



## **Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held at Banwell Youth & Community Centre, 7pm on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2025.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Nick Manley (Chairman), Simon Arlidge, Paul Blatchford, Steve Davies and Paul Harding.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Liz Shayler (Clerk).

Cllr Manley welcomed everybody.

**Before the meeting was convened, members of the public were invited to speak.**

No members of the public were present.

**The meeting was convened.**

### **09/25 To receive apologies for absence (agenda item 1)**

No apologies were received.

### **10/25 To receive declarations of interest (agenda Item 2)**

No interests were received.

### **11/25 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2025 (agenda item 3)**

**Resolved** – That the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

**The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous with one abstention due to absence)**

The minutes of the meeting were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **12/25 To discuss North Somerset Councils consultation on 'Additional Housing Sites' and agree a recommended submission to Full Council (agenda item 4).**

**Resolved:** The Planning Committee recommends that the Parish Council submits the following response.

#### **1. Prioritisation of Grey Belt Sites**

Several sites listed in the Additional Housing Sites documentation may qualify as Grey Belt land. Prioritising development in these locations would:

- Distribute new housing more evenly across North Somerset.
- Ensure housing is built in more sustainable locations, particularly those closer to Bristol, the region's primary economic hub.
- Reduce pressure on rural villages like Banwell, where existing infrastructure is already overstretched.

It is recommended that North Somerset Council reconsiders its housing allocations, focusing first on Grey Belt land before considering developments in less sustainable rural villages.

#### **2. Housing Target & Overdevelopment**

While North Somerset Council has not yet met its revised housing targets, Banwell is already accommodating 2,800 homes as part of the Wolvershill strategic development. This is a substantial contribution to the district's housing supply, and additional development within or near the Banwell Bypass is excessive and unjustified.

#### **3. Banwell's Classification as a Category A Village**

The classification of Banwell as a Category A village is not supported by the range of services and facilities available. While Banwell has some local amenities, it lacks the infrastructure

expected of a fully sustainable settlement. A Category B classification would be more appropriate, as Banwell relies on larger settlements for essential services. Like other Category B villages (e.g., Bleadon, Wrington, and Claverham), Banwell does not have the necessary employment opportunities, retail options, healthcare facilities, or reliable public transport links to support major growth without placing excessive strain on existing services.

**4. Impact on Local Services**

While the Wolvershill development promises improved local services and amenities, experience from developments such as Meadfields shows that these facilities often take years to materialise. In the meantime, existing GP surgeries, infrastructure, employment opportunities, retail facilities, and public transport are already overstretched, leaving residents with inadequate provisions. The cumulative effect of further development will exacerbate demand and negatively impact both new and existing residents.

**5. Traffic & Highway Safety**

The construction of the Banwell Bypass is already causing major disruption within Banwell village. With the Wolvershill development yet to begin, additional development in the bypass area will further worsen congestion and create significant safety risks for pedestrians and road users alike.

**6. Flood Risk & Drainage Issues**

Several proposed additional sites have flood risks or high-water tables, making them unsuitable for development. The topographical studies undertaken by Banwell Parish Council have already demonstrated that certain areas cannot be developed due to water-related constraints.

**7. Environmental & Landscape Harm**

The proposed sites erode the rural character of Banwell, with some affecting the Mendip Hills National Landscape. The impact of light pollution, urbanisation, and habitat fragmentation will have significant long-term ecological consequences.

**8. Excessive Housing Density**

Some of the proposed developments in Banwell are significantly denser than existing housing, leading to overcrowding that does not respect the village's rural setting. These densities contravene North Somerset Council's policy on rural settlement density, increasing infrastructure pressures and reducing quality of life for both new and existing residents.

**9. Biodiversity & Conservation Concerns**

- Sites 1, 2, 3, and 4 are designated BRERC bat roost locations and fall within the North Somerset and Mendip Bat SAC consultation zones.
- All five sites support a significant number of legally protected species within a 1km radius, including Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Slow Worm, Adder, Grass Snake, Badgers, Hedgehogs, and Horseshoe Bats.
- The proposed developments risk severing ecological corridors, leading to habitat fragmentation and loss of biodiversity.
- Off-site mitigation would be inadequate due to space constraints, meaning no viable solutions exist to safeguard Banwell's wildlife.

