



CHURCHILL PARISH COUNCIL

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Churchill Parish Council

Response to Planning Application No. 22/P/0564/OUT

14.4.22

Land South of Bristol Road and North off Bath Road Churchill

Outline planning application for the development of up to 83no. dwellings supported by the provision of highways, open space, ecological enhancement and associated and ancillary infrastructure, with access for approval off A368 (Bath Road); with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for subsequent approval.

Churchill Parish Council notes that the planning application is not yet registered on the North Somerset Council Planning Map. The council therefore requests an extension to the deadline for responses.

Churchill Parish Council (CPC) objects to this planning application in the strongest possible terms for the following reasons:

1. This application is not Plan Led.

1.1. **N Somerset Core Strategy 2017 Policy CS14** 3.197 refers to 'Service Villages':
"Within and adjoining the settlement boundaries of the Service Villages small scale development may be appropriate subject to the criteria set out in Policy CS32. Proposals of a larger scale outside settlement boundaries must come forward as part of a formal site allocation with revision to the settlement boundary through the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Development Plan".

1.2. The application does not form part of the adopted North Somerset Local Plan to 2026 or the Draft Local Plan 2024-2038.

1.3. The site is not on the North Somerset Site Allocation Plan. The site was recently reviewed and declined.

1.4. The site sits outside the settlement boundary. See CS32 #2.12 below.

- 1.5. Churchill Parish Council supports the officer's view expressed in Pre Application Advice (#5 in the Design and Access Statement) that "the quantum of development was too great". This is certainly the case now for this entire parish.
2. **Ref N Somerset Core Strategy CS32:** Churchill Parish Council supports the Officer's view (Design & Access Statement #5 Pre-Application advice. "*Confirmation was given that strict adherence would be made to Policy CS32 with regard to adjacency to settlement boundaries particularly as this application contravenes CS32 for service villages for the following reasons:*
 - 2.1. *CS32 New residential development will generally be acceptable in principle within settlement boundaries and appropriate development up to about 25 dwellings adjoining settlement boundaries, provided it respects the scale and character of the village and the site's location, and is not in the Green Belt. The additional flexibility is intended to enable small scale proposals to come forward which will enhance sustainability in its wider sense. The Council will not support proposals which either on their own or in aggregate cause significant adverse impacts on the character or functioning of the village.*
 - 2.2. *CS32 The policy allows for residential schemes to be brought forward adjoining the service village settlement boundaries of up to about 25 dwellings. Larger sites must be brought forward as site allocations to ensure they are brought forward through the plan led system, subject to appropriate consultation, and infrastructure planning. The purpose of the policy is to allow small scale residential development to come forward within and adjoining the villages where they are in sustainable locations, would not adversely impact on the character, setting or appearance of the village and the local infrastructure is able to support the additional development (for example in respect of school places, community buildings and foul and surface water drainage systems). In this respect the cumulative impact of development will be a significant consideration and a succession of piecemeal developments which individually or taken together have an adverse effect on any individual village are unlikely to be supported*
 - 2.3. This development when aggregated with the recent development of circa 300 new dwellings in Churchill and Langford, will have a more than significant adverse impact on the character and functioning of the villages of Churchill and Langford.
 - 2.4. The construction of the recent housing developments has not brought additional infrastructure in terms of additional school places, improved GP facilities, better, reliable public transport. The reverse has taken place. The Sports Centre has closed, the Fish and Chip shop will shortly close, the local lanes are becoming rat runs making it difficult for local residents to walk or cycle in our villages or pursue active travel in any way. The village hall is no longer of a suitable size.
 - 2.5. Further aggregation with the new developments in Sandford and Wrington and Congresbury has added significant pressure on places at Churchill Academy, and the GP surgery in Pudding Pie Lane. Patients are having to travel to Worle, and Yatton for routine GP appointments.
 - 2.6. This application cannot be claimed to constitute a 'small scale' development in this rural area.
 - 2.7. *"It results in a form, design and scale of development which is high quality, respects and enhances the local character, contributes to place making and the*

reinforcement of local distinctiveness, and can be readily assimilated into the village;” This is a large development of dense housing adjacent to the Mendip Hills AONB and cannot be said to ‘enhance the local character’ or ‘contribute to place making and reinforcement of local distinctiveness. It cannot be claimed that it will readily assimilate into the village as it lies well outside of the Settlement Boundary.

