

Planning and Environment Committee Report for Annual Parish Meeting 18 April 2005

1. The main regular part of our business is looking at all planning applications relating to the village. We have looked at 35 sets of plans this year. The majority are for extensions and improvements to the smaller properties. People are looking for more space and nudging their houses out at the back, the side, the front and into the loft. The rural nature of the parish is also reflected in applications for stables and new uses for old barns.

The newly-named tick boxes in our response sheets from BANES Planning Services are No objection in Principle, Reservation or Object in principle. In the great majority of cases (77%) we had no objection, or a few reservations about size or materials. In the handful of cases where we objected in principle, BANES agreed with us, although they approach the applications from a very different perspective with their own criteria to apply. 2 cases went to appeal, both relating to Jewson's View Farm, and the refusals were upheld.

2. A more unusual application relating to Tyndale and its use for up to 2 years by the Carrswood Activity Centre. We were somewhat guarded at the beginning, with major worries about traffic safety and parking, but the people responsible at BANES and the Carrswood Centre were very responsive and changed their plans until we were happy with them. It's nice to see the building being used again. It's future is still open to question.
3. Another topical issue came in the form of an application for the Orange Mast at Shockerwick. We objected to it's siting in an AONB and BANES refused permission. Orange appealed, we listed all our objections again, and we have not been notified out their decision yet.
4. We have been keeping an eye all year on the newly-made entrances to parts of Warleigh Woods which have been on the market, with a view to making sure that the woods cannot be abused by vehicles or any illicit development. At the moment we are trying to find out if Highways Department regulations have been flouted.
5. At the Recreation Ground some of the users, particularly the Rugby Club, have been looking into the possibility of using part of a neighbouring field for a car park. The Parish Council, and the Planning Committee, have had a number of discussions about how to ensure that village interests are fully protected if these plans are progressed.
6. We are pleased to give credit where credit is due, to BANES. In January I made a phonecall to the Footpaths man at the Council about the rickety state of two stiles on the way down from Whitehaven to the paper mill. It took him 2 weeks to visit the site, contact the landowners, commission the work, and replace them with nice metal kissing gates. We were very impressed.
7. Another enforcement officer is having some effect at the scrapyard (known as Lavington's Yard) down between the railway and the By Brook). He issued a deadline for removing scrap – including a barge - from the green-field part of the site, and it now looks much tidier.

ANNEX F

8. A hugely important and ongoing concern of the Planning and Environment Committee is the twin issue of the Link Road and the Park-and-ride scheme. We are very lucky to have Steve Mackerness, who seems to have the talent not just to follow and interpret the wider picture, but to grasp all the detail as well.
9. Many other issues – too numerous to mention – have come and gone during the year. There have also been changes to procedures and frames of reference which have involved coming to grips with a good deal of new documentation. For example
 - The so-called delegation scheme means that BANES have a target to turn around all applications within 8 weeks. It s one of the reasons why Planning Officers deal with nearly ALL planning applications without them going to Committee. This caused a lot of consternation around the parishes, but seems to work very well.
 - The new Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan – which is the Bible for planners – is nearing the end of its massive consultation phase. The latest round of consultation related to the Sustainable Development Appraisal of the Plan. If anyone would like to read the huge technical appendix, please feel free to borrow it from me.
10. Finally, and not least, I should mention that we are looking forward to the final completion of the Village Design Statement, which will greatly inform our frame of reference when we are commenting on future planning applications.

Jan Hooker