



## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 16<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2026 AT 7PM AT WELLS TOWN HALL

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cllrs: L Agabani (Mayor), D Denis, J Edmonds, G Folkard, D Orrett, S Powell (Chair), I Von Mensenkampff (Vice Chair)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk: H Wilkins  
WCC Staff: C Hobbs  
Somerset Cllr for Wells / MP for Wells & Mendip Hills: T Munt  
19 members of the public

**26/39/P APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Cllr: G Robbins

**26/40/P DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr G Folkard expressed an interest in Agenda item 6.1 2026/0531/OUT and will remove himself from the committee when the item is discussed.

**26/41/P MINUTES OF THE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Cllr S Powell signed the minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2026 and the meeting held under delegated authority on 31st March 2026

**26/42/P ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

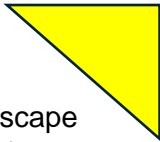
The Town Clerk updated that with regard to the land covenant at the Rugby club site she had asked information from Somerset for the devolution position regarding the land associated with that site as some land is in the ownership of Wells City Council. The Town Clerk has had not yet received a response to her letter to the Cathedral regarding the floodlights on the west front but that she was meeting with the Dean next week.

**26/43/P MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

J Scott (2026/0531/OUT) spoke of the 94 objections so far that have been registered and that they show the deeply felt reaction to the possibility of losing the landscape to the development. An integral buffer between the National landscape and the city. Building on this site would undermine all the protections that are in place. A long planning history to the site and there are good reasons for the zero percent success in gaining planning permission including at appeal that stated unacceptable harm to the SLF. That hasn't changed. The pre application advice also flags likely significant impact on the landscape. This development would be a tragedy for Wells and should never happen.

A Williamson (2026/0531/OUT) provided notes for the Planning Advisory committee which mentioned the inappropriate width of the already congested roads which the developer expects to serve the development with a 300% increase in traffic. The scheme would be overbearing and harm neighbour privacy. Even Rubix have admitted that the impact during and after construction would be "major adverse" The presence of lesser and greater horseshoe bats alone should halt this application. Rubix admit a likely significant effect which has triggered Regulation 63 of the Conservation of habitats and species regulations (2017) Rubix have not provided an appropriate assessment which is a lawful reason for Somerset Council to refuse the application. The nearby application at a car park in Cheddar was refused for exactly this reason.

F Robinson (Trustee of CPRE Somerset) (2026/0531/OUT) spoke of the proposed development would erode approximately fifty percent of the designated special landscape feature which amounts to significant harm. The applicant is relying heavily on the fact that the district doesn't have a five year housing plan supply but the significant harm which disengages the tilted balance. The applicant has submitted the application notwithstanding



the pre app advice from the council, with details in the local plan such as special landscape features which make an outstanding scenic contribution to the district, the site connect Wells to the Mendip Hills and contributes to a strong sense of space. The principal of the development at the site is not supported by the landscape officer. The applicant's statement misleadingly says there have been no previous applications when there have been three refusals on the western section where 1500 houses were applied, including one on appeal as they were in the special landscape feature. Three comments made by the appeal Inspector regarding the western side of the site were "While a key element of the national planning policy framework is to boost the supply of housing, when read as a whole the framework does not suggest it should be at the expense of other considerations" "The qualities of the SLF would be eroded by the proposed development as would the setting of the Mendip Hills National landscape and the setting of the city" " The adverse impact would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits and suggested conditions would not outweigh the substantial harms" There are no material differences between the previous cases and the present application and CPRE respectfully ask that the committee recommend refusal.

T Hathway St Cuthbert Out Parish Council informed the meeting that St Cuthbert Out Planning Committee discussed this application with a unanimous decision to recommend to refuse . There is a small strip of land on the western edge that lies within the Parish of St Cuthbert Out. The three main points for refusal were the location to the foothill of the Mendip Hills next to the national Landscape. Previous applications two fields across both were turned down by the Inspectorate as it was detrimental to the National Landscape and we feel that's relevant in this application. The second point is the accessibility to the site regarding width of roads and large construction vehicles. The third point is regarding flash flooding and effluent disposal from the site. New houses built to the west of Wells have experienced flooding and the Haybridge sewage plant is over capacity currently and therefore no further capacity.

