



Date: 6th June 2023

REF: 14/23/0021

Planning Officer: Darren Roberts

Dear Darren,

Erection of 4 No. dwellings with associated works on land east of North End Farm, North End, Creech St Michael

At a meeting of Creech St Michael Parish Council's Planning Committee held on the 25th May 2023, in the presence of six members of the community, the planning application reference 14/23/0021 was considered and the following is the response of Creech St Michael Parish Council.

Summary of our Response to the Application

The Parish Council has no objection or comments

The Parish Council has no objection, subject to the comments

The Parish Council objects in principle

X

The Parish Council objects as the application is not acceptable in its current format

Comments

The Proposal Goes Against the Council's Adopted Development Strategy and Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 states that its key objective is to provide a policy to protect and enhance the countryside and green infrastructure. The Green Wedge as identified in the Creech St Michael Neighbourhood Development Plan should therefore be protected not built upon.

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Local Development Framework (LDF) & Taunton Deane Core Strategy (adopted 2012) core policy restricts development that would harm the interests of towns and rural centres and aims to conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment.

The land itself is designated Local Green Wedge in the Creech St Michael Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 – 2028, adopted 2019, and as such has the protection of the Localism Act 2011 as it has achieved Asset of Community Status. Currently the land is not designated as residential land.

Creech St Michael is a Minor Rural Centre (MRC) as defined under the TD Core Strategy 2011 – 2028 (adopted 2012). This designation has not changed and as such the scale of the proposed development is not in keeping with this designation as additional development has already reached the capacity for such a village. Creech St Michael has already provided c.150 dwellings in the village from a requirement of 250 dwellings in 5 Minor Rural Centres.

The application states that Taunton Deane Borough Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. However, given that Taunton has now been designated a Garden City and that in excess of 10,000 houses have or are to be built, within the outlying villages of Norton Fitzwarren, Staplegrove and Monkton Heathfield to include suburbs of Taunton these additional houses in Creech are not needed.

Since the Core Strategy Policy was adopted in Creech St Michael approximately 140 dwellings have been built. These include developments in Hyde Lane (41 dwellings); Land north of the school (55 dwellings); Land off Hyde Lane (44 dwellings). Therefore there is adequate evidence clearly demonstrating that the housing supply targets are being met.

The Heritage Statement needs to recognise that unallocated green land outside of settlement boundaries will be protected and where possible enhanced. Development within such areas will be strictly controlled in order to conserve environmental assets and open character of the area. The site clearly sits within this definition and should not be developed for residential dwellings.

A number of planning applications have been refused in the past. The site is outside of the defined settlement limits of Creech St Michael, resulting in a proposed unplanned extension of the village. This site did not and still does not form part of the identified land for residential development under Taunton Deane's Site Allocations & Development Management Plan 2016, (SADMP). The former development proposal was considered unsuitable due to the additional pressure on local services and

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inability to cope with such an unplanned extension of the village. It was therefore in contradiction with Taunton Deane's Core Strategy policies SD1, CP1, CP4, CP6, CP8, SP4, DM1 & DM2. There are no material considerations that would outweigh these significant and demonstrable harms or the fundamental conflict with the Development Plan. The proposal does not fulfil the requirements for Sustainable Development as set out in SD1 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012. The site is valued for its own intrinsic sake as part of the countryside surrounding the village and should therefore be protected from sporadic unplanned development.

There Would be Harmful Effects Upon the Character and Appearance of the Area

The land contributes to the rural setting of the village and its intrinsic character and the beauty of the countryside. Landscape and visual impact assessments before and after any mitigation would need to form part of the proposal offering solutions acceptable to the local residents if this was to be granted.

If developed upon there would be visual impacts upon the existing properties, at North End, especially as the land currently backing onto these residential areas is higher than the properties, so would dwarf the existing properties and overlook them to the detriment of the existing properties. The height differentials does not appear to have been taken into consideration within the overall design statement and its effects upon the neighbouring dwellings.

The purpose of the design statement is to demonstrate how the character of an area has been taken into account and how design principles will be applied to achieve high quality design. The proposed development fails completely on all these aspects. The proposed development falls outside of the existing village envelope, so it cannot logically fit into the existing settlement pattern and neither does it respond to the character of Crech St Michael at this location.

It's the wrong site to build houses on raised land above existing housing and outside the current built up area and village envelope.

