; this was largely done by agreement between those communities most affected along the route. Overall, it is felt that there are still a number of key concerns relating to specific routes, access points, diversions and the impact of traffic volume and flow in relation to local access and through routes, particularly at Southfields roundabout.

3. Update since the last forum

- We reviewed all the feedback that we received across the week of forums in May.
- Since the last forum, we have been working to consider potential design changes and options to address the concerns raised previously. This process includes assessing the feasibility of some of the things that you have suggested, and speaking to landowners who may potentially be impacted by any of these design changes.
- We have also held a series of 1-2-1 and small group meetings with stakeholders across the route to discuss their concerns further and to get feedback on potential design changes.
- We will be showing these design changes to you today, and seeking your feedback. Some of you who attended these 1-2-1 meetings may have seen some of the things we are presenting today previously.
- A group of 8 parish councils have since presented us (14 June) with their formal position on the scheme between Mattock's Tree Green to Southfields. We are currently undertaking a detailed review of these proposals and will formally respond once this review is complete. These proposals include a suggestion for a 'left-in left-out' priority junctions.

Ongoing commitment to engagement

Date	Milestone	Purpose
TBC	WCHR forum 2	Latest update on WCHR design and a further chance to provide feedback.
June and July	Community engagement, consideration of feedback and further design updates	Meetings with stakeholders to discuss further potential design changes.
8 July	Formal response to joint parish councils proposals	We will formally respond to the proposals that we have received from a group of joint parishes.
TBC	Community forum 4	An update ahead of statutory consultation.
Autumn	Statutory consultation	Anticipated beginning of public consultation. Formal opportunity for you to have your say



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BROADBAND

There remains some dissatisfaction in relation to progress with broadband, particularly in rural villages. For example, Gigaclear did instal fibre cables and pots in Dowlish Wake, but they remain unconnected. Enquiries to Connecting Devon and Somerset remain unanswered, and it remains unclear who is now responsible for ownership and taking the initiative forward.

KICKSTART SCHEME

SSDC is offering up to 30 employment opportunities, on six-month contracts, to young people facing unemployment through the Government's Kickstart Scheme, which is available to help young people aged 16-24, currently in receipt of Universal Credit, to get jobs and gain experience. The scheme supports HM Government's [Plan for Jobs campaign](#). SSDC is planning to employ 30 young people on six-month contracts through the scheme.

To support long term employability, SSDC will run a learning and development programme in support of workplace opportunities and mentoring.

The scheme provides a stepping-stone to permanent jobs and potential future employment opportunities.

To find out more visit www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme.

Those interested in becoming a Kickstart apprentice can visit their local Job Centre Plus office, go to www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus or kickstart@southsomerset.gov.uk.

CREWKERNE/ILMINSTER SCHOOLS

At the meeting held this month with officers and stakeholders, the timeline for action was agreed. Those requiring more information please contact me for details.

HR

- Joint Working Group (JWG) being formed to facilitate the Head Teacher appointment process for the Ilminster Primary School. Independent Chair being appointed jointly by LA & Diocese to oversee process
- Meetings held with key parties within the Ilminster schools to share and agree timeline and process – final details of selection process to be agreed by JWG
- Looking to initiate formal process 15th June 2021
- Outcome of process will be known and communicated to key parties before end of Summer term – post to commence 1st January 2022
- Staff video published for all staff across CISP to reduce anxieties
- Staff Q&A session for Maiden Beech Academy 16th June – unions invited.

VILLAGE AGENT

The new village agent is Ellie Brunt, who can be contacted leanorb@somersetccc.org.uk or on 07985 680 228. She is able to assist with a range of services on behalf of vulnerable local residents who may require support. Third parties may also make referrals by accessing the form below for completion.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=6rDslanzbkKlaMTvMrikz7A6USUAjrhPi_ALDxfXEIRURDg0U11MVjhMSkFaNVBPVEo1RkhCSUM1Vi4u

FIVEWAYS SCHOOL

I have been appointed to the role of Equality & Diversity Lead, in addition to being the joint Chair of the Curriculum sub-committee.

CHARD MUSEUM

As Covid restrictions begin to lift, Chard Museum opened to the public this week, for pre-booked tours at the moment. As a trustee of the museum, I have also been appointed to be the Safeguarding Lead.

