

Churchill Parish Council

Response to Planning Application 21/P/2123/OUT replacing 19/P/2713/FUL

Land at Dinghurst Road, Churchill:

Outline application for the erection of up to 25no. dwellings with details of access and associated works (all other matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for subsequent approval).

Churchill Parish Council (CPC) objected to the previous application 19/P/2713/FUL for 48 houses on this site. The current application for outline planning consent does not alter its original reasons for objection.

Churchill Parish Council objects to this planning application in the strongest possible terms and fully supports North Somerset Council's previous refusal of application 19/P/2713/FUL on this site.

CPC objects for the following reasons:

This application is not Plan Led.

- 1.1. The site sits outside the settlement boundary and does not respect the scale and character of the village and the site's location.
- 1.2. It does not fall within any overarching national or local plan or planning policy
- 1.3. It does not form part of the North Somerset Local Plan 2026
- 1.4. It is not on the North Somerset Council (NSC) Site Allocations Plan (SAP).
2. This greenfield land, currently grazed pasture, is adjacent to the Mendip Hills AONB and is in its immediate setting.
3. The site lies adjacent to the **Churchill Conservation Area**.
 - 3.1. This planning application contravenes the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 and The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW2000).
 - 3.2. The further assertions offered by the applicants, concerning the inconspicuousness of the site within the landscape, simply fail to be supported by fact.
4. CPC feels that this application contravenes paragraph 185 of the NPPF regarding the appropriateness of new development stating "*... it should:*
 - a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new developments – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;*
 - b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and*
 - c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation".*

5. The DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan sets out under paragraph 2.2.1 that *'Some of England's most beautiful landscapes and geodiversity are protected via a range of designations including National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty... Over the next 25 years we want to make sure they are not only conserved but enhanced.'*
This application contravenes this Environment Plan.
6. **North Somerset's Landscape Character Assessment- FINAL 041018 p198 'Landscape Guidelines': Strategy for Areas J2 (Churchill and surrounding villages) and E2 (Mendip Ridges and Combes).** The site borders these two areas. This application contravenes the provisions of both.
7. A recent **Landscape Sensitivity Assessment by MHP chartered Landscape Architects** referring to this site and its surroundings concludes:
"The land unit is rated as high sensitivity due to it containing nationally protected landscapes and heritage assets, it contains community valued recreational facilities and distinctive natural landform with numerous footpath networks. It is also instrumental in providing separation and separate identities between the settlement areas of Churchill, Churchill Gate, Old Churchill and Langford."
8. **North Somerset Council REP-001 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment FINAL 130318** refers to **Area 3 Churchill, centred around Front Street and Dinghurst Road**
"Land to the north of Area 3 slopes up from the settlement edge to Windmill Hill. Although dense vegetation on field boundaries encloses the fields in this area, the rising topography increases the visual prominence of this land and there is intervisibility with the AONB. In addition, development on this land would affect the settlement form. Owing to the above, this land is of high sensitivity".
9. The documentation provided by the applicant fails to demonstrate that the development would be in the public interest and would be in **contravention of NSC's Policy DM11**: *"Development which would have an adverse impact on the landscape, setting and scenic beauty of the Mendip Hills AONB, including views into and out of the AONB, will not be permitted unless in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that it is in the public interest."*
10. **NS Core Strategy CS9 – Living within Environmental Limits** states, *"The existing network of green infrastructure will be safeguarded, improved and enhanced by further provision, linking in to existing provision where appropriate, ensuring it is a multi-functional, accessible network which promotes healthy lifestyles, maintains and improves biodiversity and landscape character and contributes to climate change objectives.*
Priority will be given to:
*** the promotion of the north slopes of the Mendip Hills AONB as sub-regional corridors for biodiversity, recreation and landscape retention.**
11. **NS Core Strategy CS32: Service Villages.** It should be noted that Churchill Parish is designated as a Service Village. It is in fact two villages – Churchill and Langford, with distinct separate identities. It has already accepted or is accepting over 300 new houses on a village of some 857 previously. This policy defines Service Villages, *"Service Villages are places where a small amount of development (particularly economic, or which extends the range of services available) may be appropriate. New residential development will generally be acceptable in principle within settlement boundaries, provided it respects the scale and character of the village and the site's location..*
12. CS32 further sets out the criteria for service villages regarding land adjacent to settlement boundaries particularly regarding otherwise unmet need. There is no demonstrable need in this parish which has no local employment, minimal public transport, full schools and narrow lanes. New developments are being advertised in Manchester and London.