Highways and Public Access

The proposed access is within the existing 20 mph speed restrictions and is close to the North End roundabout. This means visibility splays would also impact on the existing area and the additional traffic movements are very likely to impact further on the village and those travelling on the road.

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The Highways report, submitted with the application, is 2 years out of date and contains information which is therefore not only out of date but also inaccurate e.g. it refers to 6 not 4 dwellings, which is a completely different layout to the application. It also states that regarding car parking spaces the assumption is for one car per bedroom, i.e. 16 cars, plus deliveries etc. This document cannot be considered as part of the current application and must be dismissed.

The land itself is steeply elevated overlooking the narrow existing road at the proposed entrance to the development, which is not wide enough for a footpath either. The telegraph poles would need to be moved and this would cause considerable disruption if the development were to go ahead. Additionally there is 3-phase high voltage to the rear of the site which might need to be protected / moved on health and safety grounds. This has not been considered within the application.

Watercourses, Flooding Risks, Environment and Sustainability

Existing watercourses and sewers, flood plains and phosphate mitigation would need to be considered as an intrinsic part of any application. The application documents state that the foul sewage will be discharged to the existing mains sewers in North End and the surface water will be discharged to ground within the site or discharged to the highway drain at North End.

It is already known by local residents that this would add increased pressure and detriment to the already inadequate drainage at this location which regularly floods whenever there has been moderate to heavy rainfall. North End has recently (Jan/Feb/Mar/April 2023) flooded as the drainage is inadequate. The stream at the rear of Cook's Close/West End/North End likewise regularly floods. The proposal is likely to make this worse with additional run off from the development. Whilst the site is contained within Flood Zone 1 the run-off down hill will head for Flood Zones 2 and 3 at North End/St Michael Road. The development proposed makes no allowance for the additional rainfall that will risk flood as a result of Climate Change over the next 50 years.

There is no phosphate mitigation solution submitted with the current application.

Environmental and Biodiversity Concerns

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy site allocations and development management Plan (Dec 2016) Policy ENV1 Protection of trees, woodlands, orchards and hedgerows: states developments should

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minimise impact on trees, woodlands, orchards, historic parklands and hedgerows of value to the areas landscape, character or wildlife and seek to provide net gain where possible.

Existing flora and fauna would be disturbed by the proposed development with the displacement of badgers, bats, foxes, hedgehogs, deer etc. together with the impact on their environment and a full up to date biodiversity and ecology surveys need to be submitted. In addition, CPRE needs to be consulted further on the proposal.

Policy ENV3 and Statement of Environmental Opportunity SEO2 state that development which would significantly harm the appearance, character and contribution of landscape quality would not be permitted ... and the purpose of SEO2 would be to protect, manage and enhance the distinctive farmed landscape while creating a balance of productive mixed farmland and diversity of habitats and associated species. The proposed development would change the landscape and nature of the site currently green belt land and annihilate habitats in this location.

The land is identified as being within a Local Green Wedge within the existing Creech St Michael Neighbourhood Plan under policy CSM 10 Local Green Wedge. This extends along the south eastern side of the M5 motorway from Hyde Lane including all of the subject site and beyond to Creech Heathfield. The policy states that development proposals in the Local Green Wedge will be resisted where they conflict with its purposes which are to prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods; to maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents; to provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play; to provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat; to protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity. The proposed development is within this area and therefore conflicts directly with it.

The established hedgerow has recently suffered from ash die-back. The hawthorn presently there means that in the winter months the hedge offers little protection visually to the existing dwellings and the proposed one.

The proposal would mean the further destruction of hedgerows and various trees would be removed to permit the development. These are used by protected species such as badgers, hedgehogs, bats, birds of prey together with foxes, deer, pheasants and countless other variety of birds and wildlife.

Heritage Impact Statement

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The North End Farmhouse is Grade 2 listed and therefore needs to be protected from proposed dwellings which are out of character with the neighbourhood. The proposed dwellings would be approx. 4 meters to the farmhouse. The local History Group for example have not been consulted regarding the application. A detailed assessment is therefore required to be carried out. The proposed development would therefore have significant impact upon the property. It needs to be noted that dwellings have been in North End since the 6th Century and that many of the existing properties in North End are listed or of sufficient age to warrant local listing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Andrew Williams'.

Andrew Williams

Clerk and RFO

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