



BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Judith M. Hart
Clerk to the Council

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Chris Hart
Planning Team Manager
Dartmoor National Park Authority
Parke
Bovey Tracey
Devon
TQ13 9JQ

14 January 2022

Dear Chris,

Re: Planning Application 0615/18 – Land at Barn Park, Buckfastleigh

We are writing as Town Councillors in Buckfastleigh to voice our concerns about the Development Management Committee meeting held on 7 January 2022 at which planning permission was granted for the above application.

Firstly, Buckfastleigh Town Council were unaware this application was going to committee and were therefore unable to send a representative to the meeting to raise the valid concerns of residents, especially residents of Barn Park, Jordan Street and Wallaford Road. Our Teignbridge District Council Ward Councillor Huw Cox only found out it had been to committee and then passed by accident during a conversation with a colleague about another matter.

Our Clerk received the agenda for the December meeting but not the January meeting which we understand is unusual. I understand the agenda was published on the 21 December with the meeting on 7 January. Due to non working days over the holiday period, many people finished work early and did not go back until 4 January. Councils did not meet during this period, so even if the Town Council did know about the application, it may not have been possible to meet up to consider a response.

Secondly, the application that went before the committee on 7 January had been amended considerably since the Town Council last commented (in detail) with their concerns in 2019. We expected the Town Council to have been consulted on the final version of the application as local residents have a right to have their views and concerns put forward. Our Ward Councillor has also spoken to a concerned local resident who contacted the National Park before Christmas to see if there was any progress on the site and was informed that nothing was happening.

We would appreciate you answering the following questions:

Do Dartmoor National Park (DNP) routinely send out agendas and reports on planning applications to relevant parish and town councils? It appears to us that this is inconsistent. If councils need to examine every meeting agenda on your website, they need to know this.

This application has been going on for a long time and the last communication the Town Council had was in 2019. We received no acknowledgment of our letter or response to our concerns. Is it standard practice for DNP to just ignore the views of the local parish or town councils and therefore the views of local residents?

Do DNP invite a representative of the relevant parish/town councils to speak at planning application meetings as standard practice? If not, why not?

In the DNP Local Plan, the mission statement is that all new development within the Park should have a 45% ratio of 'affordable' properties. This application has been approved with nowhere near that figure allocated. It is acknowledged that there is a developing housing crisis in Devon and in Buckfastleigh, an area with significant levels of deprivation, affordable housing should be a priority of any new development. Why then has an application that falls below your own stated aim deemed acceptable?

We are very disappointed with how this application has been dealt with and it feels as though we may have been deliberately excluded from a process that will have a significant impact upon many of our residents. This could lead to a considerable loss of faith in the DNP decision making process by residents of Buckfastleigh. Having looked through the report there are several valid planning issues that could have been raised which may have led to at least a deferment at the meeting if a representative of the local community was able to attend and put those issues forward.

We want to make it clear that we continue to object to the development, and we seek an urgent conversation with DNP to understand what the next steps might be.

Buckfastleigh Town councillors met to discuss this matter on Wednesday 12 January when a decision was taken to send this letter and make it public prior to further discussion at full Council on Wednesday 19 January at 7.00pm in Buckfastleigh Town Hall. We ask that you respond to us at your earliest convenience, and we would also like to take this opportunity to invite a representative of the Park to this meeting.

The undersigned councillors all support the views put forward in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Huw Cox, Teignbridge District Councillor for Ashburton and Buckfastleigh and
Buckfastleigh Town Councillor
Councillor Sue Clarke, Town Council Chair
Members of Buckfastleigh Town Council

C.c Kevin Bishop, Chief Executive of Dartmoor National Park Authority
Dan Janota, Senior Forward Planner, Dartmoor National Park Authority