**Site-Specific Objections**

**1. East of Riverside (Adjacent to the Cemetery) – 4.8 ha, 30 dwellings**

- Flood Risk: The northern part of the site is prone to flooding, which contradicts National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance on avoiding flood-prone areas. There is always an issue with flooding on Riverside during episodes of heavy rain.
- High Water Table: - we know there is an issue with the water table in this location as topographical studies undertaken by the PC meant we were unable to extend the cemetery due to the height of the water table.
- Heritage Impact: The site is close to several listed buildings which would affect their setting.
- Infrastructure Strain: The local road network could struggle to accommodate additional development given access is Riverside.
- Environmental Concerns: Development could affect local wildlife habitats along the River Banwell.

**2. Elmcroft Farm (Behind Wolvershill Road Properties) – 5 ha, 100 dwellings**

- Traffic & Access Issues: additional housing would increase traffic and put pressure on the Banwell Bypass which would either empty onto Wolvershill Road or onto the new bypass.
- Settlement Creep: This site extends the village boundary unnecessarily, increasing urban sprawl and affect the green gap between the Bypass and Banwell Village.

- Impact on Rural Character: Development would erode Banwell's rural setting by taking development up to the bypass.
  - Drainage Issues: Potential for water runoff affecting nearby properties and infrastructure.
- 3. Land North of Banwell (Adjacent to Jubilee Gardens) – 1.6 ha, 58 dwellings**
- Strategic Gap Conflict: The site reduces the gap between Banwell village, the Banwell Bypass, and the Wolverhill strategic growth area. This contradicts the Local Plan's goal of preserving village identity.
  - The proposal has double the density of the nearby Jubilee Gardens development (54 dwellings), which is spread over a much larger area. This would overwhelm the local landscape, create a cramped urban feel, and fail to integrate with Banwell's existing layout.
- 4. South of Knightcott Road – 8.76 ha, 95 dwellings (Currently 27 Dwellings)**
- Contravention of NSC Policy CS32: The proposed development fails to "respect and enhance local character," contribute to "place-making," reinforce "local distinctiveness," and integrate well into the existing village, as required by North Somerset Council (NSC) Policy CS32. It does not make a positive contribution to the local environment or landscape setting.
  - Contradiction with Landscape Quality Assessment: The appellant has previously claimed the landscape's quality is "medium to poor," which contradicts North Somerset Council's Landscape Character Assessment SPD (2018). This assessment classifies the area (J2: River Yeo Rolling Valley Farmland and E1: Mendips Ridges and Combes) as 'Good'—the highest category. A 2016 planning appeal (APP/D0121/W/15/3138816) also highlighted the significant visual qualities of the area, describing it as an area of "visual tranquillity."
  - Harm to Green Gateway and Village Character: The development would eliminate the open green fields between Banwell and Knightcott, leading to ribbon development and merging these settlements. This would erode Knightcott's identity as a hamlet, making it appear as an extension of Banwell. The loss of this green gateway would have severe visual & landscape impacts, particularly for users of Knightcott Road and surrounding public rights of way.
  - Elevation Concerns & Visual Impact: A previous 2016 appeal decision highlighted concerns about building above the 30m contour line, noting that development at this height would cause prominent visibility issues and harm scenic views of the Mendips National Landscape. The current proposal places 19 of 27 houses above the 30m contour, making it highly intrusive in the landscape.
  - Loss of Public Footpath: The development requires the realignment of a well-used public footpath, replacing it with a permissive path, which raises concerns about long-term maintenance and access rights. This would negatively impact local recreational use.
  - Inadequate Bat Conservation Measures: The site is within the North Somerset and Mendip Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The impact on the bat population and proposed mitigation measures have not been adequately addressed, raising concerns about compliance with ecological protection policies. The site also has a high potential to jeopardise the planned dark corridors designed for bat foraging in the nearby new Strategic Wolverhill site. Horseshoe bats are highly sensitive to artificial lighting, and increased illumination from housing in this location would create a barrier to movement, leading to habitat fragmentation and reduced biodiversity.
- 5. Western Trade Centre (Behind New Development at Boulters) – 1.2 ha, 30 dwellings**
- Dependent on Adjacent Site: The suitability of this site depends on adjacent land (which there are significant concerns with).
  - Impact on Village Entrance: This would contribute to the gradual urbanisation of Banwell's western approach, altering the rural feel of the area.
  - Inadequate Bat Conservation Measures: The site has a high potential to jeopardise the planned dark corridors designed for bat foraging in the nearby new Strategic Wolverhill site. Horseshoe bats are highly sensitive to artificial lighting, and increased illumination from housing in this location would create a barrier to movement, leading to habitat fragmentation and reduced biodiversity.

