

Parish Council of Coleford

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday the 24th October 2019

Present

Cllr Philip Ham (Chairman presiding)
Cllr Allen, Barrett, Banks, Conn, Drescher, Evans, Harding, Pearce, Talbot, Townsend and Turner.

In attendance:

Vickie Watts the Clerk taking the minutes
There was 35 members of the public present.

1 Apologies for Absence (acceptance of any reasons offered)

Cllr Hanney sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

2 Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

There were none.

3 Chairman's address

The Chairman opened the meeting and said that it has been confirmed by the Mendip District Council planning department that the consultation deadline for responses had been extended to the 7th November.

He explained that the meeting would take the following order:

1. Cllr Ham to give the history
2. Cllr Townsend to give update on planning and Transport consultants reports
3. Cllr Ham to give update on the Ecology report
4. Public Forum
5. Councillors to discuss and vote
6. Timetable thereafter

3.1 History

In Mendip District Councils Local Plan Part I Coleford was given the allocation of 70 houses taking it up to 2029. This target has already been met, although the Adopted Plan does regard this as a minimum

The Local Plan Part II looked at further sites which would be suitable for housing in the Parish and the site adjacent to the old recycling center was earmarked as a potential site for a further 22 houses.

During July 2019 Gladman's indicated their intention to submit an application for 63 houses.

25th July 2019 Action group formed and Public meeting held

On the 30th July 2019 District Councillors Ham and Townsend attended the Inspectors Hearing on the Local Plan Part II when they spoke out against the Gladman's application outlining the reasons why. Gladman's did not attend.

In September 2019 the Gladman application was submitted and validated by Mendip District Council Planning department.

9th October 2019 Parish Council allocated £4500 for Transport, Planning and Ecology consultants to review and report.

3.2 Planning and Transport Consultant reports

Salmon Planning consultants had outlined that the application should be rejected on the following grounds:

1. Proposed site is not allocated as part of the Local Plan part II
2. Is beyond village development limits and within the open countryside.
3. Coleford has also already met its housing target.
4. A large amount of hedge will be removed as part of the development which will change the entry to the village causing a hard urbanization at the entry to the village.
5. It is not sustainable – the roads are inadequate, the school is at capacity and other services are limited and at more than recommended maximum walking distance from the site

Key Transport provided a summary on the transport. Within the Travel plan provided by Gladman's it states that it is sustainable but the development will promote the need to travel by car as the bus service is inadequate. It refers to people cycling to work and school but it is known locally that there is a history of accidents that have not made it on to police records. The consultant states that the travel plan is superficial and doesn't demonstrate that the development would not impact on highways safety

3.3 Ecology report

Clr Ham said that Alex Crossman had been instructed to look at the ecology report provided by Gladman's. They have confirmed that the information provided in the application is basic. The consultant has said that there is little that can be done at this time of year and it would take approx. 9 months to provide a detailed report on the ecology of the proposed site. It is believed that the site could be home to Great Crested Newts, Slow Worms and Bats. The loss of the hedgerow would also have a big impact on the wildlife.

4 Public Forum

- 4.1 A member of the Parish said that it has been mentioned that Upper Merryfield uses septic tanks for sewage, this needs to be checked to establish if this is the case.

It is understood that Upper Merryfield is served by a collection tank and pump, rather than septic tanks. Also that the sewage works located at the bottom of the village is already working at capacity. Wessex Water has been approached for comment.

- 4.2 A parishioner suggested that the Council should concentrate on refusing the application on the basis of the ecological factors. There needs to be a buffer between Coleford and the hamlet of Lipyeate.
This would be taken into consideration.

- 4.3 A member of the Parish had conducted his own traffic survey between 5.30 and 6.30pm on Monday evening when he counted 289 cars passing both ways. He believed that the surveys provided should be questioned.

Clr Townsend said that this will be discussed with the consultant. It is believed that the applicant's survey was conducted whilst there was snow on the ground. He also said that the splay required for new access would be 105m if in a 60mph area or 42m if in a 30mph zone. However if the applicants can prove that the average speed is lower then the splay can be reduced. The consultant has said that the way the splay has been calculated uses 2 different criteria.

- 4.4 A member of the public questioned the previous coal mining activity
It was confirmed that a coal mining survey will need to be produced and this should be considered in the response.

- 4.5 A resident who lives opposite Upper Merryfield questioned why they had not been consulted by Mendip District Council?
Clr Townsend said that it was normal practice that only properties that actually touched the proposed site would be consulted.

- 4.6 The same resident also said that they thought the quality of the application was very poor with inaccuracies and inconsistencies throughout.

- 4.7 A parishioner asked if Section 106 money was allocated as a result of the application being approved would the money be for Mendip District Council to utilize as they see fit or the Parish Council.
The Parish Council should be able to have a say on what the money is spent on.

- 4.8 A member of the parish said that more houses would result in more cars and more pedestrians. Could pavements be installed? There was not space in some of the highway to do this
Cllr Ham said that there has been recent case where parts of gardens and land has been compulsory purchased in order to create a pavement.

- 4.9 A parishioner asked if Lipyeate is classed as a Hamlet. If so, the proposed development would destroy the hamlet and become part of the village.

Cllr Townsend said that the proposed land was 1 of 13 areas identified as a Local Green Space on the basis that Lipyeate was a historic hamlet and has ancient woodlands. The Planning Consultant has said that this would be compromised by the development. As part of the interim Inspectors report it was mentioned that the Local Green Spaces put forward did not meet the high criteria set and there was a suggestion that the process should be put on hold until MDC had reviewed the proposed LGS.

