



# CHURCHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk of The Council: Mrs Sally Diaz  
17 Sealey Close, Draycott, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3UA  
Tel: 07399 523961 [clerk@churchillpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@churchillpc.org.uk)  
[www.churchillpc.org.uk](http://www.churchillpc.org.uk)

## Response to Planning Application No. 22/P/1172/FUL

Erection of 36 dwellings, public open space, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage system and engineering works, with vehicular access off Hillier's Lane | Land at Hilliers Lane Churchill.

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

1. This proposal lies on the western edge of Historic Churchill<sup>1</sup>, which is the western component of the settlement of Churchill and Langford. The proposal is entirely unacceptable. There are multiple grounds for this assertion. It violates a wide variety of policies within the local plan; it would violate the local landscape; it undermines the efforts to prevent the collapse of local infrastructure and would further promote the failure of over-stretched local services; it flies in the face of our crucial efforts to restrain pollution and energy consumption, since it would inevitably promote car-use, including long-distance commuting by car to reach distant workplaces. There is very little local employment.
2. This application is not Plan Led:
  - 2.1. The site sits outside the settlement boundary and is of a larger size than is permitted within the current core strategy (CS32).
  - 2.2. It does not form part of the North Somerset Local Plan 2026
  - 2.3. It is not on the North Somerset Council (NSC) Site Allocations Plan (SAP).
  - 2.4. It does not fall within any overarching national or local plan or planning policy
  - 2.5. The proposal does not respect the scale and character of the village and the site's location.
3. **Landscape**
  - 3.1. The proposal would have profoundly deleterious effects on the landscape and the visual elements of this component of the village which is now a Conservation Area (CA). The north-western part of this proposal actually lies within the CA itself. This is

unacceptable. The proposed introduction of bungalows (rather than 2-storey houses) within this part of the proposed development does not help. The post WW2 bungalows in Orchard Walk and in The Drive were deemed discordant with the CA objectives and were excluded from the Churchill CA for this reason.

- 3.2. This settlement of Historic Churchill lies in a hollow bounded by the Mendip Hills AONB 100metres to the south and the Mendip outlier known as Windmill Hill to the north. Views into the settlement from these vantage points would be seriously degraded by the proposed development which would appear as a close-packed array of modern roofs in contrast to the varied pattern afforded by the diversity of the present settlement.
- 3.3. 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.’**
- 3.4. It would adversely impact the AONB, since views both inwards and outwards across the adjacent Mendip Hills AONB boundary would suffer seriously. This would be contrary to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 which accorded to AONBs the same statutory protection as National Parks. This application would neither conserve nor enhance the AONB.
- 3.5. Highly significant are the two previous applications that have been made for residential development on this same site (in 1986 and 1990) and both were rejected by the Local Planning Authority (then Avon CC). The second of these went to an Appeal (brought by Charles Church Developments plc, PINS reference: T/APP/V0130/A/91/178862/P2). The Inspector, in dismissing this Appeal, and noting the intimate relationship of the site to the adjacent AONB concluded (para. 11) that it *...would seriously damage the character and appearance of this part of Churchill and its setting.* Furthermore, she went on to indicate as follows. *I also consider that if this proposal were allowed, it would be difficult for the council to resist an application for development of the field to the east [South of and adjacent to the (grade 2 listed) Sidney Hill Cottage Homes] thereby leading to further harm to the setting of the village.*
- 3.6. Highly relevant is a recent and very local (parish) **Landscape Sensitivity Study**. This Assessment was undertaken in 2021 by MHP Chartered Landscape Architects for Churchill Parish – specifically to assist the Parish Council in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The report focused on sensitivity to development in very specific parts of the parish. The region of the Parish thus examined excludes University holdings, the AONB and parts inaccessible by road; it represents rather more than one third of the total area. The proposed development lies in area CH2 - in the MHP classification. This area is bounded by Hilliers Lane (in W), Front Street buildings along Front Street (in N) and Dinghurst Road (in S) and (in E) by development along The Drive. The area CH2 was classified by MHP as of high landscape sensitivity (regarding development).
- 3.7. **North Somerset’s Landscape Character Assessment- FINAL 041018 p198 ‘Landscape Guidelines’ : Strategy for Area J2 (Churchill and surrounding**

