

AUST PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Tuesday 15th August 2023 @ 7:30pm at Littleton Village Hall

Present: Councillors Steve Meredith (chairman), Heather Bayston, Ian Jenkins (vice-chair), David Spratt, Jeremy Warren, Anne Wiseman

In attendance: Ward Councillors Matthew Riddle & Tony Williams (SGC), 37 members of the public

Clerk: Emma Pattullo

Approved at the subsequent meeting held on 12th September 2023.

Signed copy held by the Clerk.

1 To receive apologies

All councillors were present.

2 To receive declarations of interest and requests for dispensations

Cllr Meredith declared interest in item 6.1 due to ownership of land adjacent to the application site & right of access across the site.

3 To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 11th July 2023

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th July 2023 be approved as a correct record. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

4 To resolve suspension of Standing Order 3(f) (limitation on time for public participation)

It was RESOLVED that, due to the number of members of the public present and the nature of the agenda business, standing order 3(f) should be suspended for the duration of the meeting, to allow all who wished to have chance to address the council.

5 Public Forum

A number of members of the public expressed views on the planning application at item 6.1. The key points made are summarised below.

Application generally:

- Facility would provide social benefit and is needed in the region;
- Social benefit does not outweigh valid planning & operational concerns;
- Supporting technical information is sparse;

Traffic:

- Traffic statement does not contain any real analysis of generated traffic volume or flow patterns, nor a proper comparison with the current (extant) permission for a children's activity centre;
- Traffic volumes for the centre will be lower than for the extant permission and much lower than when the site was used by Electrotech;
- No assessment of traffic impacts on vulnerable road users – there are public footpaths and a National Cycle Network route in the vicinity of the site, many horses stabled nearby and the access road is frequently used by walkers;
- Sustainable transport – there is no public transport¹ in the vicinity of the site, hence all staff, residents and visitors would need to arrive by car;

Flood risk:

- Environment Agency do not intend to maintain flood defences in this area²;

¹ The Westlink on-demand minibus service does in fact cover Littleton village.

² Current EA policy (Severn Estuary Shoreline Management Plan 2, 2017) is actually "hold the line" ie. maintain the existing level of protection, but it is understood that funding for the necessary works has not yet been identified.

- Flood risk assessment differs significantly from that given in the extant permission, which permission includes a requirement for the site to be evacuated during periods of predicted high water levels >8m AOD at Avonmouth;
- No flood management or evacuation plan has been produced – the extant permission includes a condition requiring such a plan to be agreed prior to occupation;

Location and safeguarding:

- Location – the siting of a facility for people who may well be experiencing mental health challenges next to a fast-flowing tidal estuary and within 15 minutes' walk of the Severn Bridge, a known suicide spot, is inappropriate;
- Security – will users be permitted to leave the site and if so, has the potential impact on the local community been assessed?
- Site is remote with no local health services – is this safe for potential high medical need patients?
- Rights of access – several groups have right of access through the site (fishing club, Avon Wildlife Trust, local farmer), how will this be safely maintained?

Other issues:

- Sewage management has been a problem at this site during previous occupations, requiring frequent visits by tankers to remove excess waste water. The application does not address whether the present sewage arrangements will be sufficient for the proposed number of users;
- It is unclear what the planning status of those parts of the site covered by the existing planning permission, but not by the new application, would be if permission is granted. Could they still be used for educational purposes?³

6 Planning

Cllr Meredith left the meeting at this point due to previously declared interest.

Cllr Jenkins took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

6.1 To resolve response to planning application ref. P23/02219/F - Beluga House, Whale Wharf Lane, Littleton Upon Severn - Change of use from a residential education activity centre with adventure and school courses (Class C2) to use as a detox / addiction centre (Class C2) with external alterations

Councillors considered the application, including the aspects raised during public forum and through representations made prior to the meeting, and RESOLVED that a response of OBJECTION should be submitted, on the following grounds:

- Insufficient information provided for a valid assessment to be made;
- The site is unsuitable for the proposed use in that vulnerable people would be housed next to a potentially life-threatening estuary and bridge;
- Flood risk assessment is lacking in detail and contradicts that of the extant permission;
- Traffic impacts have not been fully addressed, particularly emergency access and risks to vulnerable road users;
- Rights of access through the site by third parties do not appear to have been considered;
- Development could have significant impacts on the local community;
- No clear means of emergency evacuation;
- Distance to medical facilities when users could well have significant medical needs.

³ Post meeting note: the planning officer has confirmed that should the current application be approved and the detox centre development be put in place, this would mean the previous consent for the education centre would become void as the new development would create a new planning unit.

The clerk was asked to draft a response covering these matters and circulate to councillors for comment before submitting to SGC.

7 Any other minor matters for discussion (no decision required) or items for next agenda

No matters raised.

8 Meeting closure

The meeting closed at 8:35pm.

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Tuesday 12th September 2023. Items for the agenda should be with the Clerk by 5th September.

Signed (Chairman):