

Wick and Abson Parish Council
Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 18th January 2024 at The Village Hall 7.15pm

Attendees:, Chair James Williams (JPW), Vice Chair Peter Crew (PGC) Gaive Golding (GG), Simon Alway (SA), Cllr Stuart Fowell (SF) Keith Hollister (KH) Anne Kinsman (AK) , Bronwen Dyson (BD) Clerk Jo Bray-Warner, and 47 members of the public and Cllr Steve Read (Siston Parish Council)

1. Chair to note apologies and receive/confirm declarations of interest in conjunction with Localism Act 2011.

No apologies

No declarations of interest

2. Chair to explain emergency procedures

Chair provided clarity around emergency procedures for the Village Hall in the event of evacuation

3. Opportunity for the public as appropriate to address the Council.

Chair provided a clear outline for the reasoning for calling an extraordinary meeting. The meeting was to focus solely on the New Local Plan Phase 3. Parish Council had sourced considerable material regarding the Consultation. Wick & Abson Parish Council had undertaken a flyer drop to households within the village advising of the Local Plan and also details of the meeting. Councillors held an open session (Drop In) from 5pm- 7.15pm on the 18th January. Chair advised that during the drop in session approximately 60-70 residents had expressed an interest in the Consultation and had requested further detail. Chair provided all Councillors and members of the public a verbal update to the outlines of the Consultation and requested members of the public's comments. Parish Council had also requested that anyone unable to attend the meeting could provide comments via email.

Below are the email comments which have been received in connection with the Consultation:

Over recent years there have been 2 developments in Wick at The Kelstons and The Carpenters Arms, all luxury homes costing over £500k with not a single one an affordable/starter home, how would we be assured that future developers will not do the same? We do not need more luxury homes in the village, but we do need affordable homes for the local young people and for low income families.

Whilst some affordable homes are needed, we feel that the development of 70 new homes is excessive for the size of the village and would impact and change it's characteristic of being a village.

If the planned development of 70 homes were to go ahead we have concerns as to how the current infrastructure of the village could support this many people. As we know the local council is struggling to afford any of the basic services. The roads are in appalling condition, there is a reduction in waste collection, there is no longer adequate (if any) provision for the vulnerable and elderly in the village (the Warden's house in Boyd Close having been sold off), the planning department state that they cannot afford to take action over the illegal fencing in the field opposite Church road until the new financial year in April. It is extremely difficult to get a same day appointment to see a doctor in person, how will an already struggling surgery cope with 70 more families? How will the local school accommodate? Will the council afford an extension to the school buildings? How would the local nursery facility accommodate? There is no NHS dentist in the vicinity meaning that families would need to travel quite some way to find one and for those unable to afford cars it would require reliance on bus services and there is no longer a direct bus into Bristol.

I agree with the Council's emerging preferred strategy of a combination of the 3 lenses and that the green belt needs to be amended. In my opinion it is far better to amend the green belt than to build in areas with relatively poor services, facilities & travel opportunities.

In terms of the preferred sites suggested for Wick, I have no objection. My only comment is that access from site EPS-BV8 (land to the rear of 91 High Street) onto the A420 would need to be improved.

(I noted that no mention is made in the preferred sites of the proposed housing development opposite the Naishcombe Hill traffic lights. This development is in the wrong place, in my opinion.)

I am writing as a homeowner in the current area, I highly object the development plans across the greenbelt areas, overpopulating an already stretched area with a infrastructure that doesn't work as it is.

I am concerned with the plans to develop 70 new homes in Wick and 4,000+ homes in the surrounding villages. We moved to Wick precisely as it was a less developed area and for the surrounding greenery and countryside. I worry that the additional houses to be built around the back of the high street and the quarry will add additional traffic to the area which already has a

significant problem with heavy traffic on the A420 and problems with cars speeding through the village. We only need to look to COVID when we saw an influx of traffic and visitors to the area and saw an increase in road traffic incidents involving cars, cyclists and pedestrians. I am also concerned that this is building on greenfield : greenbelt land and will significantly alter the local area and disrupt local wildlife. Please do pass on my comments as part of the response to SGC. Apologies I am unable to attend the meeting in person but look forward to hearing any updates.

