

Report relating to Wells City Council Planning Committee to Wells Annual Parish Meeting – 10th March 2021.

1. Between the 19th of March 2020 and the 5th of March 2021 the Committee has met on 22 occasions and considered 133 planning applications including applications relating to trees. We have recommended approval to 85% of these applications. Mendip have had decided these applications on most occasions in line with our recommendations. When they have not, we consider the issue carefully - and sometimes learn lessons.
2. During the year, Cllr Celia Wride resigned from the Council and I was saddened to lose her support as Vice-Chair of the Committee. Cllr Jenny Rust kindly agreed to fill that vacancy. I am grateful to her and all the members of the Committee for the time they have put in to consider the plethora of applications that have come before us. An understanding of the planning system and an ability to view applications in the context of what considerations are "material" and those which are not, are fundamental to membership of the Planning Committee. So, I am pleased that those who have not yet received training in planning law and practice from the Somerset Association of Local Councils are attending a course at the end of this month.
3. During the year, the Wells Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have met on a monthly basis and reported regularly to the Committee.
4. Sadly, all of our meetings have been by Zoom but we have been able to welcome a significant number of members of the public to our meetings. I am also pleased that County Councillor Tessa Munt has been a regular attendee at our meetings and it has been useful to hear her views.
5. Looking outside our bailiwick, we have considered the draft Planning White Paper and also consultations from Mendip and made representations on all of these. There have been applications relating to housing situated just outside our City boundary and in the area governed by St Cuthbert Out Parish Council. It is good that we are consulted on these matters as it is clear that such developments, if approved, will add a significant burden to the infrastructure of Wells. On the horizon there are several appeals against refusal of some of these applications. Wells is not an island and so it is good that we keep an eye on the world outside the parish boundary of Wells. I am pleased to report that I have attended Mendip Planning Board on a couple of occasions and have also had discussions with Cllr Marcel Hayden, the SCOPC Planning Chair.
6. I believe that it is fortunate that the proceedings of this Committee attract the public in significant numbers and we always listen to them carefully. It is good that we are able to give a voice to the community in this way.
7. Finally, I would like to thank Steve Luck whose advice is invaluable, Sue Glendinning and Sandy Bristow who prepare our agendas and minutes and Alex Westwood who deals with the technology.

Adrian I'Anson. Chair of Wells City Council Planning Committee.