- 2.8. This application needs to be viewed in relation to the scale of development which this Parish is struggling to absorb over the last few years. The massive over-development has outgrown the village amenities. It has increased its carbon footprint and is damaging its rural distinctiveness and character.
 - 2.9. NS Council is wishing to become net zero in carbon emissions by 2030. This development will be car-dependent and will result in increased carbon footprint and further congestion on the A38 which is already heavily congested at peak times. The A368 to Bath is narrow and windy not a good commuter route. Widening this road, removing valuable ancient hedgerows at the access of this urbanising development cannot be considered to be appropriate mitigation.
 - 2.10. Appropriate public transport is unsustainable in this rural environment as has been recently demonstrated by the reduction in services.
 - 2.11. *“It demonstrates safe and attractive pedestrian routes to facilities within the settlement within reasonable walking distance”*. It is noted that the public footpath running through the site forming a direct route to the A38 will be altered. A footpath through fields would be set to become a path through ‘urban streets’.
 - 2.12. *“Sites outside the settlement boundaries in excess of about 25 dwellings must be brought forward as allocations through Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans.”*
 - 2.12.1. It is not on the North Somerset Council (NSC) Site Allocations Plan (SAP) or either of the Local Plans. See #1 above.
 - 2.12.2. The Developers are claiming that the site lies adjacent to a new, (Newlands) site which is outside of but adjacent to, the Settlement Boundary and therefore claim that the site is adjacent to the Settlement Boundary. Were this argument to be permitted, it would set a precedent and constitute disjointed incrementalism on a massive scale throughout the service villages of North Somerset and would further contravene Policy CS32 which is very clear: See #2 above.
 - 2.12.3. Churchill Parish Council is currently developing a Neighbourhood Plan. This has been held up due to the forthcoming Draft Local Plan. Further to #2 above, the site is not included in the proposed Churchill Neighbourhood Plan the draft of which has already been submitted for comment.
 - 2.12.4. Churchill Parish Council further notes that this site has been previously considered by NSC through its SHLAA and discounted.
3. The site lies adjacent to the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
 - 3.1. The AONB is prized for its tranquillity. This application contravenes paragraph 185 of the NPPF 2019 regarding the appropriateness of new development stating *“... it should*
 - a) *mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new developments – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life”*.

b) *identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason;*

c) *limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation’.*

3.2. The DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan 2018 sets out under paragraph 2.2.1 that *‘Some of England’s most beautiful landscapes and geodiversity are protected via a range of designations including National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty... Over the next 25 years we want to make sure they are not only conserved but enhanced.’*

3.3. Development on this site is in contravention of NSC’s Policy DM11: *“Development which would have an adverse impact on the landscape, setting and scenic beauty of the Mendip Hills AONB, including views into and out of the AONB, will not be permitted unless in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that it is in the public interest.”* The south-east boundary of this proposal lies only a few metres of the AONB and will be overseen from the AONB to the south and south west. These are places that are much visited and valued by local residents and tourists for their tranquillity and scenic beauty. The urbanisation of the development cannot be screened. This development is definitely not considered to be in the public interest.

4. NS Core Strategy CS9 – **Living within Environmental Limits**

4.1. CS9 states, *“The existing network of green infrastructure will be safeguarded, improved and enhanced by further provision, linking in to existing provision where appropriate, ensuring it is a multi-functional, accessible network which promotes healthy lifestyles, maintains and improves biodiversity [see 7.3 below] and landscape character and contributes to climate change objectives. Priority will be given to: the promotion of the north slopes of the Mendip Hills AONB as sub-regional corridors for biodiversity, recreation and landscape retention.*

4.2. Churchill Parish Council is at a loss to know how this application could possibly respect this Core Strategy.

4.3. The footpath that is shown to link the site to the A368 is misplaced on the applicant’s plans as it is shown as being on private land adjacent to the site. This is incorrect. North Somerset’s footpath officer has been informed.

4.4. This footpath comes directly out onto the A368.

5. NSC Core Strategy CS1: Addressing climate change and carbon reduction:

5.1. *“Developments of 10 or more dwellings should demonstrate a commitment to maximising the use of sustainable transport solutions, particularly at Weston-super-Mare. Opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport should be maximised through new development and in existing areas emphasising the aim to provide opportunities that encourage and facilitate modal shift towards more sustainable transport modes”.* It is only a matter of time before the parts of the site which are dedicated to the environment will have applications for further housing.