It also mentioned within the interim report that an additional 505 dwellings should be located in sustainable settlements in the north-eastern part of the District, including land adjacent to Radstock and Midsomer Norton, and also other settlements where development would be sustainable. Coleford is not a sustainable location, and so it is hoped that this avenue will be closed off.

Clr Ham said that the Surgery has been asked if they could cope with the extra demand that the new development would create. A response is expected soon.

Clr Ham also stated that Bishop Henderson School was full and Kilmersdon School has only 2 places in one school year. However it was known that a new school was being built in Midsomer Norton and will be looking for students. This is only 9 minutes' drive time from Coleford.

At 19.38hrs the public meeting closed.

5 Planning Applications

2019/2345/OTS - Land Off Anchor Road Lipyeate Cross To Luckington Cross Coleford Frome Somerset. Application for Outline Planning Permission with some matters reserved for erection of 63no. dwelling houses.

All Councillors had considered the plans prior to discussion. It was proposed by Cllr Conn and seconded by Cllr Harding and Cllr Barrett that:

The Parish Council objects to the application, which it has considered in the light of proposals for Coleford set out in the Mendip Local Plan Parts I and II, research and analysis of information supplied in the application and supporting documents, and comments made by consultees and many residents.

Vote: 12 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

It was proposed by Cllr Conn and seconded by Cllr Barrett and Cllr Banks that the particular reasons for the Parish Council's objections are:-

1. Coleford is not a sustainable location for large scale development. If permitted, the application would lead to a big increase in private car journeys, due to the number and type of houses proposed. Coleford's bus service is very limited, it runs only at two hour intervals and only during weekdays, there is no realistic journey to work service to employment centres and there are no buses during the evenings and weekends. Anyone attempting to walk or cycle from the site would face numerous traffic hazards. Village services are significantly more distant from the site than the applicant's state.
2. The application completely ignores the impact of increased traffic on the very sub-standard highway network in the area around the site, in particular Charmborough Lane, and the resulting increased traffic hazards. None of the roads serving Coleford is free of narrow, winding and hazardous sections. In addition, most have steep gradients, adding to the problem of poor visibility. There is no survey information for traffic movements. The applicants' trip data is based on towns, not villages, and the Travel Plan is superficial.
3. The proposed development would cause significant road safety hazards for vehicle users, pedestrians and cyclists at the proposed site access and in the adjoining stretch of Anchor Road, due to the design of the proposed junction, which has visibility splays that conveniently reflect the available site frontage rather than the legal speed limits on Anchor Road, the lack of safety measures proposed for pedestrians and cyclists, and the hazardous nature of nearby roads.

4. The application site constitutes a major further extension of Coleford into open countryside (ribbon development), beyond the clear and long established village boundary in a visually prominent location, unlike provision made in the Local Plan. The current view of hedges and fields at the entrance to the village would be replaced by a suburban visibility splay and housing estate.
5. The application attempts to undermine the Local Plan process and greatly exceed the already generous housing provision made for Coleford in The Mendip Local Plan Part I, plus the allocation in Part II, which is nearing adoption. The applicants ignore sound Planning advice in Government Policy and the Local Plan (e.g. the Spatial Strategy), which discourages the construction of over-large developments in unsustainable locations. If developed, their proposal would more than double the number of new houses proposed for Coleford during the Local Plan period.
6. Coleford has limited facilities for a primary village, significantly less than implied by the error-strewn and misleading information submitted by the applicants.
7. The local sewerage system is already subject to failures. It should not accommodate even more new development without significant improvements, and no improvements are proposed.
8. Bishop Henderson School admissions are already in excess of the planned level, so further development would lead to more village children having to travel by car to other village schools
9. The application does not include any information on the potential hazards due to old coal mine shafts and workings, even though the applicants' information identifies former mines within and close to the application site.
10. Pending the results of ecological surveys that have not yet been carried out, the Parish Council objects to the potential impact on species such as greater horseshoe bats, which have been recorded in the area, and on nearby protected areas.
11. The economic viability of the proposed development was also questioned (amendment proposed by Councillor Pearce)
12. Pending a response from the Mendip Country Practice Surgery patients' meeting being held on the same evening, the Parish Council is concerned that the surgery may not be able to serve the increased population that would result from the development. (amendment proposed by Councillor Banks)

Vote: 12 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

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Timetable

The Chairman confirmed that the timetable going forward is as follows:

- Mendip District Council should make their decision by the 25/12/19 but is likely to be early January.
- If refused by the Planning Officer Gladman's will have 6 months to appeal.
- If the Planning Officer recommends approval then the District Ward Councillors would refer the application to the Planning Board.
- Gladman's could still appeal. It would cost MDC and probably the Parish Council money to defend, which could result in raising money locally or an increase in precept. However, in this situation, the Parish Council and MDC would both be resisting the appeal.

It was suggested that a petition be drafted and support sought over the next 5 weeks.

Cllr Townsend confirmed that Gladman's had not appealed the decision made on the Writhlington application which had been refused earlier this year.

Date of Next Meetings:

6 th November 2019	Small Grants Working Party Meeting
13 th November 2019	Parish Council Meeting
27 th November 2019	Planning Meeting

Meeting closed at 19.55hrs