

Westbury sub Mendip Neighbourhood Plan Working Group
Minutes 2 June 2025

Present - Chris Langdon (via Teams) [CL], Mick Fletcher (Chair) [MF], Ros Wyke [RW], Penny Colwill (PCo), Dave Maguire (DMg), Tony Westcott (TW)

1. Apologies, Sue Isherwood, Al Hood, Guy Timson, Adamos Euripidou

2. Minutes. The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April were agreed. **Action:** MF to post pdf copy of minutes on the PC website.

3. Matters Arising

RW confirmed owners of Mortar Pits land were Somerset Council (SC). SC said there will be no charge to the developers for this land as they claim they are barred by law from charging anything. It was suggested other councils charge for ransom strips. RW said SC had refused to transfer ownership of Mortar Pits to PC. SC also disputing PC view as to how many cars can be parked in Mortar Pits. **Action:** RW to suggest to PC that they write to SC to query exactly why they are not charging CC for the Mortar Pits land.

4. CC response to offer to buy brownfield site.

Disappointing that CC are to put the site up for sale on the open market. It was noted that this was another example of the CCs not cooperating with the village and being purely money driven. Whilst there are 16 spaces in the informal plan for a new village hall, ideally the brownfield site would provide additional parking to increase the viability of the hall. (Previous sentence not for published version of minutes) PC need to know when the brownfield site is marketed to allow the village to bid. **Action:** RW to ask PC to write to CCs to request to be informed when the brownfield site goes up for sale. Note from CL – I thought we also agreed that that PC write to CC to express dismay that they are not being constructive with long term plan for community ref brownfield site. (Copy Bishop / Church / others??)

MF reported that the church wardens had been told that the church can, for the moment, have vehicle access around the edge of the brownfield site to access the church via the graveyard. It was suggested that we need to encourage the church wardens to pressure the CCs to provide parking for the church. **Action:** RW to ask PC to write to church wardens to encourage them to seek parking places for the church users.

5. Planners pre app advice on community land.

It was noted that the planners seemed to be confused about intended access arrangements to the community land. The planners main concern appeared to be the height of the building and its impact on the listed stone barns. It was agreed that any planning application for use of the community land needs to show that the planners expressed concerns have been addressed. It was suggested that we could use the village day to canvass villagers views on the use of the hall. **Action:** CL to lead on producing questions to ask at village day re use of any new hall.

CL reported that there was a follow up meeting with the planners on 16 June to discuss the pre app comments and what evidence the planners might need to see to satisfy their concerns.

RW confirmed PC had set aside funds for a planning application for the community land. It was agreed that it was important to make an early planning application for outline planning permission for a multi user hall on the community land. This would allow the principle of a hall and it's dimensions to be established soon before a developer seeks detailed planning permission for the site and before houses are occupied to avoid a barrage of objections which would give the planners possible reasons to refuse planning for a hall. No action was needed on this before the next meeting.

Action: CL to prepare summary of what would be needed in an outline app to satisfy pre-app comments (following meeting with Amelia Elve) and to meet normal planning app requirements – and estimated costs – for next pc meet

6/7. Highways official comment on RL lane development and Planners response on publication of exchanges with PC over highways issues.

These two agenda items were dealt with in the same discussion.

It was disappointing to note that Highways appear to have ignored without investigation our suggestions on options for a controlled crossing. The dismissal of the planners to including the correspondence with the PC and meeting notes about highways and pedestrian issues was frustrating. The concern was that the PC's view on these issues would not be properly considered in the planning process, being dismissed as unofficial discussions. The CC's views from similar discussions however do seem to get prominence despite arising in similar pre app discussions and correspondence. It was agreed that what was needed was a full response from the PC to Highway's published official view on the planning application re highways and pedestrian safety issues and that this response should be available on the planning website. **Action:** *RW to put the need to make further comment on Highway's response to the PC to ensure the PC's full position on the issue is publicly available on the planning website.*

It was suggested the NPWG should draft comments on the Highway's response for the PC to consider. **Action:** *DMg to lead on drafting specific comments on what Highways have said and what they have missed out.*

PCo noted that the public right of way across the Court Farm lawn is not accessible for all users. This issue is not addressed in the application or in any of the comments on the application. If this is intended to be the access from the village core to the Strawberry line then it fails to meet the requirement for access to be cyclists and people with reduced mobility.

RW suggested that Heather Shearer be invited to the next NPWG meeting so she was up to date on the planning issues. This was because RW has responsibility for planning matters in SC and so will be conflicted when the planning application is being considered. Heather will be able to speak on the application as a local councillor. The PC and individuals from the NPWG and village will also be able to have their views heard. No timetable has been given for when a decision on the application may be given. It was felt that the application would not go before the planning committee before September.

8. Informal advice from planners on draft NP.

It was disappointed that the planners had not read the Village Character assessment before commenting. RW felt part of village north of A371 was surrounded by an area of the National Landscape and therefore specific legislation would apply. South of the A371, the current village development was surrounded by land owned by the CC where it was the CC's stated intention to develop at some point. It was felt that any development needed to be in keeping with the character of the village which will include green wedges.

It was suggested that people could be asked at village day what areas they would like to see as green wedges and green spaces and why they value these spaces.

It was agreed that there was no need to delay the production of the NP because of SC's housing needs analysis and housing allocations were not yet published. It was felt this might not be done for another couple of years.

CL said he would discuss Jo Milling's response to NP with Stuart Todd. MF and TW will also attend.

Concept of planning gain was discussed and RW highlighted that the allocation of the community land was an example of positive planning gain for the village.

RW thought the various stone walls around the village should be listed on the Local Heritage Assets. CL said he could discuss this with Jo Milling.

Action: CL to arrange meeting with Stuart Todd together with MF and TW to agree how draft NP responds to planners' comment. Target is for final draft to be available for final consultation in July (?)

9. Stand on Village Day

MF said he could provide notice boards. The topics to be discussed with villagers would be use of village hall and identification of green wedges/spaces. RW, PCo, TW and DMg said they could help man the stand. CL said he had a large map of the village and PCo said she may have a footpath map in the village shop to use on the day.

Action: CL to prepare some one page questions on green wedges and village hall to drive discussion. RW, PCo, TW, DMg to arrange to present maps and questions on display boards supplied by MF and to agree to host stand

10. AOB

None.

11. Date of next meeting .

Monday 30 June 2000 at CL's