To support the launch of Culturally Chard, the museum is hosting a presentation, at The Choughs, on July 10th, from 19:30 to 21:00 by Andrew Powell-Thomas on the Taunton Stop Line. To find out more and book tickets go to <https://www.chardmuseum.co.uk/events-2>

Any Museum member who buys a ticket will receive a voucher for a drink to enjoy during the presentation.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Many groups and organisations have begun to revert back to face-to-face meetings, some of which I have been able to attend this month. I am concerned that in some instances the appropriate social distancing and precautionary measures have not been sufficiently vigilant; specifically, track and trace, sanitisation of people and/or surfaces, and the wearing of masks. For the time being I will, where possible, assess individual situations prior to agreeing further face-to-face meeting attendance.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/6	SSDC Scrutiny
1/6	Broadway PC
3/6	SSDC DX
4/6	SSDC CEO
6/6	Ashill communion
6/6	Isle Valley payers
7/6	Isle Valley prayers
7/6	Horton resident health meeting
7/6	SCC schools stakeholder meeting
7/6	DSFRA
8/6	Lit. fest poetry competition
9/6	Chard museum
9/6	SW Assoc. for leaders in Special Schools Conf.
9/6	Horton quiz
10/6	Neroche School Governor visit
11/6	Fiveways curriculum committee
12/6	Wells charity meeting
13/6	Broadway communion
14/6	Isle Valley prayers
14/6	Poetry competition – Wadham entries
14/6	Resident planning meeting
15/6	Chard museum
15/6	DSFRA forum
15/6	ILF trustee meeting
16/6	Isle Valley prayers
16/6	Chard museum
16/6	DSFRA forum
16/6	MINDline meeting
16/6	SSE – Governor school exclusion training
17/6	SSDC Members planning workshop
17/6	Horton resident concerns
17/6	Chard museum
17/6	Boundary Commission review
18/6	SSDC Homelessness update
18/6	DSFRA forum
19/6	Samaritans SW regional conference
20/6	Horton church partnership family service
21/6	Neroche school governor meeting
22/6	Chard museum
22/6	Winsham Jubilee Hall AGM
22/6	Knowle St. Giles annual meeting
23/6	Chard museum
23/6	Highways England community forum
24/6	Mind in Somerset
24/6	Ilminster Lit Fest.
24/6	Safeguarding training
25/6	Uffculme Academy Trust meeting + Regional Schools Commissioner
26/6	Winsham open gardens
26/6	Whitelackington VH
26/6	Ilminster Experience
27/6	United benefice service
27/6	Isle Valley evening service
28/6	Chard museum

28/6	School peer-on-peer abuse training
29/6	DSFRA AGM
29/6	Donyatt VH AGM
30/6	SW Heritage training

APPENDIX 2 – Parish Council’s Response

HORTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Horton Parish Council comments in relation to planning application ref. 20/03277/FUL for the construction of 50 dwellings and formation of vehicular access on land north of Broadway Hill, Horton, Somerset TA19 9QU.

Introduction

Firstly, the Parish Council apologises for the delay in providing you with their comments on the application. This application was submitted during a period of national lockdown as a consequence of the coronavirus epidemic and due to a number of logistical and technical issues, this has resulted in the delay in the Parish Council meeting to discuss the application. Despite the difficulty of doing so, the Parish Council has used its best efforts to consult potentially affected residents and has received representations from some of them. The Council understands that those residents are opposed to the application.

In April 2021, Horton Parish Council contacted the agent with a number of questions relating to the proposal and outlined their initial concerns regarding the proposed development. Subsequently, the agent provided their written response to these questions. Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for a full copy of the questions and answers.

The Parish Council has now resumed face-to-face meetings and the subject application given full consideration at Horton Parish Council’s Annual Meeting on the 17th of May 2021. Members of the public were present during this meeting. The questions raised with the agent prior to the meeting (Please refer to Appendix 1) formed the main discussion points during the meeting.

Part One of this response deals with the planning policy and housing need aspects of the application. **Part Two** concerned the site-specific aspects. This approach is duplicated in this statement.

Summary

The Parish Council **unanimously objects** to the proposed application and the following specific and wider issues may be summarised as follows:

1. The agent engaged with the Parish Council and residents of residents in the form of a ‘letter drop’ as a result of the current pandemic. A total of 151 comments were received by the Parish Council from residents; 10 in general support, 125 objected and 14 were undecided on the proposal presented at the community engagement stage. A copy of all replies received were forwarded to the applicants agent by the Parish Council. The details and plans provided at the public engagement stage are identical to that of the subject application currently submitted for consideration and has not been amended to take into and reflect the local communities and Parish Council comments, and therefore, it is considered the current application is not informed by local opinion;
2. The site is not an allocated site in the adopted Local Plan nor is it identified in the Local Plan Review as a site to be allocated.
3. Nearby housing is linear in alignment. The construction of a mini-housing estate at this point would be out of keeping with the layout of neighbouring properties;
4. The development would be an anomalous and incongruous intrusion into the open countryside;
5. There would be an unacceptable impact on the village hall in terms of potential noise complaints from the occupiers of the proposed development should late night events continue at the Village hall;
6. There would be an increase in road safety risks by the creation of an access to the development at this point in Pound Road;