Hope this email finds you well. Unfortunately, we will be unable to attend the extraordinary Parish Council meeting this evening regarding SGC's preferred plan for new housing in the area. However, we did wish to provide some feedback to add to that of other residents. In short, we feel that the proposed plan would put too much pressure on the local community, its services and infrastructure, and cause unnecessary and excessive problems on Wick High Street / A420 with the construction. Three Shires Wick Surgery is already incredibly busy, and getting an appointment can already be tricky. I do not believe that the surgery is in a position to support another 70 families joining the practice, though those who run the surgery would obviously be better placed to speak to that. It is already difficult to navigate around the number of cars parking around the school at drop off and pick up times, especially around the junction of the A420 and Naishcombe Hill, and that will only increase should there be more demand placed upon the school. Wick High Street / A420 is the main road between north Bristol, Bath, and Junction 18. It is already incredibly sensitive to congestion, as we see every time they decide to put up yet another set of temporary traffic lights, and with the recent building work on Church Road / the old Carpenter's Arms. It makes it an absolute nightmare just trying to get from my house to the surgery to pick up my medications, or take my daughter to school, and I imagine other residents are similarly impacted. Having to suffer through 15 years of construction traffic, building work and the inevitable impact on local traffic will be intolerable, not including the increase in traffic from the 70 homes and business units.

We also question how many of those homes would actually be affordable, and how many will just be more homes that are out of the price range of local residents because those contracts have been given to private developers. The cost of homes in the area is already beyond the reach of many.

All of this doesn't even touch upon the use of greenbelt land, which is already under significant threat. There has already been too much encroachment on existing green sites, and if it continues we will stop being a beautiful village and just end up as part of Bristol's urban sprawl, completely destroying the area. There are restrictions upon building on greenbelt land for a reason, and those shouldn't be ignored because at what point would the council stop allowing building? It's not possible to say that the land is being protected, and that this is a "one off" or however SGC wishes to frame it, because that will be the same reasoning used next time, and then the time after, until we're left with no green space at all. I appreciate that there is always a demand for housing, however, I'm certain there are other sites that have potential for redevelopment before we start carving up the green spaces around Wick. You cannot "improve and enhance" the green spaces when they're gone. The council claims in their documentation that avoiding building on green sites will overload villages, yet this is precisely what their plan for Wick would do to our village! The stated goal is also to deliver homes in an area that would avoid a reliance on private transport, and have shorter commutes. Again, this is not Wick. Most people need to travel into Bristol, Bath, or further afield for their work, and the local transport infrastructure is not in place for Wick and the surrounding villages to the extent that it would remove the reliance on private transport.

Those are our quick thoughts without having had a chance to truly look through all of the available documentation, so apologies if some of these concerns have already been addressed elsewhere.

Comments provided via postcards at the drop in session:

I object to the proposal to build on green belt designated land whilst alternative sites are available. Local infrastructure and services would be put under undue pressure. Area housing needs would be better if concentrated at fewer locations where new schools, GP Surgeries, Retail spaces and supporting infrastructure is planned from the start: new towns' villages such as Yate. The initial proposed sites in Wick

- Quarry site- As brownfield this would be the most acceptable for development. I understand that the quarry site had permission for business units. This would be ideal use for this area long term as the site is being returned to nature.
- The 10 homes and business units site would have serious access issues onto the A420 with little room to improve it.
- 30 homes by petrol station would substantially expand the village onto greenfield.

My overriding feeling about the proposal for Wick is the need to preserve the Greenbelt in its present form. At a push if we have to have new housing, then brownfield land would be least damaging option, so the quarry entrance would be ok. The site by the Esso garage encompassing the lorry park would be possible- certainly less damaging than development along the river. The 10 homes behind the High St are more contentious.

If the development does go through what proportion would be social housing.

10 homes & Business units behind 91 High St. Wick comments:

- Single track road- woodcraft lane
- Phosphate run off into Dog Brook

- Increase in traffic on A420
- Site was used between 1994-1998 as a tip. Information should be available in old planning records- Land not suitable to build on
- Destruction of green belt land
-

London Road already struggles with the weight of traffic. Could the Parish Council suggest a one way system along London Road

Houses should not be built on the greenbelt ever.

The only site in the village that could be considered is the quarry area which I believe is brownfield.

Houses of 4-5 bedrooms should not be built

Villages need small affordable houses for young families and older people who want to downsize, freeing up their larger homes for bigger/more affluent families.

No consideration has been given to the access to and from the proposed development. The proposed sites are accessed by single track road. The Drs surgeries are unable to provide enough appointments for the number of people residing in the village. The loss of greenbelt impacts on physical and mental health. We are constantly being advised to go out and exercise, therefore losing more greenbelt not logical

Comments from members of the public at the extraordinary meeting:

Member of the public commented that any investment in and around the quarry sites would be acceptable however this needs to be balanced with any effects on the nature habitat and pasture land.