13. **CS32 further states:** *Affordable housing will only be permitted either within settlement boundaries or in the form of rural exception sites, and then only adjacent to settlement boundaries.* With the recent new developments Churchill has gained a proportionate level of affordable housing.
14. Policy CS32: Service Villages outlines new development within the service villages, including Churchill, will be supported where;
- 14.1. *it does **not** result in significant adverse cumulative impacts (such as highways impacts) likely to arise from existing and proposed development within the wider area;*
This application will have a significant adverse cumulative impact. Churchill has already had planning approvals for over 300 houses.
There is no need for a development on this greenfield pasture in this location.
- 14.2. *the location of development maximises opportunities to reduce the need to travel and encourages active travel modes and public transport;*
There is very little public transport. See #22 below
- 14.3. *it demonstrates safe and attractive pedestrian routes to facilities within the settlement.* See #15.1 below.
- 14.4. This application is inconsistent in with all of the above.
15. **NSC Core Strategy CS1:** Addressing climate change and carbon reduction:
- 15.1. *“Developments of 10 or more dwellings should demonstrate a commitment to maximising the use of sustainable transport solutions, particularly at Weston-super Mare. Opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport should be maximised through new development and in existing areas emphasising the aim to provide opportunities that encourage and facilitate modal shift towards more sustainable transport modes”.* This site will reduce walking and cycling. The congested road access will be extremely dangerous – no pavement on the southern side making pedestrian access totally unsuitable. The pavements opposite are substandard in width and are used by many school children accessing Churchill Academy.
- 15.2. The management of site-access, from A368 Dinghurst Road, remains entirely unacceptable. The large traffic flow will increase as a consequence of the Banwell Bypass. There remains no right turning third lane to enable eastbound traffic safely to enter the site.
- 15.3. Highways England is responsible only for Motorways and a few major A-roads. They are not responsible for the A368. Their report indicates that that they have not visited the site or taken into consideration the greater volume of additional traffic as a result of the Banwell Bypass and the 3000 houses that it is to facilitate. CPC fundamentally disagrees with their conclusion.
- 15.3.1. We note the Highways Officer’s concerns as related to Planning Application 21/P/2049/OUT regarding land on Church Lane and Front Street, Churchill: *“The A38 Bristol Road/A368 Dinghurst Road signalised is an area of concern in terms of congestion for North Somerset Council”.* The officers have requested, *“An assessment to understand the interaction of the site with the signalised junction and to ensure there is no impact on highway safety”.*
- 15.3.2. This is inconsistent with Highways England’s response to this application.
- 15.3.3. As with our response to 21/P/2049/OUT, CPC further requests that the modelling for the effect of the forthcoming Banwell Bypass is included in this assessment and must

also include the impact of the 3000+ houses that are conditional to the Banwell Bypass being constructed.

15.3.4. HGV traffic on the A38 headed north and turning west onto A368 Dinghurst Road have to utilise the lanes in both directions. This causes a conflict.

15.3.5. The Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee oak tree and Grade 2 listed railings are within sight of the proposed access.

16. NS Core Strategy CS 3 Environmental impacts and Flood Assessments CS4 Nature Conservation

16.1. These two policies imply a profound concern to sustain and improve the local natural environment. This application fails to do this.

17. **The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)** states that planning applications for '*...development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists*'.

17.1. The proposed new bat "dark" corridor as a suitable compensation strategy is risible (see expert opinion). Bats, partially blinded by house lighting, will fail to take such a corridor - even when, years later, it has grown up sufficiently to afford some protection. Light spill from dwellings will destroy insect-hunting stratagems. The bats will by then be long dead.