7. Horton is not a sustainable location for further housing development in accordance with national and local planning policies;
8. The application is not compliant with the NPPF;
9. The application is not compliant with the adopted Local Plan;
10. The Local Plan Preferred Options Document 2016-36 is opposed by the Parish Council and is not a material consideration of significant weight when a substantive Local Plan is in place and the Preferred Options document is at an early stage in developing future policy.
11. Houses constructed and approved in recent years have led to the overdevelopment of Horton. This application would further exacerbate the cumulative impact of that excessive development;
12. There is no market housing need on this scale in Horton, which anyway has consents in place for 49 houses since 2015;
13. There would be a negligible positive impact on the local economy from the development;
14. Contrary to national and local planning policies, there is no community benefit offered by the application.
15. A number of statutory consultees have objected to the proposal, the Parish Council concurs with these objections.
16. If the application is granted consent there are good grounds for a Judicial Review on the basis of non-compliance with adopted Local Plan policies.

PART ONE: PLANNING POLICY AND HOUSING NEED

Community engagement

The agent engaged with the Parish Council and residents of residents in the form of a 'letter drop' instead of a face-to-face public consultation event as a result of the current pandemic. A total of 151 comments were received by the Parish Council from residents; 10 in general support, 125 objected and 14 were undecided on the proposal presented at the community engagement stage. The details and plans provided at the public engagement stage are identical to that of the subject application currently submitted for consideration and has not been amended to take into and reflect the local communities and Parish Council comments, and therefore, it is considered the current application is not informed by local opinion.

Sustainability as an underlying driver of planning policy

The concept of sustainability in planning policy in England emerged in order to focus new residential development in locations well served by services, facilities and public transport. That is a range of services, facilities and transport that is adequate to meet most of the needs of the residents of the new housing. It appears that the applicant's agent have lost sight of this overall objective of planning policy, by suggesting that small villages with very few facilities and virtually no public transport are sustainable locations for significant levels of new residential development. This wholly ignores the fact that the residents of such villages can only access most services and facilities by car.

Placing development in unsustainable locations, where it will lead to an increase in vehicle journeys is particularly inappropriate given the current focus on reducing CO2 emissions. The Parish Council notes that both central and local government have recognised there is a climate emergency. One of the most effective things they can do to limit CO2 emissions is to ensure new housing is located in truly sustainable locations, where residents can access a wide range of services and facilities without using their cars.

Horton as a sustainable location for housing development

Despite what the application says, Horton has no effective public transport: bus passengers can only get a service to Taunton on a Tuesday and Thursday, where they have to change buses in Ilminster. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday the bus only goes to Ilminster, arriving too late for a connection to Taunton. The bus from Horton is too late in the morning for work or school, and the return bus too early. There are school and a college buses, but these are only available to pupils and students. The college bus leaves very early and journey times are long, and it is thus unsuited to many student's needs.

There are well advanced plans to dual the A358 between Ilminster and Taunton. Many car journeys to and from Horton will be longer once this has been done as the junction between eastern end of Church Road, Broadway whereby you can join the A358 will be blocked. Consequently, vehicles will have to drive further north, through lanes, or south through narrow village roads, to access the A358, the A303, and destinations to the east and north.

The nearest primary school known as 'Neroche Primary School' is located in Broadway and children from the proposed development would attend this school, should this go ahead. The Head Teacher has confirmed that the School is at full capacity and currently children from the both Horton and Broadway cannot be accommodated are having to be driven to schools further afield.

Whilst there is a school and doctors surgery in the adjoining village (Broadway), Horton does have a village hall, shop/Post Office, public house and two churches, these facilities only serve a very small part of the residents' needs. Car journeys are required for virtually all employment, much education, most shopping, social and cultural activities, and all social services and non-GP health services. This demonstrates the fallacy of the idea (and the assertions and presumption in the application) that additional housing in rural settlements sustains local services. The adopted Local Plan recognises this in paragraph 5.42 *'In simple terms it is not realistic to expect a small hamlet with few services to be made a more sustainable location through new development.'*

In practice the approval of additional housing in the village has caused increased car usage and CO2 emissions as the additional residents travel to Ilminster, Chard, Taunton and further afield for work, shopping, secondary healthcare and entertainment. This is contrary to National and Local planning policies.

Given the above the Parish Council considers that Horton and Broadway are not sustainable locations for new house developments and that granting consent would breach both national and local planning policies.

Compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

As mentioned above, national policy aims to place new housing in sustainable locations. Thus, the NPPF states at paragraph 8b) that new homes should be in locations *'with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.'*

Paragraph 8c) sets out the environmental element of sustainable development:

'an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'

As the proposed development is not in a location with accessible services and facilities, it will not contribute to a low carbon economy, or mitigate climate change. Nor will it protect our natural environment or improve biodiversity.

On transport the NPPF states at paragraph 103:

'The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.'

The proposed development fails to comply with this fundamental policy.

Similarly at paragraph 148, the NPPF addresses climate change by saying:

'The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions...'

It can be seen from the above that the proposed development is not sustainable as defined by the NPPF and does not comply with the NPPF.

In concluding this consideration of the NPPF, the Parish Council maintains that the adverse impacts, largely due to the unsustainable location of the proposed development, outweigh any benefits there might be. In this context the Parish Council does not consider the proposed development provides any benefits to the community of Horton, nor have any been properly evidenced by the applicants.

Compliance with Local Plan

The planning policy appraisal of this application could be limited to: "It fails to accord with the most relevant national and local plan policies and should be refused on this basis. There are no other material considerations which could remotely justify any development on the subject site.

The first section of the "Vision for 2028" in the adopted Local Plan reads:

'South Somerset will be a thriving, attractive and affordable place to live and work in. It will be a far more sustainable place with more self-sufficient towns with much better public transport links within and between them, therefore more and better community facilities will be available in each of them. The move to a low carbon economy and low carbon living will have been secured...'

The vision makes it clear that virtually all new housing development will be focussed on Yeovil and other large settlements. As set out above, this approach accords with the NPPF.

Policy SD1 of the Local Plan reflects the approach to sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. Policy SS1 reflects the NPPF's approach by putting new development in sustainable locations – the larger settlements where there are a good range of services, facilities and public transport.

Policy SS2 is the most relevant to the current application as it deals with development in Rural Settlements, which is what Horton is classified as. It states:

'Development in Rural Settlements (not Market Towns or Rural Centres) will be strictly controlled and limited to that which:

- *Provides employment opportunities appropriate to the scale of the settlement; and/or*
- *Creates or enhances community facilities and services to serve the settlement; and/or*
- *Meets identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing.'*

The current proposal fails to accord with any element of this policy: it does not provide employment, enhance community facilities or meet an identified housing need (see below for a full explanation of how the application fails in these respects).

Elements of the supporting text for policy SS2 are relevant at paragraph 5.23:

'Rural Settlements are considered as locations where there will be a presumption against development unless key sustainability criteria can be met. This is explained in Policy SS2. These settlements will no longer have identified development areas and will be considered to be within the open countryside for planning purposes.'

As is demonstrated in this submission, the key sustainability criteria are not met, as per paragraph 5.31:

'Applications for new development in Rural Settlements will need to include necessary supporting evidence to justify that the criteria of Policy SS2 have been met. Such proposals should be based upon meeting the needs of the Rural Settlement in question, and should undergo early engagement and preferably demonstrate support from the community, consistent with the Government's 'localism' agenda.'

This application fails to *'include necessary supporting evidence to justify that the criteria of Policy SS2 have been met.'* Nor has the applicant shown that this proposed development meets the needs of Horton, or has support from the local community. The feedback the Parish Council has received from members of the community both at the public consultation and planning submission stage has all opposed the development. These comments are also relevant to paragraph 5.32 below.

'Given that Policy SS2 is starting from the premise of no development unless certain conditions are met, the evidence for development being of a strong sustainable nature is particularly important to provide. Furthermore the local community is best placed to determine local need and what will make their settlement more sustainable and there will be an expectation that development proposals have either come from the local community, or been tested and checked through local consultation and engagement.'

Policy SS5 sets out the numbers of dwellings to be provided in Rural Settlements. Those targets have already been met and substantially exceeded. Horton has already had a much greater proportion of the housing allocation for Rural Settlements than is appropriate for a settlement its small size and lack of facilities.

Paragraph 11.4 of the transport section of the Local Plan states:

'A reasonable aim for the modal shift policy in Chard and Yeovil would therefore be to reduce the number of cars being used for short journeys to local shops and facilities, the town centre and travelling to work and maintain car use at current levels in our Market Towns, Rural Centres and Rural Settlements. For the Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extensions the aim is to ensure that at least 30% of travel is by sustainable means.'

The target for Rural Settlements is to maintain car use at current levels. The proposed development will undermine this objective.

The section of the Local Plan on climate change says:

'13.5 The local plan Vision and Strategic Objectives support a low carbon economy, and promote greater self-containment by focussing most new development at the main settlements in the district, with a balance of employment and housing provision, ensuring communities have good access to shops and community services and facilities. This should ensure the need to travel is minimised, especially by car, and therefore limit the growth of CO2 emissions from travel.'