## villages)

This application contravenes the provisions of this assessment

- 3.8. 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.”*

3.8.1. CPC notes that this application cannot demonstrate being ‘in the public interest’. Churchill has been allocated a disproportionate amount of development for a Service Village comprising two small villages with separate identities. Over 300 new dwellings have been constructed in the past three years with a further 25 recently been given planning permission (Dinghurst) and 257 allocated in the North Somerset Draft Local Plan 2024-2038.

3.8.2. CPC notes that there cannot be a local need for more new dwellings in this historic part of Churchill due to the newly built homes being advertised in London, Manchester and Birmingham.

3.8.3. CPC would like to know details of any exceptional circumstances in which this development could be considered to be ‘in the public interest’.

- 3.9. Churchill Parish Council further draws attention to the introductory statement by North Somerset Council in the appeal for non-determination of outline planning permission for 62 dwellings on land to the east of Church Lane and Front Street, Churchill, Application No 21/P/2049/OUT, appeal ref no. APP/D0121/W/22/3292961 :

3.9.1. *The development would harm the distinctive rural character and landscape setting of Churchill; and the setting and significance of the Churchill Conservation Area and the Grade 1 listed St John's Church; adversely affect the amenity of public rights of way; and is contrary to the sustainable development strategy for North Somerset, which requires proposals for more than about 25 dwellings within or adjacent to the settlement boundary of a service village to be allocated in a local or neighbourhood plan. The scheme therefore conflicts with policies CS5 and CS32 of the adopted North Somerset Core Strategy (2017) and policies DM3, DM4, DM10 and DM32 of the adopted North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) (2016) and the development plan for North Somerset read as a whole. That harm would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme, when assessed against the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, taken as a whole. This application lies less than 100metres from the site referred to in this statement.*

4. This application further 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; and*

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

5. **North Somerset Core Strategy Policy CS5** seeks to protect and enhance the enjoyment of Graded Listed Buildings within the community: *“The council will conserve the historic environment of North Somerset, having regard to the significance of heritage assets such as conservation areas, listed buildings, buildings of local significance, scheduled monuments, other archaeological sites, registered and other historic parks and gardens”.*

5.1. Adjacent to the site lie listed Grade II Sidney Hill Cottage Homes and as previously mentioned part of the site lies within the Churchill Conservation Area.

## **6. Ecology and Natural Environment**

7. Churchill Parish Council notes that a detailed ecological survey has not yet been done (see letter from Ecologist) and the preliminary examination leaves many questions unanswered. A substantial part of the wildlife-friendly western boundary hedge will be destroyed to permit adequate visibility at the proposed site entrance.
8. The settlement has no street lighting at present. The proposed on-site lighting, no matter how well designed to limit light spill, will cause major disruption to some wildlife. At present, major flyways exist across Churchill for many bat species. Some are light tolerant, but the highly protected greater and lesser horseshoe bats are very highly light sensitive<sup>2</sup>. They are abundant here<sup>2</sup>. Their commuting and foraging activities will be severely disrupted.
9. NS Core Strategy CS9 – **Living within Environmental Limits** 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 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.** CPC notes that this application is contrary to this policy.

9.1. **NSC Core Strategy CS4 Nature Conservation.** This application fails to meet the criteria set out in CS4.

9.2. **North Somerset Climate Change and Nature Emergency Commitment:** All of the proposed houses will need two cars to access infrastructure and leisure activities.

10. NS Core Strategy CS32: Service Villages.

10.1. It should be noted that Churchill and Langford is designated as a ‘Service Village’. It is in fact two villages – Churchill and Langford, with two separate identities. This policy defines Service Villages as follows, *“Service Villages are places where a **small amount of development** (particularly economic, or which extends the range of services available) may be appropriate. New residential development will generally be acceptable in principle **within settlement***

**boundaries, provided it respects the scale and character of the village and the site's location.** See 3.8.1 above regarding the present increase in the size of the villages of Churchill and Langford. The previous number of dwellings was 857. There are a further 257 in the Draft North Somerset Local Plan 2024-38 and NSC has recently granted permission for a further 25 dwellings at Dinghurst Road and a further 62 are currently awaiting an appeal decision.

