

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON 22nd February 2024 AT 7.30PM**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Alison Carr (AC), Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr Stanley Paulo (SP), Cllr Trevor Ingram (TI), Cllr Andrew Gorton (AG)
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey, 152 members of the public. 2 representatives of Avalon Planning Ltd 2 representatives of Morrisons PLC
Absent	n/a

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council**

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
<b>24/070</b>	<p><b>Welcome and Chairmans announcements:</b> The meeting started at 7.30pm. The Chairman, Cllr AC, welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- thanked Colin Veale, Chairman of the Village Hall Trustees and the Clerk for preparing the venue.</li> <li>- reminded attendees that the Council has two vacancies and encouraged them to consider becoming a Councillor.</li> <li>- Publicised the Annual Parish meeting to be held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30pm at the Village Hall</li> </ul> <p>The Chairman explained the Extraordinary Meeting had been convened to consider a planning application (24/0044/FUL) to re-develop the land and shop building known as Potters Country Market – currently Morrisons Daily/Post Office. Cllrs were keen to receive residents’ comments and stated that Morrisons were leaseholders. They did not own the building.</p> <p>She thanked representatives from Avalon Planning Ltd and Morrisons for accepting the Council’s invitation to attend the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman gave a final reminder: the deadline for responses to the planning application 24/0044/FUL was Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February.</p>
<b>24/071</b>	<p><b>Apologies.</b> To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence. <i>N/A</i></p>
<b>24/072</b>	<p><b>Public question time (3 minutes):</b> Residents are invited to give their views and question the Parish Council on issues on this agenda or raise issues for further consideration at the discretion of the Chairman, before the start of the Parish Council meeting. Members of the public may not take part in the Parish Council meeting itself. This item includes issues submitted to the Clerk prior to the meeting. <i>Individual contributions are limited to 3 minutes.</i></p> <p>Standing Orders were suspended:</p> <p>Murray Ross (MR) of Avalon Planning gave a short presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The application was submitted on behalf of their client The Pervaiz Naviede Family Trust (PNFT Real Estate Ltd)</li> <li>- The existing site is the commercial centre of the village.</li> <li>- They considered the site to be under-utilised and could be better used. Currently, there was an over-provision of parking.</li> <li>- The previous approved scheme to upgrade the existing building for mixed commercial/residential was not implemented.</li> </ul>

- Gave an overview of the proposed commercial/residential scheme including two retail units (total 91m<sup>2</sup>) with 5 parking spaces creating a focal point for the village.

Over the next hour MR answered a series of questions and statements from members of the public. The lively session covered many issues including:

#### Asset of Community Value

- Many residents stressed the “vital importance” of the current supermarket shop and Post Office facility to the community. It was noted that the village has an older demographic and many people rely on the current facilities for groceries, Post Office and banking services.
- Attendees vigorously applauded Martin Sherriff Regional Manager when he stated “Morrisons have a very strong desire to remain in the village”.

#### Retail Space

- Many attendees questioned the long-term economic viability of two small retail units (total 91m<sup>2</sup>) including storage. They noted that two small units in the existing building had been without tenants for many years since the current building was established.
- Residents questioned whether the retail units were big enough to interest a supermarket chain.
- Martin Sheriff, Regional Manager, advised that Morrisons look for 2,000+sq ft floor space (approx. 185m<sup>2</sup>) when considering new stores and 91m<sup>2</sup> retail space provided in the proposed scheme would be “very challenging”.
- MR advised that the proposed floor space for the retail units was dictated by the site owner. Also, the owner had previously struggled to find an operator for the retail space.
- Attendees expressed concerns regarding the additional car journeys to access supermarkets and Post Office if the current facilities are lost. Limited hourly public transport was available but access to the bus stop would be via unpaved, unlit lanes. West Hill is a widespread village.
- A member of the public asked if temporary shopping/PO facilities would be provided during the construction phase if the application was approved.

#### Parking

- Attendees considered the 5 parking spaces allocated for the shop to be inadequate, noting that they were likely to be used by the staff who will travel to the village. Also, one of the spaces would be allocated parking for disabled drivers.
- Attendees considered there was no provision for deliveries by large vehicles which would exclude some retailers.
- The current car park was considered to be central to the village and used for many purposes: school coach drop off/pick up, pizza van etc
- A resident highlighted the struggles of shops in nearby villages due to the lack of parking nearby.
- Attendees commented that West Hill is a widespread village and car park spaces are necessary for the many residents who rely on cars to access the village shop

#### Post Office/Banking facilities

- Attendees considered the Post Office to be an “essential” facility for West Hill and also from surrounding villages.
- Many people were reliant on the banking services provided at the Post Office. All of the banks in Ottery St Mary had closed.