Housing development in this location will not comply with these requirements.

As demonstrated above, paragraph 11 of the NPPF does not seek to undermine policies which promote the overall objective of sustainable development, as policies referred to above do. Accordingly, these policies are to be given very considerable weight when considering this appeal.

Furthermore, South Somerset District Council has recently established that it has around a six year supply of housing land, rather than less than five years. This means that all Local Plan policies regarding housing and where it should be located now have their full weight, and should be strictly applied. All arguments, past or present, put by the applicant that are based on the lack of a five-year supply of housing land are now irrelevant and carry no weight, as confirmed in the Planning Policy comments dated 16th June 2021:

'...As you are aware SSDC published the Five-year Housing Land Supply 2020-2025 in November 2020 and consequently is able to demonstrate a housing land supply equivalent to 6 years. The January 2021 addendum shows that when the standard methodology for the period 2021-2031 is applied that increases to 6.15 years. Whilst the adopted Local Plan is now more than five years old it is considered that the policies most important to making a decision on this proposal are consistent with the NPPF, 2019 and can therefore be given full weight...'

Given the failure to comply with the NPPF and the Local Plan the Parish Council considers the appeal should be refused without further delay.

Relevance of the Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document: 2016-2036

The consultation document includes the creation of a new layer in the planning hierarchy: some former Rural Settlements now to be called 'Villages'. Inappropriately it combines the two separate settlements and parishes of Broadway and Horton to form a Village. It sets a target for new housing in the Villages which is an average of 60 new houses per Village over the new Plan period. Broadway Parish Council made representations to the Planning Authority opposing both the strategic shift of housing development away from Yeovil and the specific suggestions as to Broadway and Horton. The combining of Broadway and Horton does not make sense, and is unjustified.

Furthermore, the Preferred Options document has little relevance or weight as a material consideration.

Housing growth in Horton and its cumulative impact

The application ignores the growth of new housing allowed in Horton since 2015. In recent years there has been an explosion of new housing in Horton and Broadway and is completely out of scale with the size of the villages.

The following housing schemes have been completed or approved in Horton since 2015:

8 houses on Thornleigh Road, 1 house at Fernhill, Pottery Road, 1 house at Stoneleigh, Pound Road, 5 houses at Riverside, Goose Lane, 2 houses at Thatchcroft, Trotts Lane, 1 house at Bullen, Trotts Lane, 2 houses at Sunnyside, Pottery Road, 1 house at Bullen Bungalow, 2 houses at the rear of Stoneleigh, Pound Road, 1 house at Kimberley Forest Mill Lane, 1 house on land north of Elm Tree, Shave Lane, 1 house at Gees Cottage, Shave Lane and 2 houses on land north of Shave Lane. Furthermore, 9 houses are proposed at Nyworthy Farm, 3 houses on Channells Lane and 9 houses at Old Pottery. These 3 applications for 21 houses are currently still under consideration. This makes a total of 49 houses. The approval of a further 50 houses on the proposed site would mean 99 houses built or approved in the last 6 years.

The following housing schemes have been completed or approved in Broadway since 2016:

16 houses at St. James' Close, 9 houses at Vardens Farm, 5 houses on three smaller sites, 25 houses at Bell Field, 2 houses on Hare Lane, 1 house at The Lane and 35 houses at Pound Farm. This makes a total of 92 houses.

The latest Planning Policy comments dated 16th June 2021 confirms that the proposed development, along with the previously approved house developments would see at 12% increase in population in Horton:

'...The 2011 Census data for the Built up Area of Horton also includes Broadway, however as a rough guide Figure 1 below shows mapping data indicating that there are currently 551 address points in and around Horton itself, which at 2.3 people per household equates to 1,267 people (rounded). An additional 663 households would potentially increase the population by a further 152 people (rounded) giving a percentage population increase of 12% (rounded)...'

Furthermore, the Planning Policy conclude with their latest comments that:

'As is demonstrated above Horton is a Rural Settlement that benefits from a range of community facilities. The number of homes built during the plan period so far equates to about 2 per year⁵. If existing commitments are to be built out and a further 50 dwellings were to be approved, this would potentially equate to just over 4 dwellings per year over the plan period⁶. However, the proposal is not currently supported by any evidence to show how it will meet any local housing need, including affordable housing.'

This cumulative development is out of scale with the function and role of Horton and therefore unsustainable and contrary to Policies SS1, SS2 and SS5 of the adopted Local Plan and the Parish Council fully concur with the last sentence of the above paragraph.