I Tetley asked if the committee recommend for Somerset Council to undertake a cumulative impact assessment which might confirm the evidence on the Wookey Hole Rd application which is pertinent to this application at Orchard Lea. After nine previous applications in the west of Wells at no time do Somerset question the pressure on the infrastructure of schools, doctors etc. There is only one site notice for the application with no description of the application. No signs on the monarch way which would be affected by the proposed development and no signs on other boundaries which would also be affected.

A Lackworth asked for an explanation of the process when a person submits an objection on the Council website. A Lackworth asked for confidence that the responses are read. There are desktop studies in the application where the details were weak. The Landscape feature was dismissed as well as the issue of flooding. The biodiversity study is weak. A Lackwork has a lack of confidence in the review process. The landscape is very visible from a distance such as Portway.

Cllr S Powell assured A Lackworth that his report had been read by the Committee The Town Clerk assured the public that Wells City Council will submit their response to Somerset and she urged all members of the public to submit their objections on the portal and if there is a larger document that requires submitting, then to email the case officer directly.

**26/44P**

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FOR CONSIDERATION**

**1**

2026/0531/OUT

Outline planning application for the erection of up to 73 dwellings, public open space, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage system and engineering works, with vehicular access off Orchard Lea. All matters reserved except for means of access  
Location: Land At 354157 146529 Milton Lane Wells Somerset

Cllr G Folkard removed himself from the Committee and sat in the public gallery.

The Town Clerk listed the points made for the refusal of this application submitted by St Cuthbert Out Parish Council. These were that the application is very close to the area of outstanding natural beauty, not enough capacity for attenuation for water flow, poor visibility for pulling into the main road is poor, supporting documents are inaccurate, percentages of social housing and access to Orchard Lea is unsuitable.

Cllr S Powell informed the meeting that there had been 97 comments objecting to the proposed development and one in support. Some of the issues highlighted are highways, unreliable data, dark skies, landscape harm, view cones, local infrastructure, wildlife and development, outside development area, lack of road access

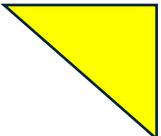
Cllr L Agabani gave his opinion based on comments made by the public that he would recommend refusal.

Cllr D Denis insisting that a bat survey should take place as the removal of dark skies would have a negative impact on bat populations. Cllr D Denis spoke of a lack of information regarding phosphates with the cumulative impact on the levels is immeasurable. There are inaccuracies in the application with a reference to East Sussex in the application which demonstrates sloppiness. In the application, SUDS run off are measured at 5.2 litres per second and based on a 1:100 year storm is unrealistic and more likely to be 1:10 with climate change.

Cllr D Orrett thanked all members of the public for their comments and that Wells City Council do listen to comments made. Cllr D Orrett agreed with all issues that had been made.

Cllr S Powell proposed that Wells City Council oppose the application on the following grounds.

- i. It does not comply with the Mendip local plan DP4 and the Wells Neighbourhood Plan policy ENB1 on page 68 and 74. DP4 means in practical planning terms that development must respect conserve and enhance a distinctive character of Mendip, proposals that would harm valued landscapes including their setting and scenic qualities or sense of place conflict with DP4. The policy applies especially to areas with recognised landscape importance such as special landscape features and the setting of the Mendip Hills National landscape. The development site is adjacent to the Monarch's Way and close to the West Mendip Way. The site lies and is identified by Somerset Council as a prominent scenic backdrop to Wells and an essential part of the city's landscape setting. The proposed development would urbanise a significant part of this SLF, eroding its openness, prominence and rural character. The site lies adjacent to the Mendip Hills National Landscape meaning it falls within the setting of the nationally protected landscape and under NPPF paragraph 1790, great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing scenic beauty. This development will do the opposite, causing adverse effects on both the Mendip Hills National Landscape and the character of Wells.
- ii. The Wells neighbourhood plan. This policy identifies a number of view cones with one identified as the Upper Milton view cone which is located on the Monarch's Way and upper Milton Lane, close to the northern site boundary and looks south across the site. The view is described as a panoramic view of west Wells from a northern entry to the city for walkers and demonstrates the Wells bowl referred to in the 1996 assessment. The policy states that any development proposals on land within or immediately adjacent to the identified view cones, will only be supported where they don't compromise the special landscape character identified in the 1996 Mendip and 2020 landscape character assessment.

