

**Minutes of the Planning and Consultation Response
Committee meeting held on Tuesday 7th February 2023 in
the Community Hall, Bruton**

Present: Councillors Buckland, Jones and Wilson
In the Chair: Councillor Jones
In attendance: Deputy Town Clerk
15 members of the public

P22/66x Election of a member to chair the meeting

It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 [for-against-abstain] that Councillor Jones be elected to chair the meeting as the Committee Chair was unable to attend.

P22/66 Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s85(1)).

Apologies were received from Councillors Abi Baker, Grahame Baker, Fradley, Robinson and Taylor.

P22/67 Declarations of interest

No personal or pecuniary interests were declared.

P22/68 Minutes of the meeting held on 4th January 2023 (LGA 1972 sch 12 para 41 (1)).

It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 that the Minutes of Planning & Consultation Response Committee meeting held on 4th January 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

The Chair and members agreed that in order to minimise inconvenience to members of the public who were attending because particular agenda items are of concern to them, items P22/69 iv, vi, vii, P22/72, P22/73, P22/74, P22/71 and P22/75 would be brought up the agenda and heard in that order before other items. In the interests of clarity and consistency these minutes follow the original agenda order rather than the order in which these items were actually discussed.

P22/69 New planning Applications

The Committee discussed the following applications and made recommendations to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on behalf of the Council:

- i. 22/03573/S73 Moray House Patwell Lane Bruton Somerset BA10 0EG**
S73 application to vary condition 02(Approved plans) of planning application 22/02367/HOU for the erection of single storey garden room at rear of property
It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to recommend APPROVAL of the application.
- ii. 22/03362/HOU Tolbury Farm, Tolbury Lane, Bruton BA10 0DQ -**
Erection of an oak framed extension and pergola in position of previously approved extension.
It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to recommend APPROVAL of the application.

- iii. **23/00116/HOU Rose Cottage, Lower Backway, Bruton BA10 0EA** New roof installed over existing oak framed conservatory. Slate tiles to match existing
It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to recommend APPROVAL of the application.
- iv. **23/00121/HOU Cornbrash, Redlynch Road, Pitcombe, Bruton BA10 0NH**
Two-storey extension to an existing dwelling along with a single storey annex.
Members noted that the proposed development which is to accommodate family members is unexceptionable in itself, but because it is situated close to Grade II Listed buildings it will also require Listed Building consent.
It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to recommend APPROVAL of the application.
- v. **23/00142/FUL Land At Grove Alley, Old Flour Store, 2 Grove Alley, Bruton.** Conversion of a two storey storage building into two separate office spaces, one contained on the ground floor and one contained on the first floor
It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to recommend APPROVAL of the application.
- vi. **22/03565/COL Coombe Rise, Higher Tolbury, Bruton BA10 0DJ**
Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the existing use of land for purposes ancillary to and in association with the use of Coombe Rise as a residential dwelling, along with the construction of a shed, the erection of a yurt and the siting of a lorry body, all of which are used for private and domestic purposes ancillary to and in association with the use of Coombe Rise as a residential dwelling.
The applicant who was present gave details of the history and background of the application. Members discussed how the land in question had been used in the past and it was generally agreed that although its status was uncertain and it had been unfenced it had long been associated with the dwelling at Coombe Rise and was not regarded or treated as part of the adjacent woodland.
It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to recommend APPROVAL of the application.
- vii. **23/00181/LBC Bruton Methodist Church, West End, Bruton BA10 0BH** Part-removal of ground floor pews in association with proposed change of use from Church (Class F.1) to a mixed-use of Art Gallery (Class E) and community uses (Class F.1)
The applicant who was present explained that the ground floor pews probably date from the late 19th or early 20th century, and that so long as they are *in situ* the building could not be used for anything other than divine worship. This did not apply to the pews in the upstairs gallery and they would be retained as a feature, preserving an element of historical continuity. Members accepted this argument and noted that the best way to conserve a building is to use it; if there was no longer a demand for its use as a place of worship the proposed development represented its best hope of survival.
It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to recommend APPROVAL of the application.

P22/70 Update on previous planning applications

The Committee noted the following decisions relating to applications previously considered by the Committee.

- i. 22/00921/FUL & 22/00219/LBC Blue Ball Hotel, Coombe Street, Bruton**
Change of use from mixed A1 & C1 to C1 together with internal and external alterations to include new window and door openings, joining of property with hotel next door, and works to roof. **APPROVED**

- ii. 22/03123/FUL & 22/03303/LBC Redlynch Farm, Redlynch Road, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0NH**
To carry out essential repairs and minor alterations to the Redlynch Farm, as well as build a new extension and rebuild the stable building in the grounds at the back of the house and use it as a office space/garden room **APPROVED**

- iii. 22/02575/HOU & 22/02576/LBC Prospect House Providence Place Bruton Somerset BA10 0AZ** Amendments to the previous consent applications 21/03261/HOU & 21/03262/LBC. Revised roof and floor plan layout and proposed change in material for the kitchen extension. **APPROVED**

P22/71 Somerset Statement of Community Involvement

It was agreed 3-0-0 that the Somerset County Council (SCC) consultation on a Statement of Community Involvement for the new unitary council be referred to the Strategic Planning Committee.

P22/72 Correspondence with Somerset County Council

Councillor Jones explained that he had written to Councillor Mike Rigby, SCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Digital, about the failure of the authorities to enforce the 7.5t. weight limit, the delayed whole town parking review, and the excessively bright street lamps installed in recent years. Councillor Rigby had replied at considerable length but in some respects his response was disappointing.