#### Design

- The housing density was considered too high and out of character with the surrounding areas.
- Three storey houses were considered out of character with the village.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attendees were concerned the three storey houses would dominate surrounding areas due their scale and elevated site.</li> <li>- The design of the houses was considered out of character with West Hill.</li> <li>- A member of the public asked if the owner could be persuaded to provide a larger retail unit.</li> <li>- Attendees did not agree that the proposed 3 storey retail/resident block would create a focal point for the village.</li> </ul> <p><u>Trees</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residents were concerned that 8 trees would be felled. They noted that West Hill is a woodland village.</li> </ul> <p><u>Local Infrastructure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many attendees expressed concerns regarding the adverse impact on local infrastructure which was considered to be under significant strain.</li> <li>- Others noted that children in the village were unable to secure places at the village school or nearby secondary school.</li> </ul> <p><u>Affordable Housing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attendees asked “Where are the affordable houses?”</li> <li>- “A member of the public asked “where are the houses for young families?”</li> </ul> <p>District Cllr Jess Bailey (JB) stated that she would be submitting a strong objection to the planning application. She was aware of the widespread opposition to the application evidenced by so many people attending the meeting. She felt the application didn't comply with EDDC and Neighbourhood Plan (NP) policies. In particular, the application was contrary to NP17: Proposals that will result in either the loss of Community Facilities of Value or significant harm to Community Facilities of Value will be strongly resisted. Also, the application makes reference to the Districts lack of 5 Year Housing Land Supply (HLS). Cllr Bailey noted that, following a rule change, East Devon requires a 4yearHLS and can demonstrate a 4year HLS.</p> <p>Murray Ross, Avalon Planning Ltd, stated that he would contact the site owner to provide key points from the meeting.</p> <p>Standing Orders were resumed.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked members of the public for sharing their views.</p> <p>119 members of the public left the meeting</p>
<p><b>240/73</b></p>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the Localism Act 2011 (sections 26-37 and Schedule 4) and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, members are required to declare any interests that are not currently entered in the Member's register of interests including the nature and extent of such interests they may have, in items to be considered at this meeting.</li> <li>- Members are also reminded that any change to their Declaration of Interests must be notified to the Monitoring Officer at East Devon District Council within 28 days of the change.</li> <li>- Receipt of requests for dispensations for new Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests or Non-Registerable Interests for items on the Agenda.</li> </ul> <p>Cllrs AC, FP, SP, AG, TI each declared no interests.</p>

<b>24/074</b>	<p><b>Planning Applications received:</b> To consider and agree a response to:</p> <p><b>24/0044/FUL</b> Potters Country Market West Hill Road EX11 1TY</p> <p>Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment to provide 9no. dwellings and replacement commercial/retail (Class E) space, with associated access, parking and landscaping.</p> <p><b>Cllrs considered the application:</b></p> <p><b>Cllr FP considered the application to be contrary to Neighbourhood Plan policies. Comments included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NP 2 Character &amp; Design: The housing density of the proposed scheme is much higher than surrounding areas.</li> <li>- NP17 The proposals that will result in reduced retail floor space and is likely to cause significant harm to a valued community facilities. He noted the scheme included few car park spaces allocated for the shop and clearly the scheme expected a significant drop in footfall.</li> <li>- The proposed scheme will significantly damage the sustainability of the village. Additional houses will further increase the strain on infrastructure. Loss of village facilities will increase traffic journeys to/from the village.</li> <li>- Recommended that the scheme should be strongly opposed.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr SP expressed concern about the viability of two small retail units and marked out a 90m<sup>2</sup> area to demonstrate the much reduced retail space.</p> <p>Cllr AG considered the scheme to be constructed on a false premise (that the existing larger retail unit was unviable). He asked Avalon Planning to report back to the owner and asked them to consider alternative uses for the site. Cllr AG supported Cllrs' previous comments. He also noted that the reduced number of car park spaces would lead to additional parking in nearby areas.</p> <p>Cllr TI supported the previous comments. He added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The application seems to drive the loss of the shop.</li> <li>- Inadequate parking provision for residential units</li> <li>- The 4-bed houses are family houses - there's no spare capacity at local school</li> <li>- Acknowledged that the current building needs to be improved</li> <li>- Need to retain a Post Office</li> </ul> <p>Cllr AC supported the previous comments. She felt the owner had not considered the needs of the community. She noted the attendees overwhelming opposition to the application and shared their concern that Morrisons and the Post Office facilities would be lost. She noted the number of residents attending is unprecedented in the Parish Council's history, demonstrating the strength of opposition in the community. She added that the site was very prominent and the proposal would spoil the character of the Woodland Village.</p> <p>It was resolved to <b>strongly oppose</b> the application.</p>
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**2\Other Matters**

<b>24/075</b>	<b>Clerks Report:</b> (for information) <b>No matters were raised.</b>
<b>24/076</b>	<p><b>Councillor questions, reports and items for future agenda</b></p> <p>Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. <i>Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.</i> <b>No matters were raised.</b></p>

<b>24/077</b>	<b>Next meeting:</b> To confirm arrangements for the next WHPC ordinary meeting <b>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b> 7.30pm at the Village Hall.
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**Part B - Confidential/exempt items. In consideration of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960** (publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted): to agree any items to be dealt with after the public and press have been excluded.

All remaining members of the public left the meeting.  
Meeting closed 9.10pm

Signed .....

Date .....