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- iii. Vehicular access would be unsuitable for works traffic. Somerset Councils design guidance notes for streets in residential developments set out clear expectations for the width geometry, forward visibility and overall capacity of streets intending to accommodate construction and service vehicles. On any fair reading of that guidance Fir Tor Avenue and Orchard Lea do not meet the criteria for carrying sustained works traffic of a scale required for a 73 unit development. It contravenes the council's own design guidance; it creates safety risks and imposes significant impacts and disrupts and shifts the cost and disruption of the development onto households who gain no benefit from it. The proposal relies on an access route that the council's own guidance indicates is unsuitable and the resulting impacts would fall unfairly on local residents.
  - iv. The NHS document assess a contribution of £48,774 should go towards increasing primary care infrastructure which is not enough. The current combined medical centres providing primary care have insufficient capacity and won't be able to absorb the increased patients arising from the proposed developments.
  - v. Light pollution – The applicant's assessment is theoretical and overly optimistic. In practice introducing housing, lighting and continuous human activity directly beside ancient woodland, where multiple species are already confirmed would almost certainly reduce biodiversity over time. Regardless of the fields current arable use, the proximity to sensitive habitat means the likelihood of achieving any long term biodiversity gain is extremely low.

Cllr S Powell explained these were her points for rejecting this application.

The Town Clerk summarised additional points.

- i. that this application would set a precedence and that it's unrealistic and that
- ii. the point regarding the pressure on the NHS could be stressed further with the inclusion of the pressure on all local facilities and infrastructure.
- iii. The loss of privacy with local residents.
- iv. The suggestion of refusal of the Cheddar parking refusal which should be referenced
- v. Previous refusals at this site have not been considered by the applicant
- vi. Comments made by neighbouring Parish councils should be cross referenced to ensure that the inspectorate appeals and surrounding applications to other local areas are taken into account
- vii. Cumulative impact assessment request was specifically referenced as was the additional signage. To clarify the Town Clerk mentioned that Somerset have discharged their responsibility which is to apply only one site notice.
- viii. Confirmation of the flood risk assessment and the request for that and the reference to the provider being someone different to the Rubix group.
- ix. Biodiversity loss as a whole. Phosphates was also referenced as was the Natural England and Somerset wildlife Trust being added as consultees.

Cllr L Agabani asked that the threat to horseshoe bats species be stressed. The Town Clerk assured him she had referenced climate and ecological impact and dark skies, detailing bat species and habitats particularly for horseshoe bats referencing light pollution and noise impact.

Cllr D Orrett gave information about access. The single vehicular access proposed as being via Fir Tor Avenue and Orchard Lea. Design guidance notes published by Somerset Council for streets in residential developments identifies four categories of adoptable residential street types. Type three is access street is identified as suitable for a maximum number of 50 dwellings if a single junction. The proposed development is 73 dwellings. Fir Tor Avenue is already a single access to 30 dwellings so

accordingly the required category of street for this access requires 5.5 metres minimum carriageway width with 2 metres minimum for footway width. Neither these requirements are met by Fir Tor Avenue or Orchard Lea. The intended access fails to meet the required standard.

Cllr D Denis thanked all members of public who had sent in letters regarding the application

Cllr S Powell proposed that Wells City Council refuse the application.

**Recommendation - Refusal.**

Cllr G Folkard rejoined the meeting.

- 2            2026/0530/LBC  
Repair boundary wall including gateway following storm damage.  
Location: Tower House St Andrew Street, Wells Somerset BA5 2UN  
**Recommendation - Approval**

**26/45/P        PLANNING APPLICATIONS - NOTIFICATION ONLY**

- 1            2026/0381/S106D  
Application to discharge the planning obligation dated 12th July 2000 between Mendip District Council and George Philip Phelps (and successors in title) pursuant to planning permission ref. 105034/004 (granted for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling)  
Location: Meadow Way Silver Street Wells Somerset BA5 1UN

**26/46/P        TREES**

- 1            2026/0614/TCA  
T1 - Cherry - Fell to ground level with replacement Cherry planting in suitable location  
Location: 7 Bath Road Wells Somerset BA5 3HP

**26/47/P        DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITIES**

To delegate authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to decide any urgent matters arising before the next meeting.

**26/48/P        ANY OTHER MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**

Cllr S Powell asked that the Neighbourhood Plan be activated.  
The Town Clerk suggested that it be added to the agenda as a standing item.

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that an approach had been made regarding the land at Palace Fields. L Wassell (Estates Manager) has requested that applicants come along to a meeting.

Cllr D Denis asked T Munt for information regarding premises licenses. T Munt will meet with Somerset Licensing next week and will update WCC.

**26/49/P        DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026, 7pm**

**Minutes Signed by the Chair ..... Date .....**