5.2. The lack of any significant local employment and lack of appropriate public transport means that residents of this proposed estate will be car-dependent. The

increased volume of traffic generated by this application will reduce the capability of existing residents to walk and cycle on narrow lanes bordered by grass verges which are an important feature of the village scene.

6. **Ref The applicant's Travel Plan:** The applicant quotes the bus service No 51 (para 3.5). This service only runs 5 times daily, the first morning bus leaving the Nelson Arms (10-15 minute walk from the site) at 8.59am arriving in Weston-S-Mare at 9.39am. The last bus leaves Weston-S-Mare at 4.45pm arriving in Churchill at 5.38 – a long return journey and impossible to work a full day.
 - 6.1. The distances from employment centres are as follows: Bristol 15 miles; Bath 25 miles, and Weston-S-Mare 10 miles.
 - 6.2. The applicant's Design & Access statement states that the distance from the site to the M5 is 4 miles. This is incorrect. The distance is in fact 8 miles.
 - 6.3. The applicant quotes Mendip Outdoor Pursuits and other local amenities as being within walking distance. They have omitted to mention that the A368 is very dangerous for walkers and cyclists. It is used by large numbers of HGVs accessing Yeo Valley in Blagdon or Burrington Combe on their way to the ports, despite the 7.5t weight restriction. There are no pavements. Churchill and Langford are villages, not towns. This safety situation will deteriorate further once the route becomes more accessible to large vehicles when the proposed Banwell Bypass is completed.
7. **NS Core Strategy CS3 Environmental Impacts and Flood Risk Assessment:**
 - 7.1. 4.6 Design and Access Statement, *"..the Site is entirely within Flood Zone 1 and not susceptible to flooding from pluvial, groundwater, infrastructure or artificial sources.* Churchill Parish Council challenges this statement. There is ample photographic and written evidence that this cannot be the case.
 - 7.2. Pluvial flooding from the Mendip Hills AONB frequently floods the A368. The Newlands site has suffered major difficulties in this respect.
 - 7.3. The applicant maintains *"Investigations have confirmed the possibility of a surface water drainage connection to the existing culverted water course beneath Bristol Road. Investigations have confirmed the possibility of a foul water drainage connection to the existing adopted foul water sewer crossing the northernmost part of the site"*.
 - 7.4. North Somerset Planning Department will already be aware of the flooding issues regarding the Newlands site on the A38/bordering on the A368. CPC respectfully points out that the A368 regularly floods from rapid surface water coming down from the Mendip Hills. Without the natural soakaway of the pasture of this site, this rapid surface water run-off will further overload an already overloaded surface drainage system. When overloaded, the system discharges onto the A38 and naturally takes a course down towards Langford before pouring into the Langford Brook which will further enhance the likelihood of serious flooding in Blackmoor (Lower Langford).
 - 7.5. There is the further issue of the foul water drainage system being already overloaded.
 - 7.6. **NSC Core Strategy CS4 Nature Conservation.** This application fails to meet the criteria set out in CS4.

- 7.7. Biodiversity Net Gain cannot be relied upon. It appears that there is no system in place which enables monitoring of offsetting and for measures to be validated. See article by ecologist [Sophus Zu Ermgassen](#) submitted to Parliament.

8. North Somerset Climate Change and Nature Emergency Commitment:

- 8.1. All of the proposed houses will need a car to access infrastructure and leisure activities. The proposal contains measures to remove significant stretches of ancient hedgerows.

9. Ecology:

- 9.1. Bats: This proposal will destroy a substantial bat flyway/foraging route (including the internationally protected Greater Horseshoes and Lesser Horseshoe bats and a possible 8 further species). The proposed mitigation corridors within the site are entirely inadequate. Excessive illumination is inevitable. Claims of sensitive lighting will not stop individual home-owners choosing their own exterior lighting.
- 9.2. Light pollution will further affect the Mendip Hills AONB and the tranquillity of this part of Churchill.

10. CS 25 Ensuring safe and healthy communities.

- 10.1. *3.310: "Any [CIL] contributions will be influenced by the North Somerset School Organisational Plan (2007–2012). This strategic document includes an assessment of future demand for school places and how these may be accommodated. The main conclusions arising from the document which are relevant to the Core Strategy are: To ensure that there is a surplus of around 5 – 7% of places in all schools to enable parental preferences to be realised as much as possible".*
- 10.2. 5th Bullet point. *"To monitor the provision of school places across the district to ensure that the supply and availability of school places reflects the needs of its local communities; especially in areas of residential growth".*
- 10.3. To date, the new developments in Churchill of approx 300 homes have not produced expansion of local schools. Children are being offered school places as far as Backwell and Worle, adding to the rush-hour traffic. This would suggest that CS25 2.210 cannot be met now. With the additional houses (196) allocated in the Draft Local and the existing schools already full, indicates that children living in Churchill will not be able to attend the local schools that are within walking/cycling distance. .