## Conclusion

Banwell Planning Committee urges the Parish Council to strongly oppose the proposed additional 5 housing sites. The existing strategic allocation at Wolverhill already provides a substantial contribution to North Somerset's housing needs. Further development would be unsustainable, environmentally damaging, and inconsistent with the Local Plan's objectives. The Parish Council urges North Somerset Council to reconsider these allocations in favour of better-connected locations with the appropriate infrastructure to support growth.

**The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)**

**13/25 To note and comment upon planning applications (agenda item 5).**

**(i) 25/P/0238/RM Land at Parklands, Meadfields Phase 6 Churchland Way.**

Reserved Matters application for area Phase 6, with access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for approval, for the erection of 68no. dwellings and associated works pursuant to Outline Permission 16/P/2744/OT2 (Outline planning application with Environmental Statement with all matters reserved for subsequent approval for a residential development of up to 250 dwellings and associated infrastructure).

**Resolved:** To note this application.

**The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)**

**(ii) 25/P/0325/FUL Land South of Lower Laurel Farm, Summer Lane, Banwell**

Proposed erection of 6 bed-bungalow for use as an accessible holiday let.

**Resolved:** To support this application.

**The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)**

**14/25 To note the following planning applications (agenda item 6).**

**(i) 25/P/0239/NMA Land at Parklands (Phase 4a) Churchland Way.**

Non-material amendment to permission 23/P/1376/RM (Reserved Matters application for area Phase 4a for the erection of 95no. dwellings and associated works pursuant to Outline Permission 12/P/1266/OT2) to allow for substitution of house types and some surfacing and boundary amendments.

**(ii) 25/P/0258/LDE Withyhurst, Riverside Banwell BS29 6EH.**

Certificate of lawfulness for confirmation that the use of an existing outbuilding used as a two-storey annexed habitable space used incidentally to the occupation of the main dwellinghouse (Withyhurst) is lawful.

**Resolved:** The applications above were noted.

**The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)**

**15/25 To note planning decisions – (agenda item 7)**

**(i) 24/P/2704/FUL The Moor Dairy Moor Road Banwell BS29 6ET**

Proposed demolition of existing barn and erection of a new barn. **APPROVED**

**(ii) 24/P/2695/AGA Banwell Woods Towerhead Road Banwell**

Application to determine if prior approval is required for the placement of a shipping container clad in timber, to be used for storage of tools/equipment and shelter during adverse weather conditions. **WITHDRAWN**

**(iii) 24/P/2636/FUL Field to the Rear of Rose Hatch Cottage Hatches Lane Banwell**

Proposed extension of existing equine menage area. **APPROVED**

**(iv) 24/P/2588/FUH 87 Knightcott Road Banwell BS29 6HR**

Proposed demolition and rebuilding of the existing single storey outbuilding on the same footprint to provide a new garage/workshop and home office and solar panels to the West elevation roof. **APPROVE**

**16/25 Date of the next meeting (agenda item 8)**

7<sup>th</sup> of April 2025 7pm Planning Committee Meeting at the YCC.

**The Chairman closed the meeting at 19:30**

.....Chairman

.....Date