- 10.2. CS32 further sets out the criteria for service villages regarding land adjacent to settlement boundaries particularly regarding otherwise unmet need. There is no demonstrable need in these two small villages which have no local employment, minimal public transport, full schools and narrow lanes. Churchill Parish Council reiterates that developments are being advertised in Manchester, Birmingham and London.
- 10.3. **CS32 further states:** *Affordable housing will only be permitted either within settlement boundaries or in the form of rural exception sites, and then only adjacent to settlement boundaries.*” With the recent new developments Churchill has gained a proportionate level of affordable housing. It should be noted that local residents are unable to access this accommodation in order to stay within their support network.
- 10.4. *“Sites outside the settlement boundaries in excess of about 25 dwellings must be brought forward as allocations through Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans.”* This application for 36 houses is not on the SAP or in the LP 2026 and is not be included the Churchill Neighbourhood plan currently in draft, or the NS Draft Local Plan 2024-2038..

## 11. Traffic and Congestion

- 11.1. **Policy CS32:** outlines permitted new development within the service villages, including Churchill. These will be supported where:
- 11.2. *it does not result in significant adverse cumulative impacts (such as highways impacts) likely to arise from existing and proposed development within the wider area;*
- 11.3. *the location of development maximises opportunities to reduce the need to travel and encourages active travel modes and public transport; and*
- 11.4. *it demonstrates safe and attractive pedestrian routes to facilities within the settlement.*

This proposal is inconsistent with all of the above.

- 11.5. NSC Core Strategy CS1: Addressing climate change and carbon reduction:
- 11.6. *“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”.* All dwellings will need at least two cars to access employment and local facilities.
- 11.7. It is important to appreciate that the local presence of a large secondary school (Churchill Academy) results in unusually congested conditions on the local road network.

- 11.8. On Hilliers Lane there are approx. 2000 vehicles passing per day. On the part of Front Street which is the interconnector between two T junctions, the combined daily flow is more than 6000 vehicles. Flow is particularly variable over the working day. The pronounced peaks are in the hours 0800-0900 (school and commuting) and 1500-1600 (end of the school day). Major obstruction also occurs especially in the PM peak because of parked buses and parked cars. School buses park here on Hilliers Lane for prolonged periods. They park here prior to loading briefly within the very restricted space available on the school premises. The daily pattern is largely unchanged over many years, but the quantity has increased substantially. The new feature which has appeared in recent years is that the route Hilliers Lane to and from Church Lane has become a busy rat-run, for vehicles attempting to avoid the anticipated congestion on B3133 Stock Lane. The data acquired in the peak hours by the applicant's automatic traffic count is as follows:
- 11.9. Applicant's count, Hilliers Lane ATC conducted on 11-17 Jan 2022, Peak hour weekday 5d average:
- 0800h-0900h: 199 (Nbd), 213 (Sbd)    1500h-1600h:        80 (Nbd), 162 (Sbd)
- 11.10. Congestion is even more marked than the data averaged over the peak hour data would suggest, since school traffic (both in AM and in PM) is largely concentrated into about half-an-hour. This pattern of behaviour, dominated by school traffic and with the large peak AM flow somewhat greater even than the PM flow, is qualitatively consistent with our own records, accumulated over decades. Note that PM flow N bound is also consistently less than that S bound.
- 11.11. Note also a conflict is inherent in NSC policy which aims to reduce the number of school buses. Parents indicate that, if no bus is available, they will deliver a student to school by car. The alternatives apparently are: one school bus or 40-50 private cars competing around school for road space and parking space and with a much larger total energy-demand. Which is preferable?
- 11.12. We should note the problem posed by many parked vehicles (road width here between kerbs is 5.8m). We should also note that the required visibility splay for the proposed estate entrance will require that the species-rich and bat-friendly western boundary hedge be effectively removed (or cut down to <0.5m) over a substantial distance, both N and S (at least 50m each way).
- 11.13. CPC considers mistaken the assertion that the new housing estate traffic will all head south onto A368 (see the applicant's Transport Statement para 6.7.4). In fact, it is evident that considerable traffic now uses Hilliers Lane and the tortuous and disturbingly narrow Church Lane) to avoid congestion on the B3133 Stock Lane. This implies that site users would do likewise if proceeding to or arriving from the North. This trend will be greatly exacerbated by substantial extra A368 traffic resulting from the construction of a Banwell Bypass.
- 11.14. In consequence of the above considerations, this proposed housing estate, by adding a further T- junction on Hilliers Lane, would have a serious extra congesting effect, both during construction and then during its subsequent occupation.
- 11.15. NPPF, July 2021, page 32, paragraph 111, states: *Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or **the residual cumulative impacts on the road***