Housing Need: Market Housing

The Parish Council is clear that there is no local housing need in Horton which the proposed development would address.

The Local Plan states paragraph:

'Housing proposals will need to fully explain how they contribute to meeting local need. This could be via delivering affordable housing, low cost market housing, or a different form or type of housing which is in limited supply for locals (e.g. small bungalows for elderly local households to move to and remain in the village, or two bedroom accommodation for young households).'

The Planning Policy team concur that a need for additional housing has not been provided and is therefore not in compliance of national and local planning policies.

PART TWO: SITE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

Ecology

The proposed development does not comply with Local Plan *Policy EQ4: Biodiversity* which states that development should protect the biodiversity value of the land, minimise fragmentation of habitats and promote coherent ecological networks. In addition, the design and layout has not been amended to take account of the biodiversity and findings of ecological surveys. The impacts on biodiversity arising from the development have not been sufficiently taken into account and the proposals do not conserve or enhance biodiversity.

The proposal fails to accord with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as set out in paragraphs 170, 174 and 177 (copied at the end of this section).

The Ecological Impact Assessment by Clarkson & Woods recorded the presence of an exceptional population level (i.e. a high number) of dormice, a European Protected Species (EPS), at a district level of importance.

The dormouse population extends into the adjacent village hall grounds and the (Galion) site population of dormice should not be considered in isolation. The Ecological Impact Assessment and subsequent ecology response to questions put to Galion by the parish council, states that it is *'apparent that the site supports part of a viable local metapopulation'*. We would question whether the level of importance of the site and its contribution to supporting the local metapopulation has been determined.

The site may qualify for non-statutory protections under local planning policy and potentially as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The ecology response to questions put to Galion suggested the *'only basis for the site to be selected as an LWS would be to provide a buffer to other sites of nature conservation importance.'* However, the site should not be considered in isolation but with the adjacent village hall site, which together support this 'exceptional' metapopulation. Wildlife does not observe land ownership boundaries

The derogation test of 'no satisfactory alternative' to this site has not yet been satisfied. Should the LPA determine that 'construction period' impacts for dormice are mitigable, and feel that once further information has been submitted, and that the 'derogation tests' can be met, the LPA should also give further consideration to operational impacts, as identified in the ecological report submitted and detailed below.

'The proposed mitigation for the dormice population is sub optimal due to the lack of suitable replacement hedgerow habitat,' as stated in the ecology response to questions. The buffer space between private gardens and retained hedgerow affords inadequate mitigation to ensure the likely long-term survival of this dormouse population. It is likely to result in long term negative effects on the dormice population: the operational impact would include the permanent fragmentation of habitat, likely dormouse fatality due to vehicles at the new break in the hedgerow and predation by domestic cats.

The ecology response to a question put to Galion on mortality impacts on dormice by domestic cats suggests that hedgerow management to *'promote bushy resilient hedgerow features will reduce this and consideration of using some offsite land to provide additional habitat'*. This is not a clear commitment and would need legal agreement to be part of any EPS licence mitigation. There is no proven evidence to suggest that bushy hedgerows are an effective way of reducing dormice fatality from cats. Covenants restricting cat ownership do not work in practice. In addition, the inclusion of a solid fence on the inside of the hedgerows to take them out of private gardens would not enable effective management practice to achieve this.

Natural England does not grant 'operational licences', such that this development on this site with this population of dormice, and the area and extent of mitigation proposed will likely result in long term negative effects on population level, for which planning consent should not be given.

The development would also have a negative effect on the eight species of bat recorded, removing grassland which will in turn reduce the availability of night flying invertebrates. The impact of night time lighting is likely to deter bats from continuing to use the boundary habitats, in particular light spill from homes and security lights. The mitigation measures are inadequate with a small area of grassland created in the north west corner and will not fully mitigate for the loss of suitable foraging habitats.

The buffer space between private gardens and retained hedgerows on the boundary is as little as 750mm in places, which is insufficient to provide sufficient maintenance access or to protect the hedgerow as a wildlife corridor and has been described as such in the Ecological Impact Assessment. The inclusion of a close board fence on concrete posts to the inside of the hedgerows, to take them out of gardens and protect them from potential removal by residents, is a clumsy response to overcome the poorly considered impact on biodiversity and wildlife. This approach is likely to cause long term deterioration of the habitat, reducing the suitability and capacity for the hedgerows to support a range of wildlife, particularly dormice.