Members of the public were invited to comment and made the following points:

- The ambience created by the installation of excessively bright street lamps at the Plox - Godminster Lane junction seemed to have encouraged speeding, to the detriment of highway safety - including that of the many young people who cross Plox and/or Godminster Lane on their way to and from school and Jubilee Park.
- The excessively bright street lamps flood neighbouring properties with light all through the night to the detriment of the well-being of residents.
- The excessively bright street lamps compromise the amenity of the Conservation Area.
- The excessively bright street lamps have abolished dark skies, to the detriment of wildlife in the adjacent Riverside park.
- Keeping the excessively bright street lamps on all night wastes energy.
- In all these respects the excessively bright street lighting directly contradicts SCC's declared policies in respect of highway safety, personal well-being, environmental conservation and commitment to net zero in the light of SCC's declaration of a climate emergency.

- If the Town Council were to commission a professional lighting assessment these harms could be substantiated and SCC would find it harder to avoid taking the requisite remedial action.
- When challenged about such matters SCC's Highways Department (Highways) tends to justify its decisions by citing opaque 'regulations' (which cannot be easily or freely accessed by members of the public) and 'professional judgement' (which is not susceptible to objective assessment). Highways seems inclined by default to apply regulations in a literal, inflexible, unimaginative, maximalist and 'one size fits all' manner instead of giving due weight to local conditions and circumstances.
- The Police lack the resources to enforce the 7.5t. weight limit so it would make sense to transfer responsibility for enforcement to SCC's Trading Standards department, as in neighbouring Wiltshire.
- If this were done the fines generated by strict enforcement could usefully contribute to SCC's revenues, an approach adopted by Oxfordshire County Council.
- In April 2023 responsibility for highways will be transferred to the new unitary authority. This gives the new Somerset Council a rare opportunity to develop a new corporate culture, one which is more attuned and attentive to the interests of local communities.

Members echoed, supported and supplemented these comments. It was agreed that while Bruton has no powers over highway matters the Town Council should continue to press Highways to take the concerns and interests of local residents more seriously. It was also noted that Bruton's narrow High Street makes it unsuitable for modern A-road traffic but if the A396 were re-designated as a B-road it would be less used by heavy commercial traffic and Highways might agree to the lower lighting levels associated with minor roads and streets.

It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 that Councillor Jones would write to Councillor Rigby thanking him for his letter and making the following points on behalf of the Town Council:

- 1. SCC should be asked to transfer enforcement of its Weight Limit Orders to its own Trading Standards Department since the Police who are currently responsible have insufficient resources to do the job. Councillor Jones had made this request in his previous email but it was not addressed in Councillor Rigby's reply.**
- 2. Bruton Town Council will arrange a Whole Town Parking Review since the SCC scheme has stalled.**
- 3. SCC should be asked to direct Highways to reduce the intensity of its recent street lighting installations in Bruton to <3000lx., and to turn the lamps off between 10pm and 5am. Councillor Jones made this request in his previous email but it was not addressed in Councillor Rigby's reply.**

P22/73 Street lamp on Plox

The Town Council had been asked to support the installation of an additional street lamp on Plox (between lamps #10 & 11). The following points were made by residents:

- The pavements on both sides of this section of road are adequately if not brilliantly illuminated, the pavement surface is good, and the kerb is well delineated by reflected light.
- Several residents of Wellesley Green have opined that there is no need for an additional street lamp; it is not known whether their view is representative.
- Additional lighting in this location would put even more pressure on nocturnal wildlife in Riverside park.
- The main problem with the street lighting along Plox and Silver Street is the wide variation in light levels. Some parts of the roadway are pools of darkness while the floodlighting at the Plox-Godminster Lane junction is better suited to a motorway intersection than a Conservation Area in a medieval market town. Requiring drivers to keep readjusting their vision to different lighting levels along a short stretch of road is not conducive to highway safety.
- Members appreciate the Health & Safety and Duty of Care concerns of those responsible for the welfare of children, but without a professional risk assessment they found it difficult to judge whether an additional street lamp would be appropriate or proportionate.

It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 that in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary the Committee considers an extra street light on Plox to be unnecessary, but that if the Highway Authority were minded to take the opposite view it should consult local residents, ensure that the intensity of any new street lighting be less than 3000lx., and arrange for the street lights be turned off between 10pm and 5am.

P22/74 High Street parking

Members discussed the perennial problem of parked vehicles obstructing traffic on the High Street, a problem exacerbated by the increasing size of commercial and agricultural vehicles and the increasing numbers of vans making local deliveries. Where the highway is particularly narrow, for example by Sexey's Hospital, Crown Barton and Warren Close, large vehicles can only get past vehicles parked in parking bays by mounting the pavement, which itself is very narrow. This occurs very frequently, many times every day, imperilling pedestrians and residents of adjoining houses, and damaging public and private property including drains and cellars.

Careful measurement of parking bays and the carriageway has confirmed what is observed daily, that some parking bays when occupied make it literally impossible for large vehicles to get past without mounting the pavement. Some of the most badly affected High Street residents including the Warden of Sexey's Hospital argue that removing the problematical parking bays is the only solution, and members could only agree.

It was RESOLVED 3-0-0 to request Highways:

- i. To survey the High Street and establish where the most obstructive parking bays could be relocated**

- ii. **To move the parking bays outside Sexey's Hospital down the road towards West End**
- iii. **To install signs reminding drivers to park within the lines of parking bays.**

P22/75 Community Shed

Members considered a draft pre-application (planning) proposal for a community shed on Town Council land on Cuckoo Hill. They were supportive in principle but suggested that softening the artist's impression and including some planting might improve the proposal's chances of success.

P22/76 Date of next meeting

Members agreed that the date of the next Planning & Consultation Response Committee meeting would depend on the deadline of the next Planning application consultation.

The meeting ended at 21.03

Patrick Pender-Cudlip
Deputy Town Clerk