11. CS26: Supporting healthy living and the provision of health care facilities:

- 11.1. This application will put further pressure on our existing GP Surgery, Mendip Vale Medical Practice. It is extremely difficult to get a GP appointment now. See #2.5 above.

12. NS Core Strategy CS27: Sport, recreation and community facilities:

- 12.1. Churchill Sports Centre has been closed since March 2020. Its future is in doubt. The existing recreation field is in full use.

13. Public Transport and Travel: Also see #6 above.

- 13.1. Churchill is 4.5 miles from the nearest railway station at Yatton and does not have a bus link to it. The nearest bus stop is on the A38, but this mainly caters for services to Bristol

- 13.2. There is a very limited bus service to Weston-S-Mare which takes a long time, and runs infrequently and is subject to frequent delays see #6 above.
14. CPC further draws attention to Avon Fire & Rescue Service report. "Central Government does not provide any funding to Avon Fire & Rescue Service for the capital cost of growth-related infrastructure"
- 14.1. *"Therefore, Avon Fire & Rescue Service may need to become reliant on local support funding through either developer contributions, Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)"*
- 14.2. *"These developments will contribute to a significant increase in demand for Avon Fire & Rescue Service. As the population increases, so does the demand. This has an added impact upon the current resources therefore stretching our assets to meet this demand."*
- 14.3. *"It is accepted that Avon Fire & Rescue Service will not be increasing the number of resources or assets to manage with this growth."*
15. The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) states that planning applications for '...development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists'. There is one specific tree which is protected with a TPO.
16. The NPPF 2019 (paras 102 and 103). states that planning should, "actively manage patterns of growth in support of the opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use. In assessing applications for development paragraph 108 notes assessments should ensure:
- 16.1. appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- 16.2. safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and
- 16.3. any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree."
- 16.4. This site cannot ensure any of the above. It is already too dangerous to walk or cycle in Church Lane and King Road during term time. Residents including school children have to walk in the middle of the road.
17. NPPF (2021) 78: Rural Housing:
- 17.1. *In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.*
- 17.2. The above paragraphs have amply demonstrated that there is no further need for housing estates that are not connected to good public transport and will put further pressure on already stretched infrastructure (see #2 above) in this rural area. As evidence of the the lack of local demand the new developments are being advertised in London, Manchester and Birmingham. Further urbanisation as represented by this application will destroy the character of the villages of Churchill and Langford.

18. Statement of Community Involvement :

18.1. Ref #5 “5.1 In addition to the targeted neighbour consultation, a notification letter was sent directly to Churchill and Langford Parish Council setting out the background and detail to the proposals, confirming the scope of consultation and inviting Councillors to meet to discuss the proposals, either in advance of or following submission of an application”. 5.2 At the time of writing, no response has been received however it should be noted that the applicant remains receptive to the prospect of direct engagement with the Parish Council following submission of the application”.

18.2. Churchill Parish Council would like to make it clear that no such letter has been received.

18.3. #5 Design and Access Statement. Pre-Application advice: Churchill Parish Council supports the officer’s view that strict adherence would be made to Policy CS32 with regard to adjacency to settlement boundaries and the Officer’s view that the quantum of development was too great”

SUMMARY:

Outlined above are just a few of the many reasons why this proposal is totally inappropriate, not plan led and constitutes a speculative application that is not based on local need due to the large amount of recent development. It contravenes many of policies contained within North Somerset’s Core Strategy and the NPPF 2021.

Infrastructure in terms of roads, services and public transport is not sufficient to cope with the existing additional housing estates in Churchill and Langford. The reverse is the case with the closure of Churchill Sports Centre and Murphy’s fish and Chip shop and the reduction in bus services. The Schools are full, and local children are being offered places in Worle and Backwell which in turn will soon also be full.

Traffic on our local roads and single track lanes is reaching crisis point where emergency vehicles cannot get through in school opening and closing times.

For all of the above reasons given in this response, Churchill Parish Council urges North Somerset Council to refuse this application.

The Parish Council would ask for an extension to the deadline to cater for Easter and the lack of appearance of the application on the Planning Map.