

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Town Council Meeting held in Room 3 at the Town Hall on Tuesday 20th August 2019 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillors: Andy Stokes, Pam Barrett, Pamela Forbes, Ron Fox, David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips, Kate Kayley, Huw Cox, John Bailey and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

In attendance: 6 members of the public and Sarah Parker Khan (Teignbridge District Council and Ashburton Town Council)

Press: No Press in attendance

19/66. Apologies: Cllrs Sue Clarke and Gwena Harman. No apologies received from Cllr Darren Greep.

19/67. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

19/68. Questions and comments from the public: None

19/69. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

- **Planning Application 0300/19 Proposed: mixed use development through the conversion of existing buildings and new build of a care village with a communal facilities hub, extended retail provision, open space, landscaping and car parking at Lower Mills, Buckfast Road, Buckfast**

Some members of the Town Council attended a site visit on 14th August and viewed the plans from the public display held earlier in the year. It was noted that the proposed development is aimed at providing more of a care need rather than an age need and will include accommodation for younger people if they meet the criteria.

120 staff including qualified nurses will be employed working 24hours, 7 days a week with some staff accommodation. The site will include 150+ accommodation units including specialist accommodation for dementia and end of life care, communal facilities such as a gym, swimming pool, sauna, cinema, workshops and restaurant which will be open to non-residents. A new community hall will be provided to replace Buckfast Village Hall, underground parking for 140 cars and a wide range of trips and activities will be arranged.

The village will work with the local medical centre and other health providers. There will be some assisted and local authority funded places but the units will be mostly for the private sector and purchased on a leasehold where the Abbey retains 10% of the property.

Members expressed concerns over flood risk, that the site should be carbon neutral where possible. The site will generate its own power. The land would not qualify for new housing, so a Section 106 agreement does not apply to this development. There is the suggestion to provide a community minibus which may be available for local residents, but there has been no commitment to this.

What will be the impact on the Kilbury treatment works? South West Water have confirmed that there is capacity, but have other proposed developments such as the 80 bedroom Premier Inn at Ashburton been included?

It is understood that the build process will be undertaken in 18 months with a proposed completion date in July 2021. The site will have to be complete before anyone can move in there will be a significant increase in traffic movements.

Part of the site lies within the restricted safeguarding zone for Bullycleaves Quarry what mitigation is in place to address this?

The Council also seeks reassurance concerning the impact on the local and protected bat population, for e.g. lighting and traffic movement at night will increase fatalities. The population has increased in recent years, what advice will be sought, from whom and how will this be addressed?

What impact will there be on local services including NHS provision? A second surgery is planned for the site as an extension to the existing medical surgery. Members would like reassurance of this as it is not included in the plan. The village must be adequately medically resourced, not to the detriment of the parish.

The application includes 20% affordable provision but what does this mean? A clear statement is needed regarding the long-term funded care which is affordable to Devon County Council with a ring-fenced local residency priority.

The Chair highlighted concerns from his draft response to the application:

- The Care Village could be a major employer in the parish. There is a need for local employment and training, will staff be sought locally and provided with training opportunities? This would also help with reducing traffic emissions.
- Will the applicant guarantee the use of the village hall and communal facilities to the wider community?
- The site will increase the population of the parish by at least 300 residents many of whom will have little or no mobility. There is already a significant parking problem in the town and the lack of parking may result in a loss of trade in the town in favour of the out of town retail area proposed together with free parking.
- This application is contrary to Dartmoor National Park Authority Local Plan and requires an Impact Assessment.
- The suggestion of a community minibus is welcomed, but is there any commitment to this?
- Traffic movements will be increased but will mostly be to and from the A38. It is believed that the impact of this is underestimated by the Highways Authority following the reduction in the bus service.
- The use of an existing brownfield site is welcomed by the Town Council, but the proposed development is unlikely to be of benefit to local elderly residents as the cost will be beyond their reach.
- This development should be considered as part of the allocation of dwellings for Buckfastleigh.
- The carbon emissions for this site will be much higher than a standard development due to the amount of heating and laundry required. This site does not address climate emergency targets.
- There is no indication of low carbon construction materials being used.

- There is already controlled sewage discharge into the River Dart from the Abbey when rainfall is high, this development will place greater pressure on the existing infrastructure.
- How will the increased amount of waste disposal be addressed and the high amount of single use plastics?
- Any major development outside of the Local Plan and National Planning Framework should be refused unless there is significant benefit to the community. What is the justification for such a major development in the National Park?
- Many aspects of what is being offered to the community are not included in the application, so will these happen? The Town Council would like assurances.

Members agreed that the Lower Mills site cannot remain as it but will the proposed development “kill the town or help the town?”

Member of the Public: *What are the criteria for living there? Money, health, disability? Who is going to live there?*

Cllr Andy Stokes: This has never been clarified – will the accommodation be affordable for people in Devon or from the southeast?

The planning application is only for material considerations and not how the accommodation will be allocated. How will different faiths be incorporated?

Decision: Members unanimously voted to broadly support this application subject to all the points and concerns raised being addressed with assurances from the Abbey as detailed above. The development should enhance the community and provide a commitment to employment and training opportunities for local people within the community and adjoining parishes.

It was agreed that the Abbey should provide a corporate social responsibility programme with investment in the local community even though a Section 106 agreement does not apply. The Town Council would like to work with the Abbey for eg. the provision of apprenticeships for 16 to 24-year olds.

Action: Clerk to draft a response and circulate to Members for comment.

- **Planning Application 0339/19 Proposed: change of use to children’s early years and pre-school and alterations to building at St. Mary’s Convent, Buckfast**

No external changes other than additional security.

Decision: Unanimous vote to support.

Planning application received after agenda set:

- **Planning Application 0360/19 Proposed: Replacement mixed use building for agriculture purposes and bat roost (in conjunction with the mixed-use redevelopment of the former Buckfast Mill site) at land to rear of St. Mary’s School, Buckfast**

Action: Clerk to request an extension and site visit prior to a response.

Meeting closed at 8.15 pm.