**network would be severe.** In this present instance, the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe

**12. CS 25 Ensuring safe and healthy communities.** *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.*

12.1. This policy cannot be met as both Churchill Primary and Academy are full. Children are already leaving the village to travel to other remote schools in Backwell and Bristol. Families who recently moved to the new developments on the assurance of availability of local school places through the above policy, have been unable to access Churchill Academy or Primary and have been offered places as remote as Worle meaning further traffic on our crowded roads.

12.2. It is noted that the applicant refers to Sandford Primary School. Sandford itself is the subject of significant new successful planning applications, so this amenity cannot be relied upon to service the needs of unwanted and unsustainable further development in Churchill.

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

13.1. The applicant refers to access to the GP surgery

13.2. 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. The facilities are already overwhelmed. Patients need to queue outside the surgery in Pudding Pie Lane at 7.45am in order to get an appointment. This is unacceptable for seniors and those with disabilities and is counterproductive to wellbeing and health.

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

14.1. Churchill Sports Centre has been closed since March 2020 and is set to remain so for some considerable time.

14.2. The Play area for young children is over 1.6 km away a 25-minute walk with young children.

**15. Public Transport and Travel:**

15.1. The Bristol Airport bus is 20-minute walk away on the main A38 and only runs every hour. This bus is run by the Stagecoach company and is subject to regular delays due to frequent stoppages along the M5 due to its origin in Plymouth. It is subject to unexpected delays due to stoppages along the M5. Hold-ups are frequent on the M5 part of its route especially during the holiday season. This bus service also suffers from cancellations when the driver exceeds his legal, scheduled, daily driving time limit - due to these motorway stoppages - and has to be relieved of his shift during the journey to and from Plymouth.

15.2. There is an hourly bus service from Langford to Bristol operated by Bristol University. However, to get to the bus stop in Langford is 2.5 km (1.5 miles). The last bus on the return journey leaves Bristol at 6pm.

- 15.3. 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.
- 15.4. It is further mentioned in the Design and Access statement (D&A) that the site is therefore considered to be accessible to shops, services and facilities by sustainable modes of transport. This is not accurate. The small, 24-hour supermarket is 2.4km (1.5 miles) away in Langford. The applicant infers that there is a Post Office, local store and tea room. This is a single shop with a combination of functions in Front Street. It provides a basic range of supplies. The Fish and Chip shop which has applied for change of use to residential and is least 20mins walk from the proposed site.
16. 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 ...."*
- 16.1. *"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) ...."*
- 16.2. *"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."*
- 16.3. *"It is accepted that Avon Fire & Rescue Service will not be increasing the number of resources or assets to manage with this growth."*
17. **Employment.** There are very limited local employment opportunities that would support the purchase of the proposed houses. Nearest employment centres are Bristol and Weston-S-Mare.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

On consideration of all these matters, CPC urges North Somerset Council to recognise that this proposal is unacceptable and consequently to refuse this application.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Winstone (July 1991) Evidence given at Planning Inspectorate Inquiry, reference: T/APP/V0130/A/91/178862/P2

<sup>2</sup> *North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Guidance on Development: Supplementary Planning Document (Jan 2018).*