

Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Extra Meeting held at the Village Hall Wednesday 14th August 2019

This meeting was in addition to the regular monthly meetings to achieve planning response deadlines set by Mendip District Council

Present Sue Isherwood, Chair
Marie Scriven, Councillor
Jo Tucker, Councillor
Peter Bright, Councillor

In attendance Chris Harris, Clerk
1 member of the public

1. Apologies for absence

Sue Reece
Ros Wyke

2. Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

None

3. Finance

3.i Audit Update

Submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2018/19 Part 2 had not yet been made due to the changeover of Clerks. This was now formally agreed, signed and completed and the Clerk to send a copy of the Certificate of Exemption to the external auditors as soon as possible.

ACTION: Clerk

3.ii Invoices Received

Invoices had been received from the Village Hall (hall hire) and SLCC Enterprises (advertising costs). These were approved and paid.

4. Planning Matters: Application 2019/1549/FUL Agricultural Buildings on Land Between Top Road and Perch Hill / L.A. Moore, Applicant

A copy letter had been received from Cindy Carter, Planning Officer for the Mendip Hills AONB Unit which commented on and objected to this development on environmental, ecological and visual grounds and the overall sensitivity of the site within the bounds of the AONB. The letter also confirmed that the AONB had not been consulted on the sensitivity of the site, nor does the application take into consideration the ongoing assessment of the area under the Mendip Local Plan Part II as a Local Green Space, which protects such areas from development.

A member of the public presented a number of objections to the development, noting several misleading representations on the current plans relating to existing structures and gradients.

Two councillors presented verbal reports on discussions they had had with local residents which commented on and objected to this development on environmental, ecological and visual grounds and the overall sensitivity of the site within the bounds of the AONB and the village conservation area.

It was unanimously RESOLVED that Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council objects to this application for the following reasons:

- There are a number of misrepresentations on the plans submitted, including stone walls being represented as hedges, road gradients not showing rise and trough with areas of potential pooling from run-off and no indication of the final height of the recently planted non-native hedging.
- The development does not take into consideration the sensitive nature of the site within the existing AONB nor the ongoing assessment of the area under the Mendip Local Plan Part II as a Local Green Space, which protects such areas from development.
- Over half of the land in question is in the village conservation area. Any development on the site would be very prominent and visually intrusive over a wide area of the village and surrounding areas. Planned bunding on the rising rear side of the development is inadequate and inappropriate given the steeply sloping nature of the site. It would be virtually impossible to adequately screen such a large development without the screening itself becoming visually intrusive.
- The overall size of the development is excessive and not proven and is not in keeping with the level of activity planned at the site, which will use off-site contractors for only a few weeks a year and will undertake all processing and packaging of viticulture produce elsewhere.
- There are existing facilities at the other viticulture site a few metres along Top Road built by the applicant which are more than sufficient to manage the additional viticulture activities planned for this second, much smaller site.
- No highways assessment has been made regarding the safety or appropriateness of road access into either Top Road or Perch Hill, nor the impact of any increased traffic flow.
- Siting of an agricultural composting area next to an existing private garden is inappropriate.
- No assessment has been made of the impact of chemical drift from crop spraying onto neighbouring private land and properties, which is likely to be a significant risk on such a sloping site.
- The planned soak-away is unlikely to be sufficient for such a sloping site, particularly considering the submitted plans do not adequately indicate road gradient and existing areas of rise and trough. This could lead to significant pooling on Top Road during heavy rainfall/snowmelt and the risk of flooding onto private land and properties downslope.
- No indication has been made of conformity to the AONB Dark Skies policy in relation to the use of electric lighting.
- Use of non-native hedging instead of native/indigenous species is not keeping with the sensitive nature of the site within the AONB nor does it give consideration to the ongoing assessment of the area under the Mendip Local Plan Part II as a Local Green Space.

The Clerk and Chair to respond to Mendip District Council with their objections as soon as possible.

Action: Clerk and Chair

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Chris Harris was formally introduced to the Council as the new Clerk.

5.ii Declarations of Acceptance of Office were formally signed by all Members present.

Signed by the Chair of the Parish Council

Signature

Date 18th August 2019