A number of members of the public raised the comment, that greenbelt land should be safeguarded and should not be used for development until all other options including brownfield sites have been fully explored. The effect of losing greenbelt land on the biodiversity within the village would be dreadful.

During the Chairs opening comments he advised that c6 years ago landowners in the area were asked to 'offer up' their land for future development and this information has been used in scoping the consultation. Member of the public asked for clarity around this point and Chair/Cllr SA and Cllr Steve Reade (Siston Parish Council) provided further clarity around the process. The member of the public commented that current landowners in the village who have wanted to obtain planning application on their greenbelt land had been refused. Chair advised that PC were unable to comment on individual cases. The member of the public also requested clarity around the guidelines which developers should adhere to for social housing. Chair provided the statistics.

Member of the public strongly commented that Wick needs affordable housing rather than larger houses and asked if special conditions can be added for allocated sites, alongside this question member of the public asked if there was anyway to control the 'size' of the houses which are built.

Cllr SA provided the National guidelines around size/car parking allocation etc. Chair advised that any planning application can have comments added that the style of houses built must be in keeping with the village.

A number of members of the public requested clarity around what infrastructure is being proposed for example schools/Drs surgeries as all the services will be affected by increase in any development in the village.

Cllr SA provided clarity on the how surgeries obtain their income and Cllr AK provided statistics for the Three Shires practice. Chair advised re data he has been provided regarding the school and school places. Cllr SA also provided additional commentary regarding how income is generated for local schools.

Member of the public commented that they would support the need for 2/3 bedroom houses if this could be controlled as this would bring young families to the village and to help sustain the primary school.

Member of the public commented that developers do not adhere to their original application including the social housing aspect.

Chair acknowledged comment

Member of the public raised a query regarding the business units proposed off Woodcraft Lane and the impact on the highway network.

Chair iterated that again these are proposed sites. Cllr Steve Reade (Siston Parish Council) advised that if residents feel strongly around the locations of the proposed sites then to get together, identify new sites, approach the landowner and then if this is suitable request the landowner to submit an application for the 'call for land' at SGC.

Member of the public requested the definition of the Greenbelt.

Chair provided the detail

Cllr GG advised that this is the Emerging preferred strategy however there are 3 lenses of development strategy within SGC. Cllr GG provided clarity on the 3 lenses.

Member of the public commented that the proposed site for 45 homes near Bury Lane is not suitable as the road network would not be able to take additional traffic.

Member of the public commented regarding the refusal of the development opposite the Carpenters Arms and requested Council provide clarity regarding the planning process.

Chair and Cllr Steve Reade (Siston Parish Council) provided the process currently adopted by SGC.

Member of the public commented whether sites can be allocated as self-build plots.

Chair iterated that currently a development of this size should have 35% affordable housing and that potentially when any development requests come through a percentage could be requested under special conditions for self-build. However again Chair iterated this is the first round of consultation and further details will emerge and be circulated by SGC in due course.

Chair requested Cllrs to provide their thoughts:

Cllr GG commented that he would not support development on the greenbelt however commented that he did feel areas should be identified across the village with a strong emphasis that it should primarily be brownfield sites and to support a split between affordable and self-build houses.

Cllr AK advised she agrees that development on the greenbelt should be avoided at all costs and acknowledges that W & A does require affordable housing.

Cllr BD commented that her main concerns are the preservation of the Green Belt in principle, and all the associated implications for conservation and wildlife etc. The other concerns are pressures on the main road in general, and the busy road junctions at either end of the village, in particular. Obviously, Siston and Warmley deserve support in their own right, but also because the proposed development would greatly impact Wick residents as well.

Cllr SA commented that he feels other brownfield sites on the boundary between Wick & Abson and Doynton have not been explored thoroughly and this requires review.

Cllr SF advised that he acknowledges there is a need for starter and young family homes rather than larger developments of 4-5 bedroom homes, he commented that the question is where to look for developments which support the village and that greenbelt land should be protected from any development. Cllr SF also commented that Parish Council would like to create and adopt a Neighbourhood plan but have struggled previously to gain any momentum with volunteers. Cllr SF advised that if anyone wished to volunteer to advise the council.

Chair commented that no building within the greenbelt or on greenfield sites. He accepts some housing is required for the village and is inevitable. The current plans proposed by SGC are all aligned to greenbelt and commented that all brownfield sites should be explored alongside empty retail units that aren't going to reopen and look to develop these areas before encroaching on any greenbelt land.

Chair thanked the public for their comments and attendance and advised that if residents feel comfortable and are able to make their own comments on the Consultation. He advised that Parish Council will consider all views and construct a response to the Consultation. This will be added to our website for oversight.

Meeting closed at 8.55pm