The Ecological Impact Assessment estimated that 600m² of scrub or 300m of 2m wide species rich hedgerow would need to be provided as mitigation in order to gain a licence for hedgerow removal. The proposal falls far short of this. The development would result in an unacceptable loss of this Section 41 'Priority Habitat' and therefore fails to comply with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act). The hedgerows proposed are largely non-native ornamental species, planted in private spaces across the development. These ornamental species would be unsuitable as habitat mitigation and do not connect to the existing hedgerow network. The Ecological Assessment estimates only 12m of native hedgerow that is suitable as dormice habitat has been included in the proposal with 30m being removed.

As the Ecological Impact Assessment concludes, *'the proposed development will result in adverse impacts upon a number of ecological features ranging from International to Site importance.'* The presence of protected species is a material consideration and the proposals would result in adverse harm to a number of protected species and habitats. The proposal fails to accord with NPPF policy and Local Plan Policy EQ4: Biodiversity and should be refused on this basis.

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 170 states: 'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressure.

Paragraph 174 states: 'To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them;
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 175 states: 'When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

Paragraph 177 states: 'The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.'

Landscape

The proposed development does not comply with *Local Plan Policy EQ2: General Development*.

It does not conserve and enhance the landscape character of the area and does not reinforce local distinctiveness or respect local context. It will not protect the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and will result in an adverse effect on local landscape character and the local area character.

A development on this scale and in this location will harm the local landscape. Located in open countryside, it is on the most prominent ground within the village. The site is exposed to a wide area, as demonstrated by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (LVIA, Fig 8), including the edge of the Blackdown Hills AONB and numerous roads and rights of way. There are numerous viewpoints from where the development will not be seen with existing built form beyond it. It will be a prominent development on the skyline from many lower elevations, such as its prominence in the wider landscape.

We disagree that the site is within a '*peri urban*' setting as described in the LVIA; it is open countryside on the edge of a village and the development represents an intrusion into open countryside. The LVIA also states that '*the nature of the effect will be mostly minor as the new development is adjacent to the existing settlement edge*'. This development is on the most elevated ground within the village, with a westerly aspect on the immediate edge of the foothills of the Blackdowns AONB which will look down on the site. The site slopes fairly steeply with a 9.5m fall towards the west / north west and will be visually exposed. This will be a prominent development which and its effect on the visual amenity will, we believe be major.

The character of Horton is one of small scale and infill developments that have evolved over time, and demonstrate a variety of architecture, materials, size of plot and type and size of dwelling. In contrast, this development introduces a uniformity in size, materials, style and layout that is out of character with the fabric of the village and out of scale with the size of the village and the setting. The proposal is not responsive to the setting, does not respect the sense of place or local distinctiveness and there will be no visual continuity between the existing and new. The development will result in an intrusive, uniform suburban development in open countryside, stuck on the most exposed edge of the village.

The development will be seriously detrimental to neighbour amenity. In several cases the ridge heights of proposed houses are up to 6m higher than neighbouring single storey dwellings on Pound Road and Forest Mill Lane. This will create an overbearing presence, a loss of privacy and overlooking issues in some instances.

The layout of the development has no effective informal open space and no play space. This is entirely unacceptable in a housing estate of the scale proposed. The only 'open space' provided is a small area in the north west corner, which is for below ground attenuation next to a pumping station. This will not provide a usable, connected space for public use. There is little permeability through the development, with one narrow, confined path leading from Pound Road, but with police concerns expressed over safety, this we have been advised will be removed from the scheme.

The approach into the village from the west will be adversely impacted, with the development forming a prominent feature on the skyline. No tree planting is proposed along Broadway Hill or the south western boundary to soften the impact and building forms, due to private gardens running right up to the boundary hedgerows.

We totally disagree with the applicant's claim at LVIA (para 4.31) that the landscaping on the proposed development will '*improve the current condition and status of the landscape*'. The proposed removal of native hedgerow and the planting of ornamental hedgerows throughout the development is not an improvement in terms of the rural setting or biodiversity. The buffer between the dwellings and the hedgerows is insufficient to protect the long term health of these landscape features and important habitat for wildlife and are therefore likely to deteriorate over time, particularly with a solid wooden fence to the inside face.

The parish council believe the impact on landscape and visual amenity does not comply with *Local Plan Policy EQ2: General Development* and is a material consideration that should be a part of the reason for refusing consent.

Horton Village Hall

One of the many concerns from local residents, and the Horton Village Hall Committee, is the proximity of the proposed Gallion development to Horton Village Hall. The hall was deliberately built on the edge of the village to ensure its programme of events and the amount of traffic did not cause undue disruption to the local community. The hall regularly has a busy programme of events including day and evening classes, weddings, parties, conferences and large village community events. Any houses built close to the village hall would have residents who frequently were disturbed by the noise, volume of traffic etc from the busy events programme.