18. **The Applicant cites NPPF 2019 Para. 8**, "*Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

18.1. Taking each objective in turn:

18.1.1. a) **An economic objective:** refers to sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places to support growth. Churchill is not the right place. It is far from viable public transport; 4.5 miles from the nearest railway station without a bus link. It is remote from the employment centres of Bristol and Weston-S-Mare meaning a lot more traffic on the already congested local roads. (See #26 below) The JSP Inspectors had major reservations about building in strategic locations, Churchill was one of them. Churchill has already accepted a large amount of additional housing. The local schools are already full.

It is difficult to get a GP appointment – 3 weeks for even a telephone appointment. This site is neither the right type or in the right place to ‘support growth’. Improved productivity? No.

18.1.2. b) **A social objective:** The recent addition of over 300 new houses has ensured that Churchill already has a sufficient number and range of homes. It must be remembered that villages have a specific character and culture which must be respected. This application in addition to the houses already built or in the pipeline will turn this village into a dormitory town where car usage is paramount not only for access to the surrounding villages and towns but for personal safety.

18.1.3. c) **An environmental objective:** CPC is incredulous that the applicant can claim that this development will contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment. The land that is already grazed and well looked-after by a local farmer.

19. **CS 25 Ensuring safe and healthy communities.** *Any [CIL] contributions will be influenced by the North Somerset School Organisational Plan (2007–2012). This strategic document includes an assessment of future demand for school places and how these may be accommodated. The main conclusions arising from the document which are relevant to the Core Strategy are: **To ensure that there is a surplus of around 5 – 7% of places in all schools to enable parental preferences to be realised as much as possible.***

19.1. CPC cannot comprehend how this policy can be met as both Churchill Primary and Academy are full. Children are already leaving the village to travel to other remote schools in Backwell and Bristol. Families who recently moved to the new developments on the assurance of availability of local school places have been unable to access Churchill Academy or Primary and have been offered places as remote as Worle meaning further traffic on our crowded roads.

20. **CS26: Supporting healthy living and the provision of health care facilities.**

20.1. This application will put further pressure on our existing GP Surgery, Mendip Vale Medical Practice. It has become extremely difficult to get a GP appointment now.

21. **NS Core Strategy CS27: Sport, recreation and community facilities.**

21.1. The applicant asserts that Churchill Sports Centre is a current amenity. Churchill Sports Centre has been closed since March 2020 and is set to remain so for some considerable time.

22. **Public Transport and Travel:**

22.1. Churchill is 4.5 miles from the nearest railway station and does not have a bus link to the station.

22.2. The applicant further maintains: *“The village, together with its near neighbour Langford, is linked via the A38 and A368 to higher order services, facilities and employment at Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare respectively, with regular bus services to both from stops close to the site via the Falcon, no.51 and no.62 routes.*

22.2.1. The bus to Bristol via Bristol Airport on the main A38 only runs every hour. This bus is run by the Stagecoach company, originates in Plymouth and is subject to unexpected delays due to stoppages along the M5. Hold-ups are frequent on the M5 part of its route especially during the holiday season. This bus service also suffers from cancellations when the driver exceeds his legal, scheduled, daily driving time limit - due to these motorway stoppage - and has to be relieved of his shift during the journey to and from Plymouth. The X1 service to Bristol from Congresbury is approx. 5km (3 miles).

