

## **Planning Committee Report to Annual Parish Meeting 2025**

The Planning Committee met monthly throughout 2024-2025 to consider an average 8.7 planning applications at each meeting and make their recommendations to Somerset Council. There were 2 meetings held under delegated authority. Members of the public have attended several meetings, and their views and comments were welcomed.

The Wells City Council Climate Emergency Motion 2019 has ensured the Committee focussed on how a planning application could be negatively by climate changes and where the plans show designs which are positive to the effects of climate.

Most applications were for moderate changes to properties such as adding extensions, loft extensions, windows and porches

However, some applications are apparently more problematic once they reach Somerset Planning and outcomes are not still not forthcoming. For Example:

2024/0241/FUL Retention of marquee. The Full Moon Wells, BA5 1UH. April 2024, WCC Recommended Refusal- The case remains open, and no decision has been made.

Where there is a WCC interest the decision is deferred to Somerset Planning such as 2024/0794/LBC and 2024/0793/FUL as this is WCC Council Property. (*Change of use from former Post Office to restaurant including internal and external alterations*).

### **Single new house development or smaller housing developments to support affordable housing within Wells Parish Boundary.**

WCC Planning Committee have recommended approval in the following cases:

2024/0490/FUL Erection of a single dwelling, including associated parking and landscaping. Land At 356033 146235 Churchill Avenue Wells Somerset. which granted by the Case officer in October 2024.

2024/0695/FUL Convert 2no. large units to 4no. smaller units. Plot 1 The Old Chapel Bakery Union Street Wells Somerset- Somerset Council refused the proposed development by virtue of its overall design, lack of natural light, and

location adjacent to a busy pedestrian thoroughfare, namely the proximity to the main walking route between Union Street Car Park and Wells High Street, would result in significant harm to the amenities of future occupiers through a lack of privacy and inadequate provision of natural light. The applicants have appealed this decision.

2024/1052/FUL Retention of existing public house (Sui Generis), conversion of an outbuilding (Sui Generis) to a one-bedroom bungalow and erection of a two-bedroom bungalow (Resub of 2023/2351/FUL). Cheddar Valley Inn 22 Tucker Street Wells Somerset BA5 2DZ. Wells City Council recommended approval in the original application and again on the resubmission. It was approved by Somerset in October 2024.

**Speakers:** The Planning Committee invited Somerset Council Senior Planning Officer- Simon Trafford to the meeting in December 2024 ([2024-11-21 Planning and Environment Minutes.pdf](#)). One of the questions put to him was S106 monies and how they are decided and what is needed from Wells in terms of input and information. Simon Trafford advised Wells City Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan as a framework, to set out WCC expectations for infrastructure. Councils requiring allocation of Section 106 monies are advised to submit a delivery plan with ideas of infrastructure projects, pedestrian crossings etc. The Council has responded and submitted the document in Appendix B.

The Planning Committee has submitted public comments on Planning Applications for larger housing developments outside the parish boundary of Wells, which will impact negatively on the services and infrastructure of the City e.g. New Farm, Haybridge. The Developers Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate was upheld in August 2024 and this application will now proceed.

Wells Planning recommended refusal of application 2023/1275/FUL from the Churchill Retirement Homes for 44 apartments on the Glastonbury Rd for inadequate parking and lack of affordable housing. The outcome decision by Somerset Council was approval and s106 monies of £17K was made for funding to NHS/GP services and funds were offset for Somerset Council Affordable Housing.

The **Wells Neighbourhood Plan** – 10 projects to progress the Neighbourhood Plan have been identified (Appendix A). The Planning Committee in April 2024 invited a task and finish group to work on Project 5 and the outcomes of this Report will be made to Full Council in March 2025. Other Projects are in progress e.g. Project 1- WCC submitted a response to Somerset Council's Local Plan Consultation 1<sup>st</sup> Phase which looked at Settlement Setting Assessments. (Appendix C)

In England, Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory from 12 February 2024 under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021\)](#). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than before development. There have been no significant Housing Development planning applications within Wells in the last 12 months where this will apply. Where applications involved a loss of biodiversity, the Planning Committee has taken a proactive approach, suggesting replanting more trees to replace the loss of trees which will be removed in the application. In the case of a recent Retrospective application (validated December 2023) for the construction of a Bund by Serious Staging, Wells City Council Planning recommended refusal on grounds of removal of biodiversity without a survey before the works were started. To date this retrospective Planning Application has not had a decision outcome from Somerset Council.

I would like to end by thanking my fellow committee members for their support and contributions to all the above work we have undertaken. This Committee has to consider the implications resulting from changes in Planning legislation and guidance and how they impact on the civic society needs, commerce and environment of our compact small city.

Cllr Denise Denis, Chair Planning Committee

10 February 2025