In addition, the actual building of the proposed development would be extremely disruptive over many months to the range of activities and events that are held in the hall. The volume of traffic for the proposed 50 houses would also have a significant impact on access to the village hall. There was a very comprehensive survey about the proposed development carried out by the Parish Council. Many respondents highlighted that the proposed development is clearly going to be detrimental to their very successful village hall.

Access and Sustainability

Regarding access to the site, there continues to be concern about the access to and from the site, and the likely increase in traffic through the village as a result of this large development. Residents from the development wishing to access the village by foot currently have two options according to the plans;

The first is to exit the site by the main entrance onto Broadway Hill. There is no continuous footpath into the village from this point. This is mentioned in the application, with mitigation being that there is a crossing point onto the opposite side of the road where there is a pavement. If this alternative route is taken, the foot passenger will find themselves on the wrong side of the road to access any of the facilities of the village i.e. Post Office/store, Public House, school, Doctors surgery and churches. Their only option for accessing the village will be to cross the road at the convergence of five roads at the "Five Dials" junction. One of these roads is the main route through Horton and another (Pound Road) is the access route to the back road route to Taunton and also to Stewley, where traffic can join the A358. The Five Dials junction is therefore extremely busy during peak commuter time, and crossing at this point would not be a desirable route to take, particularly for children.

The second option for accessing the village from the site is via the proposed footpath which leads onto Pound Road. Pound road as mentioned above is a very busy road, particularly at commuter times. Vehicles frequently exceed the 30mph limit. There are no pavements on either side of the road at any point along the majority of Pound Road. There are cars and other vehicles parked along the road, frequently on both sides of the road. This is a challenging road to walk or cycle along, and would not be a safe option for children.

The design of the footpath onto Pound road was criticised by Avon & Somerset Constabulary who stated that the plans are "not acceptable in their current format". Their "Designing out crime" officer raised concern about the design not being compliant with guidelines to create safe access for users. There has been no clear response from Galion regarding this, apart from a suggestion that they may remove the footpath from the plans altogether. If this is true, no other access has been identified so far, so we would assume all foot traffic would need to be via the main site entrance, with the associated problems already mentioned above.

There are concerns among residents that the size of the proposed development will cause a significant increase in traffic through the village. This will be particularly true at the commuter time and school start and finish times. The developers state that the school is within defined walking distance. However, for the reasons of road safety at peak times, most parents would not be happy to let their children walk to school, and will drive them instead. This will also be true for all children who will currently be unable to attend the village school due to it being already oversubscribed. These children will need to attend school outside of the villages, which again will cause more traffic.

Another factor which will cause an increase in traffic from the new development is the unavailability of a regular local bus service. The only existing bus service to the local town of Ilminster (and from there on to other towns) runs once daily. The return time is less than two hours later, meaning that travel onwards from Ilminster to other destinations and returning to Horton within the same day will be impractical. The car will be the default option for travel.

Foul Water Sewers: Outdated and under capacity of infrastructure.

A development of this size would require a connection to the main sewer for foul water disposal (Wessex Water). This sewer runs through Horton, down to The River Ding and then continues the run through-and-serve, Broadway.

There is a long-standing issue with this piped infrastructure which at present is under capacity for the existing village needs, let alone an additional large “new build” complex. The sewer already overflows and residents have to regularly clear the roads of “sewage matter!” when this happens. The overflow also pollutes the River Ding. Wessex Water is aware that the sewer is currently inadequate.

The Local Plan states:

‘POLICY EQ7: POLLUTION CONTROL - Development that, on its own or cumulatively, would result in air, light, noise, water quality or other environmental pollution or harm to amenity, health or safety will only be permitted if the potential adverse effects would be mitigated to an acceptable level by other environmental controls, or by measures included in the proposals. This may be achieved by the imposition of planning conditions or through a planning obligation.’

Horton Parish Council considers that the inadequacy of the foul sewer is a material consideration and a basis for refusing the application. Granting permission would not accord with Policy EQ7.

Conclusion

The Parish Council believes that there is no benefit to the village from this development. It considers for the many reasons it would be damaging to village, the landscape and the environment. The site proposed is unsuitable by virtue of its location in the open countryside and its remoteness from an adequate range of facilities, including retail, employment, services, education, social and health care. Its construction would encourage greater vehicle use and thus increased CO2 emissions. It would increase road safety risks on Broadway Hill Road. It would have a damaging impact on the landscape. Horton is not a sustainable location for such a development. The lack of a 5-year housing land supply is not particularly relevant to this application. Moreover, the village does not need further housing on this scale. The application is compatible with neither the National Planning Policy Framework nor the District Council’s Local Plan therefore, Horton Parish Council respectfully suggests that the application should be **refused without further delay**.