- 22.2.2. There is an hourly bus service from Langford to Bristol operated by Bristol University. However, to get to the bus stop in Langford is 1km. The last bus on the return journey leaves Bristol at 6pm.
- 22.2.3. There is a very limited bus service to Weston-S-Mare which takes a long time, and runs infrequently and is subject to frequent delays.
- 22.2.4. The applicant further claims that, *"The site is therefore considered to be accessible to shops, services and facilities by sustainable modes of transport."* This is not accurate.
- 22.2.5. The small, 24-hour supermarket is 2.4km (1.5 miles) from the site. The applicant infers that there is a Post Office, local store and tea room. This is a single shop with a combination of functions in Front Street. It provides a basic range of supplies.
23. **CPC draws attention to Avon Fire & Rescue Service report.** *"Central Government does not provide any funding to Avon Fire & Rescue Service for the capital cost of growth-related infrastructure"*
- 23.1. *"Therefore, Avon Fire & Rescue Service may need to become reliant on **local support funding** through either developer contributions, Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)"*
- 23.2. *"These developments will contribute to a significant increase in demand for Avon Fire & Rescue Service. As the population increases, so does the demand. This has an added impact upon the current resources therefore stretching our assets to meet this demand."*
- 23.3. *"It is accepted that Avon Fire & Rescue Service will not be increasing the number of resources or assets to manage with this growth."*
24. **Employment:**
- 24.1. The lack of local employment opportunities is a major concern. We note the lack of specific reference to this. Local major employers have been cited as:
Thatchers. However their new factory is fully automated. There are currently looking to fill 13 vacancies.
 These will doubtless be taken up by other developments particularly in Sandford.
Langford Vets There are currently 4 vacancies: 3 requiring high-level qualification plus 1 part-time receptionist.
- 24.2. Employment opportunities are unavailable locally. This will lead to more local car use in contravention of NS Council's Climate Change and Nature Emergency commitment.
25. **The NPPF (paras 102 and 103) 2019** states that planning should, *"actively manage patterns of growth in support of the opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use. In assessing applications for development paragraph 108 notes assessments should ensure:*
- 25.1. *appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;*
- 25.2. *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and*
- 25.3. *any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree."*
- 25.4. CPC notes that this site cannot ensure any of the above. See #15 above.
- 25.5. The NPPF states specifically at paragraph 109 that

25.5.1. *Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.*”

25.5.2. CPC notes that there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety and the residual cumulative impacts of this development will be severe.

26. Drainage:

- 26.1. The subsoil conditions and depths on this site are remarkably variable – very different half-drain times observed at different locations on site.
- 26.2. The drainage plus the sub-soil profiles information strongly reinforces our conclusion that this site has very heterogenous superficial stratigraphy and geology. It is part of the outwash fan delivered from Dolberrow valley in post-glacial floods (a view endorsed by site visits from the Oxford geomorphology group and Prof Andrew Goudie). Consequently, sub-surface channels filled with rocky debris and coarse sand permeate through a complex poorly sorted mosaic of silts and clays of very low water permeability.
- 26.3. The author of the drainage and flood assessment fails to recognise the various problems and proposes to rely upon on-site infiltration. The procedure he adopts ignores the unusual character of this site which is a major subterranean through-flow from the Mendips above. Furthermore, the infiltration data itself would lead an impartial expert to assert that infiltration is not appropriate here. Indeed, partly acknowledging this, the author has attempted (and failed) to find stormwater runoff routes offsite. See also the Pitt Review (2008) in response to the 2007 floods – need for local information.
- 26.4. It is pertinent to observe that - despite the reduction in house numbers - the length of access road is not substantially reduced. Consequently the area of impermeable surface introduced by development, though now somewhat smaller, is not reduced in proportion to the house numbers
- 26.5. The proposed attenuation ponds are located adjacent to the point on the A368 where flood water already accumulates. Directing more site-derived stormwater into this region will make matters worse. Related problems of dramatic flooding are apparent at the Newlands site on the A38.
- 26.6. The proposals remain inadequate.

27. Summary:

- 27.1. Outlined above are just a few of the reasons why this proposal is totally inappropriate. It contravenes too many of the policies contained within North Somerset’s Core Strategy and the NPPF 2019.
- 27.2. This is a speculative application that is not based on need.
- 27.3. Churchill has accepted a large number of houses for a Service Village, which by NSC’s own estimation is the 2nd least sustainable location of the 9 ‘Service Villages’. The housing and population increases in Churchill are unsustainable in respect of traffic, school places, road infrastructure, parking, shopping facilities, and medical facilities and public transport. Any further development will have disproportionately adverse consequences in terms of infrastructure, health, wellbeing and will change the character of the village and its culture life for ever.
- 27.4. This is unacceptable development allowing urban sprawl to leapfrog over the Green Belt destroying village communities and the culture of village community life.

- 27.5. CPC fully supports North Somerset's refusal letter to Coln Residential regarding Land At Dinghurst Road, Churchill (19/P/2713/FUL). The same issues apply to this application.
- 27.6. The reduction in the numbers of houses makes no difference to the fundamental reasons for North Somerset Council's previous refusal.
28. For all of the above reasons given in this response, Churchill Parish Council urges North Somerset Council to refuse this application.